

## VANDERBILT FAMILY

Sometime after 1650 some poor Dutch farmers named van der Bilt emigrated from Holland to New Netherlands. By 1685 Aert Jansen van der Bilt was holding a large part of the village of Flat Bush on Long Island. He may be the original settler or Jan, his father, or an uncle may have preceded him.

Aris, a relative of Aert, perhaps a brother, settled in Flat Bush by 1685 also. He also owned land on Staaten Island which he seems to have traded from the Indians. Aris and Hilitje were married by then. They had numerous children. They were parents of Jacob I born in 1692. He married Neilje (Eleanor) in 1715. Jacob and Neilje had eleven children and lived in Staaten Island. They cleared a farm in the forest in the community of New Dorp. Jacob and his sons helped build a ship to bring the Moravian immigrants across which came there in great numbers from Germany. The van der Bilt were converted into that sect. One was an elder in the church and one presented the church with a bell from Holland.

In 1723, Jacob II was born of Jacob I and Neilje. He married Mary Sprague of English blood (first foreign inter-marriage). In 1764, Cornelius was born to them. Mary produced the smallest number of children (7), of any of the Vanderbilt wives from Aris to the Commodore, a period of over 200 years. They were a prolific race.

Cornelius (who was evidently named after an uncle of that name) married Phebe Hand in 1787. They lived on a farm land at Port Richmond. One of her uncles was Major-General, Edward Hand, an Adjutant-General of the Continental Army during the Revolution. He as a Colonel had commanded a rifle regiment with distinction at the battle of Long Island. The Hands were people of foresight and vision, several pegs above the Vander Bilt (as it is spelled by now). Phebe was a wonderful and courageous woman. Cornelius and Phebe had nine children. They had a struggle to make ends meet.

Their fourth child, Cornelius, was born of them May 27, 1794. He was destined to be the Commodore Cornelius Van Derbilt who amassed a fortune. He was the brother of Laura Vander Bilt, mother of Storm Andrew Vanderzee.

The Vanderbilts were on the whole, obscure farmers, laborers or fishermen, stolid, honest Dutchmen with tenacity but little vision. The Hand strain brought vision and foresight which Commodore Cornelius evidently inherited from his mother. She saved money in a clock and helped the family through many difficulties by her foresight. The father of Cornelius and Laura was a shiftless man who lacked initiative and the qualities of Phebe.