

Irrawaddy Empire

Pagan, Burma, 1988

by Bill Greer

About the Author

Adventure travel expert Bill Greer is the founder of GORP.com, the early Internet era's leading community for outdoor and adventure travel, selected as one of the Top 50 sites on the web in 2000. More recently, he is the author of **The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan**, a novel of New Amsterdam that paints a real and bawdy portrait of Dutch life on the Hudson through the eyes of a sharp-tongued bride who comes among the first settlers. Visit Bill at www.billsbrownstone.com.

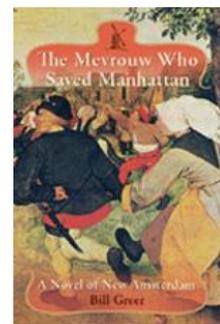
Reviews for The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan

**From de Halve Maen, Journal of the Holland Society
of New York, Summer 2009**

"[A] romp through the history of New Netherland that would surely have Petrus Stuyvesant complaining about the riot transpiring between its pages ... Readers are guaranteed a genuine adventure that will evoke the full range of human emotions. Once begun, they can expect to experience that rare difficulty in putting down a book before they have finished."

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Irrawaddy Empire

Pagan, Burma, 1988

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At sunset, a reddish brown glow envelops the landscape. The dark bricks of hundreds of temples blend with the sandy soil of the fallow fields. The haze hanging in the air disperses a golden light, separated from the bronze waters of the river by a thin line of dull purple mountains on the horizon. Such is the view of Pagan that early European visitors described as so fantastic and unearthly that it could pass for another planet.

A thousand years ago, Pagan was the capital of a great empire. It lay at a bend of the Irrawaddy River in central Burma. The river valley was a fertile region, yielding a surplus of rice. From this, the Burmans grew wealthy.

These Burmans were a religious people. They used their wealth to glorify Buddhism. Over 5 centuries, they erected thousands of monuments in the plain surrounding the capital. Some of these were simple structures, standing 20 feet tall, with a design no more complicated than a small bell-shaped pagoda resting on a square base. Others covered vast tracts and soared over a hundred feet to the sky. Their architecture rivaled any of the era.

In the evening light, the white-washed walls of the Ananda stand out. This temple forms a giant cross 200 feet square. The gabled main building is capped by successively diminishing terraces and finally crowned with an elongated dome and spire

170 feet above the ground. Within the walls, 4 giant Buddhas guard the points of the cross. According to legend, the Ananda was designed by a group of Rahandahs, saints second only to the Buddha himself, whom the king asked to model a temple after their Himalayan homeland.

Treasures are hidden throughout the temples scattered across the countryside. The Burmans decorated the interiors with multicolored frescoes. One surviving painting depicts life in Pagan when powerful monks demanded favors from all brides-to-be. Other richly detailed panels trace the stories of the Buddha. In one nondescript temple, a seventy foot Buddha reclines in a space so narrow that a full view is impossible. An imprisoned king reputedly built this temple to express his displeasure with captivity.

The Burmans built pagodas to house the most precious relics of their religion. Unlike the temples, the pagodas have no interiors and present no idols. They comprise a series of stone terraces, some elaborately decorated with stone demons and golden trees, supporting a stupa encrusted with gold leaf. The stupa holds a chamber for housing relics of the Buddha. A British captain returning from Pagan in the 1700s told of the Schwezigon Pagoda enshrining a tooth and collar bone of the Buddha.

Only in these monuments does the glory and wealth of ancient Pagan survive. The villages subsist on a weak agriculture and cottage industry. But the Buddhist devotion still appears. Orange-robed monks are honored with alms as they pass on their morning rounds. Pilgrims leave offerings at the feet of the Ananda Buddhas.

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**Irrawaddy Empire, Burma, 1988
by Bill Greer**

Children parade in traditional costume as a town celebrates the novices' initiation to the monkhood. The spiritual wealth endures.

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The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan

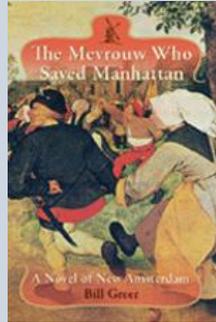
by Bill Greer

“A very authentic ring ...
like etchings by
Van Ostade and Steen.”

– Charles Wendell, Ph.D., President of
the New Netherland Institute

A Novel of New Amsterdam

When Mevrouw Jackie Lambert opens her New Amsterdam tavern in 1626, she jumps aboard a madcap ride through New York history. With a razor-sharp tongue and the tastiest beer on either side of the Atlantic, Jackie spurs the tiny Manhattan settlement toward a head-on collision with the tyrannical Dutchmen who rule it. Poison, blackmail, murder, all are fair game as she fends off threats to the family she yearned for growing up as an orphan. And when pegleg Peter Stuyvesant would rather destroy the town than surrender his honor, Jackie must take history into her own hands or lose everything she has spent a lifetime building.



A Real Portrait

While a work of fiction, *The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan* paints a real portrait of life in New Amsterdam with all its humor, bawdiness, and conflict. It presents a window into how Dutch culture during the Golden Age of the Netherlands transplanted to the wilderness of the Hudson Valley. The thread of Jackie's life reflects the central theme of the Dutch period, the rebellion of the common people against their rulers, the Dutch West India Company and its Directors, a conflict that historians argue laid the foundation for the pluralistic, freedom-loving society that America became.

About the Author

Bill Greer has spent much of his working life in the heart of New Amsterdam. He is a Trustee and Treasurer of the New Netherland Institute, a membership organization supporting research and education in Dutch-American history. Visit him at www.BillsBrownstone.com for more on Mevrouw's world and old New York and to read an excerpt of fifty pages from *The Mevrouw Who Saved Manhattan*.

CONTACT: Bill@BillsBrownstone.com / 347-204-1917

Reviews

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Manhattan View Press, New York
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