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Johan van Staveren was born in 1613 or 1614. His parents were Adriaen Jans van Staveren and Machtelt Symons van Borsen, an oil miller and soap boiler.^[1] Evidently Adriaen was not satisfied with these occupations alone, for his name appears in connection with a wide variety of public offices. He was a member of the Leiden city council in 1621 and was elected alderman no less than ten times and mayor five times between 1626 and 1646.^[2] Although little is known about Adriaen's financial situation, given his highly successful administrative career, Johan and his siblings most likely grew up in comfortable circumstances.^[3]

Van Staveren was registered in the *Album Studiosorum* of the Leidse Academie (Leiden University) in October 1628. This did not mean that he enrolled as a student; after all, he was just fourteen at the time. It was customary to enter in the Album the names of not only regular students, but also the pupils of the highest class of the Latin school, which was the gateway to the university.^[4] However, like Rembrandt eight years earlier, Van Staveren elected to pursue an artistic rather than an academic education.^[5] Who taught Van Staveren to paint cannot be firmly established, but on the basis of his style and subject matter, he is generally thought to have trained with Gerrit Dou.^[6] This must be taken with a grain of salt, for the two painters were almost the same age. In 1644 Van Staveren was involved in founding the Guild of Saint Luke in Leiden. When the Guild was finally organized in 1648, he registered as a member and is recorded as paying his guild dues until his death.

In addition to his skill as a painter, Johan van Staveren was also an accomplished administrator. Following in his father's footsteps he eventually rose to become mayor in 1667. To that end he followed a career path typical of many young patricians. He started out in 1641 as captain of a civic militia guard, a position he held for eight years. In 1651 he became a member of the city council and by 1656 had served ten terms as alderman. His appointment as mayor in 1667 was the crowning achievement of his administrative career.^[7] Van Staveren must have been an influential man, especially after 1648, when his younger sister Cunera married Pieter van Assendelft (1622–88), scion of an eminent patrician family that had been spawning city administrators since the mid-sixteenth century.^[8] In 1674 Van Assendelft, a draper and owner of a stone quarry, was taxed on a capital of 35,000 guilders.^[9] Van Staveren, too, was a man of means. In the will he



and his sister Alida, with whom he lived until she married in 1663, drew up in 1650, they bequeathed 12,000 guilders to their relatives.^[10]

Van Staveren is known primarily for his genre scenes and portraits, as well as a few other subjects. His depictions of hermits in caves, many versions of which have been preserved, are entirely in keeping with the Dou tradition. This affinity, however, is less evident in his history pieces and landscapes, which often include anachronistic-looking castles. His work varies in quality and generally lacks the high level achieved by some of Dou's other followers. Perhaps it was his average talent that forced him to pursue an administrative career. The fact that he gained professional momentum in the mid-1650s may not have been a coincidence, for precisely in those years it became increasingly difficult for a painter to make a decent living in the Leiden art market.^[11] For Van Staveren painting may, thus, have increasingly become an (important) side job. If so, then Van Leeuwen's omission of the artist in his city chronicle of 1672 is quite understandable. His name is also missing from Arnold Houbraken and Jacob Campo Weyerman's publications. Van Staveren appears only in an anonymous manuscript with "biografieën" (biographies) of Leiden painters, which was probably written by a Leiden art lover in the last quarter of the eighteenth century.^[12] About Van Staveren he noted that: "many splendid works by him [could once] be seen in this country, which were said to have been finished by his master. The art dealers already acquired the most and best [works] long ago, as well as many others by various pupils of Dou, and sold them abroad as paintings by Dou."^[13]

If his biographer is correct, Van Staveren's best works could well lie hidden in the oeuvre of his putative teacher.^[14] Johan van Staveren died at the end of April in 1669 and was buried in the Pieterskerk in Leiden. He never married, and as his sole heir, his sister Alida inherited all of his paintings. After the death of Alida's husband, the minister Eduardus Westerneyn, an inventory of his possessions was drawn up in 1674. It appeared that the couple owned more than 200 paintings, 72 of which were by Van Staveren.^[15] That so much of his work remained unsold suggests that it was not in demand. Yet this also illustrates his success as an administrator. Given the time and energy required by his career, selling his work would have become less of a priority. Clearly he did not need to sell his paintings, since he died a wealthy man.

-Piet Bakker

Endnotes



1. He gave his age as fourteen when he enrolled in the *Album Studiosorum* of the Leidse Academie (Leiden University) on 28 October 1628. See Eric J. Sluijter, et al., *Leidse fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 226. No birth certificate has been found. His parents married in 1606 and the Leiden baptismal registers have been preserved only from 1621 on. Thus, the number of children born between 1606 and 1621 cannot be determined. From later sources we learn that in that period not only was Johan born, but his brother François and sister Alida as well. His sister Cunera was baptized on 22 December 1622. Furthermore, there are records of two Aeltjes, in 1624 and 1626, and a Marrigje in 1621, all three of whom probably died shortly after birth.

2. *Naamwyser, Waar in verтоond werden de Naamen van de Ed. Achtbare H. H. Regenten der Stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1688–99), covering the period 1641–99. From the same list of names it emerges that from 23 July 1637 to 1640 he served as a delegate of Leiden on the board of the Amsterdam Admiralty, and in 1643 as head of an orphanage. Other sources relate that he was head of poor relief for homebound people in 1623. See RAL NA not. J. Mote, inv. 284, deed 23. He was also a member of the Council of Forty in 1626. See RAL NA not. F.G. van Sijp, inv. 164, deed 83, p. 29, June 1626.

3. While his father indeed served as a city administrator for a large part of his adult life, this does not necessarily mean that he derived his wealth from this position. In the first half of the 17th century patricians generally held these offices alongside their actual profession, and an academic background was not yet considered a prerequisite. Only after 1650 did the patriciate in Leiden evolve into an academically educated governing elite and amass the enormous fortunes nowadays perceived as characteristic of this social class. See J. Moes and D. J. Noordam, *Macht, aanzien en welzijn. Nieuwelingen in het stadsbestuur, 1200–1795* (Leiden, 2003), 56.

4. Willem Frijhoff, *Wegen van Evert Willemsz. Een Hollands weeskind op zoek naar zichzelf, 1607–1647* (Nijmegen, 1995), 125.

5. Gary Schwartz, *De Grote Rembrandt* (Zwolle, 2006), 42. See also the biography of Rembrandt in this catalogue.

6. Eric J. Sluijter, et al. *Leidse fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 226.



7. Furthermore, he was regent of the Elisabeth Gasthuis from 1654 to the end of 1656, “Commissaris van de Echt-saecken” (commissioner of marital affairs) in 1655 and 1656, and “royeermeester” (comptroller general) in 1666. See *Naamwyser, Waar in vertoond werden de Naamen van de Ed. Achtbare H. H. Regenten der Stad Leyden* (Leiden, 1688–99).

8. Dirck J. Noordam, *Geringde buffels en heren van stand. Het patriciaat van Leiden 1574–1700* (Hilversum, 1994), 36–41.

9. Gerrit J. Peltjes, *Leidse Lasten. Twee belastingkohieren uit 1674* (Leiden, 1995), 41. Other family members were taxed for far greater amounts.

10. SA Amsterdam, NA not. F., inv. 2092, (film 2234) deed 67, p. 134, 22 July 1655. This will (but not its content) is mentioned in A. Bredius, *Künstler-Inventare Urkunden zur Geschichte der Holländischen Kunst des XVIten, XVIIten und XVIIIten Jahrhunderts* (The Hague, 1915–21), 2187.

11. Piet Bakker, “Crisis? Welke crisis? Enkele kanttelingen bij het economische verval van de schilderkunst in Leiden na 1660,” *De Zeventiende Eeuw* (March 2012), 232–69.

12. See Eric J. Sluijter, et al. *Leidse fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 40. This manuscript is in the library of the GAL 254 (portefeuille 41a). The biographies of Leiden painters such as Van Staveren, De Pape, Van Tol, Van Spreeuwen, Van Gaesbeeck, Brekelenkam, and Maton, who were ignored by earlier biographers, are in a dust jacket bearing the title “Adversaria Leidsche schilders.”

13. GAL 254 (portefeuille 41a) “Hier te lande veele fraaije stukjes van hem te zien [waren], waar in men zeyde dat zijn meester de laatste hand zoude gelegd hebben. De konsthendelaars hebben de meesten en besten, benevens meer anderen van verscheijde leerlingen van Douw, al overlang opgekogt en buijtenlands voor schilderijen van Douw verkogt.”

14. For an illustrative example, see Johan van Staveren (?) after Gerrit Dou, *The Doctor* (Amsterdam, Rijksmuseum, inv. A 2321); in Eric J. Sluijter, et al. *Leidse fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630–1760* (Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal) (Zwolle, 1988), 267.



15. RAL, NA not. Van der Stoffe, inv. 1192, deed 34, 22 February 1674. This inventory is also in A. Bredius, *Künstler-Inventare Urkunden zur Geschichte der Holländischen Kunst des XVIten, XVIIten und XVIIIten Jahrhunderts* (The Hague, 1915–1921), 2183, but is far from complete: he forgot to include fifteen works by Van Staveren.

Literature

- Bredius, Abraham. *Künstler-Inventare Urkunden zur Geschichte der Holländischen Kunst des XVIten, XVIIten und XVIIIten Jahrhunderts*. The Hague 1915–21, 2183–88, 218n.
- Sluijter, Eric J. et al. *Leidse fijnschilders: van Gerrit Dou tot Frans van Mieris de Jonge 1630–1760*. Exh. cat. Leiden, Stedelijk Museum de Lakenhal. Zwolle, 1988, 226–29 and 266–67.