



Powder Keg

Barbara Knickerbocker



Knickerbocker is an American name. There are no Knickerbockers in The Netherlands. There never were. This famous American family name began as a tongue-in-cheek signature based on an age-old Dutch game. The Vincent family were Belgic Walloons who fled their homeland at the time of the Reformation to escape religious persecution. Flax farmers, they brought their sought-after talents to the nascent settlement of New Amsterdam (now New York City). Barbara Knickerbocker is a direct descent of both families. She grew up with her family history drummed into her by her elders. Raised during the Great Depression, she found her adult life profoundly influenced by her family's history. While researching the Vincent family during the Reformation, she discovered fascinating historic parallels between the experiences of the Belgic Walloons and the Sephardic Jews both in Europe and more surprisingly, in the early days of New Amsterdam. Powder Keg is written in three parts. The first is a memoir of growing up during the Great Depression. She and her parents were crammed into the top floor of Grandma Knickerbocker's home. Childhood was spent dealing with a feisty housekeeper, and an unrepentant grandmother who needed her sons' help, but resented his young family's intrusion into her life. Part II is a museum of Walloon and Knickerbocker-Dutch historical artifacts. Part III is an early history of the two families and the founding of New York City.

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