Broadside

Episode One

"Reduce that people to an entire submission."…Charles II

August 28, 1664: The daily business of the Dutch settlement on Manhattan, New Amsterdam, comes to an abrupt halt as four English warships appear in the lower bay. Peter Stuyvesant, the colony's Director General, shores up defenses of the fort while sending a polite welcome to the Commander of the English squadron, Richard Nicolls.

Nicolls has been sent by King Charles II to "Reduce that people to an entire submission to us and secure that trade…which the Dutch have wrongfully possessed themselves." He demands Stuyvesant and the town "rendered to his majesty's obedience, and protection." and has 96 cannons and three companies of troops to affect his orders.

Stuyvesant, beset by decades of neglected defenses and the refusal of his own people to fight, surrenders without firing a shot. New Amsterdam becomes New York…for now…as Charles provokes an all out war with the Dutch.

"The Trade of the World is too little for us two."…Pepys

What brings the English and the Dutch to the brink of war? For forty years they fought together against the Spanish Empire. Elizabeth I herself sent an army to aid her Protestant co-religionists. But as the Dutch and English expand their overseas trade, they come into conflict. In 1621, at the Dutch fort in Amboina Indonesia, the Dutch torture and kill English merchants for allegedly conspiring to seize the fort. The "Amboina Massacre" inflames English passions against the Dutch for the next half-century.

Wars deflect the Anglo-Dutch rivalry for several decades as the Dutch resume their struggle with Spain and the English embroil themselves in a civil war. By mid-century, the Dutch win their independence and Charles II's father loses his throne and his head to

powerful factions in Parliament. The two republics, after a short honeymoon, are soon again at each other's jugulars over political and religious differences, issues of sovereignty at sea, and trade. England's Navigation Acts ensure trade conflict and eventually war.

Although the English with their superior navy win most battles, the sea war damages the commerce of both countries until Cromwell, assuming virtually dictatorial powers, offers peace to the new Dutch leader, Johan De Witt. After the treaty, Cromwell soon starts a war with Spain, while De Witt directs the building of a competitive battle fleet. When Cromwell dies, the country, bereft of leadership, restores Charles II to the throne.

Charles, to consolidate his rule and gain financial independence from Parliament, re-institutes the provocative Navigation Acts, encourages merchants to revive old claims against the Dutch, and rouses the rabble with Amboina-tales. He soon convinces his country that, "the trade of the world is too little for us two, therefore one must down."

De Witt strikes back…Charles gets his war.

As Nicolls was renaming New Amsterdam, the news of another English "expedition" down the African coast reaches De Witt in The Hague. Robert Holmes captured forts, sunk ships, took prizes, and otherwise wreaked mayhem. De Witt sends a retaliatory force under De Ruyter…Pepys reports the results: "I hear fully the news of our being beaten to dirt at Guinny, De Ruyter taking whatever we have, forts, goods, ships, and men."

With the news of De Ruyter's counter-raid, Charles orders a squadron to attack the Dutch merchant fleet from Smyrna. Bad weather foils his plans but De Witt can no longer ignore the blatant English attacks and on January 14, 1665…Charles gets his war.

James' Finest Hour…Lowestoft; Louis XIV makes his move.

Charles II appoints his brother, James, the Lord of the Admiralty. James completely reforms the Navy, instituting the linear tactical formation successful in the last war. De Witt continues building bigger ships but many are not yet finished and, since De Ruyter is not back yet, he appoints Obdam to command the Dutch fleet. Obdam meets the English under James at Lowestoft. Heavier English firepower, in line, destroys Obdam and his ship. The Dutch, disorganized and dispersed, hobble home.

Charles, realizing the danger to James, recalls the kingdom's only male heir from sea duty and appoints Sandwich to interdict De Ruyter and take a rich Dutch merchant fleet. Sandwich misses De Ruyter but captures a few big Indiamen. With the end of the fighting

season, plague comes to London, disrupting city and court, a bad harbinger for Charles II's war effort…and on January 16, 1666, another unhappy harbinger: Louis XIV declares war on the English. Now Charles has a war …a much larger war.

The Four Days Battle…De Ruyter Proves His Mettle

Day One: The fleets are at a rough parity as the 1666 campaign season begins. However, to counter a French fleet, Charles splits his fleet, sending Rupert to block the French while Monck remains north. Sighting De Ruyter's Dutch fleet, Monck attacks. The first pass is inconclusive but, as Monck tacks and fights through De Ruyter's squadron, he loses several ships in his van squadron: Berkeley killed, Harman escapes. Fighting lasts from noon till ten at night.

Day Two: Monck now has 50 ships down from 56; De Ruyter 77, down from 86. Fleets, now both in line, sail past each other several times, blasting broadsides. After one pass, De Ruyter brilliantly maneuvers his squadron to save another from annihilation and shatters Monck's fleet.

Day Three: Monck improvises by putting fifteen of his largest ships, each with huge stern guns, in a line abreast to protect the rest of the fleet as it limps to safety. Suddenly Rupert appears and he and Monck try to combine and fight but find themselves separated by dangerous shoals. De Ruyter takes and burns the Royal Prince.

Day Four: With Rupert's squadron, the English fleet is now 52 ships against De Ruyter's 69. Heavy fighting, with lines repeatedly broken, results in a confusing battle. Ships from both sides run out of ordinance. De Ruyter's tactics finally send English into full retreat, but without any rounds of ammunition, and almost every ship damaged, De Ruyter heads home, too. The carnage: almost 4,000 killed and an equal number injured.

Episode Two

De Witt Meddles; God punishes London for Holmes' Bonfire.

Dutch are perhaps overconfident after the 4 Days' Battle. But on Saint James' Day they have fewer ships than the English (72 vs. 87) and, as usual, less firepower per ship. Moreover, unwisely, De Witt aligns his fleet to minimize the damage to certain flagships, which results in a cannon-duel favoring the English. De Witt's meddling causes the Dutch to get much the worst of this battle.

Blasting away for days in June and July, neither side can decisively follow up its victory. Tens of thousands killed, the wealth of both nations reduced to flotsam on the North Sea, and unspeakable hardships for each country...for what? Dutch privateers interdict coal barges…it will be very cold in London this winter. And, the Dutch are about to have a visit from Robert Holmes.

Holmes gets a tip from a pusillanimous Dutchman about a large merchant fleet near the island of Terschelling. Holmes attacks, destroys one hundred fifty ships, and, to get his troops who are rampantly pillaging back on their ships, burns down Terschelling. Holmes' Bonfire is a dangerous escalation of a horrific war. And, when the city of London burns to the ground a month later, many of the Dutch Elect see it as a work of God. Moreover, one Dutchman, Johan De Witt, plans to carry the war to the heart of England.

De Witt's Raid and his Manhattan Bargain

The British crown has run out of money. Charles cannot get more without calling his mischievous Parliament so he enters into negotiations to end the war and mothballs his main battle fleet. De Witt sees his chance. He sends his brother, Cornelis, to lead a Dutch fleet into the Medway. It destroys more battleships than ever before or ever again in English history, becoming for De Witt, "the best plenipotentiary for peace."

Pepys' reaction is typical: "No sooner up than I hear the sad news which put me into such a fear that at two hours warning I sent my father and wife into the country by coach this day with about thirteen hundred pounds in gold in their night bag. Pray God give them good passage! And good care to hide it when they arrive. But my heart is full of fear."

De Witt's terms to the English are surprisingly lenient: The Navigation Act is slightly amended. England gives up claims in the East Indies and Surinam. Yet the English keep Cape Coast Castle, which establishes them in the slave trade for the next two centuries, and they retain New York. For De Witt, Manhattan is merely a bargaining chip, and an indefensible chip at that. But, if the peace does not last, the chip may be played again.

Charles and Louis Conspire; De Witt's Dilemma

The Treaty gives both the English and Dutch the peace they need to rebuild their economies, but neither can ignore the power of Louis XIV. Charles temporarily sides with Sweden and the Dutch to get Louis out of Spanish Netherlands and then secretly negotiates a Treaty with Louis that has as its goal the dissolution of the Dutch Republic. A very secret sidebar includes subsidies for Charles on the condition he becomes Catholic.

The plan for the dismantling of the Dutch Republic envisions a remnant puppet state governed by Charles II's nephew, William III. William and his Orange party continue to make demands on De Witt's government. Since it is only a matter of time before William assumes command of the army, De Witt makes no concerted effort to maintain or improve it. But with Louis XIV as your best neighbor, a frail army and weak land defenses are dangerous policies.

The War Begins; William in Command; Battle of Solebay

1672 is, for the Dutch Republic "rampjaar," the year of disaster. France invades from the south, Munster and Cologne from the east, and at sea the combined fleets of the English and the French attack Dutch shipping. As the French army advances against nominal resistance, the Orangists assail De Witt, who resigns. Then, unbelievably, an Orangist mob hideously murders De Witt and his brother, Holland's own heroes. No one would ever prove William III's complicity, but he is ready to take charge…

William III opens the dykes and stops French advance while De Ruyter surprises the allied fleets, divides and severely damages them. Any invasion from the sea is impossible. Miraculously, the Dutch survive the onslaught.

De Ruyter Prevails; Evertsen Retakes Manhattan

In 1673, De Ruyter once again meets the combined fleet, and once again prevails. William also has success in getting allies to relieve the pressure from the land armies. Charles is running out of money again, even with French subsidies and is without popular or Parliament support for the war. He then learns of another disaster overseas…Cornelis Evertsen has taken Manhattan.

In an extraordinary expedition, Evertsen takes six ships across the Atlantic and raids English possessions in the Caribbean. Combing with another squadron from Holland, they sail up the Atlantic Coast, disrupt the Virginia tobacco fleet, retake Manhattan, install a Dutch government there, raid the Newfoundland fisheries, and return across the Atlantic with a dozen prizes. New York, New Jersey, and Delaware…once again New Netherlands.

While the provinces of Zeeland and Amsterdam toss the responsibility for reinforcing and re-supplying New Netherlands back and forth like a hot potato, William III uses the conquests as a useful bargaining chip in peace negotiations.

In the Treaty of Westminster 1674, the English and Dutch agree to return all territories captured and the Dutch, to ensure Charles will not go back to the French for money, agree to pay an indemnity. The English give up all claims to Surinam and Pulo Run. New Netherlands returns to the English becoming New York once again.

Two of Charles's favorites died in 1670, before the Third Anglo-Dutch War: Monck, so crucial to the Charles' Restoration, early that year; Henrietta, of a perforated ulcer just a few weeks after the Treaty of Dover.

Stuyvesant returned to New York after defending his decision to surrender New Amsterdam and died on his Manhattan farm in 1672, the same year Nicolls died in the Battle of Solebay and the same year the mob murdered De Witt.

De Ruyter died still fighting the French in the Mediterranean in the continuation of the war in which the English no longer participated.

Charles II ruled for another decade after the third Anglo-Dutch War; but, he avoided major power wars, perhaps because of rampant domestic conflicts often centered on the succession of his brother James, who was Catholic. Charles II himself converted to Roman Catholicism on his deathbed.

James became king on Charles II's death but, ruling without his subtlety, lost his crown in a "bloodless" revolution to his daughter, Mary, and son-in law/nephew, William III, who promised to keep England Protestant. Evertsen led the fleet that took William III to England. Pepys, a loyal supporter of James, retired from public life with James' flight to France.

William III as king combined English and Dutch military power to restrain the continuing ambitions of Louis XIV, established a financial system that enabled the English state to remain solvent in times of war, and settled many lingering constitutional issues between Parliament and the monarchy. Mary died of smallpox just four years into their reign.