

Guide to the Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt collection 1974.168

Finding aid prepared by Rachel M. Oleaga

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Describing Archives: A Content Standard

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Summary Information

Repository	Brooklyn Historical Society
Creator	Vanderbilt, Gertrude Lefferts, b. 1824.
Creator	Vanderbilt, Jeremias, b. 1695
Creator	Vanderbilt, John, d. 1812
Creator	Vanderbilt, John, d. 1842
Title	Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt collection
Date [bulk]	Bulk, 1792-1810
Date [inclusive]	1737-1818, bulk 1792-1810
Extent	0.25 Linear feet in 1 manuscript box and 1 oversize flat box.
Language	English
Language of Materials	Materials in English.
Abstract	<p>The Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt collection relates to the Vanderbilt family of the town of Flatbush in Kings County, New York. The collection contains miscellaneous deeds, indentures, and accounts for members of the Vanderbilt family in Flatbush; principally Jeremias Vanderbilt (b. 1695), John Vanderbilt (b. 1752), and John Vanderbilt (b. 1794). The collection also contains the estate records of Jeromes Ryerson, a citizen of the town of Brooklyn whose children and property came under the guardianship of John Vanderbilt (b. 1752) upon his death in 1792. Three slave bills of sale are also contained; one bill of sale for three slaves to Jacob and Jeremias from their brother Rem Vanderbilt, a bill</p>

of sale from members of the Vanderbilt family to John Vanderbilt (b. 1794) and another bill of sale from Michael Vreeland to Sejtie Hegeman. Also included is arbitration on the border dispute between Flatbush and Brooklyn in 1741, and licenses for taverns issued in Flatbush in 1796. Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt married Judge John Vanderbilt (b. 1829) of Flatbush, New York in 1846. These materials were part of her personal collection, and were potentially used in researching a book she published on Flatbush, New York in 1909 titled *The Social History of Flatbush; and Manners and Customs of the Dutch Settlers of Kings County*.

Preferred Citation

Identification of item, date (if known); Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt collection, 1974.168, Box and Folder number; Brooklyn Historical Society.

Biographical Note

The Vanderbilt family originated from the Netherlands and settled in Flatbush, Kings County, New York in the late seventeenth century; Jan Aersen van der Bilt is the first Vanderbilt documented in 1640. The Vanderbilts whose material appears in this collection include Jeremias Vanderbilt (b. 1695), Jacob Vanderbilt (b. 1692), John Vanderbilt (b. 1752), and John Vanderbilt (b. 1794), among others.

Jeremias Vanderbilt (b. 1695) was the child of Aris Janse van der Bilt and Hilletie Remsen, grandson of Jan Aersen van der Bilt. Jeremias and his brother Jacob (b. 1692) along with their eight siblings, were born and raised in Flatbush. Jeremias, unlike Jacob who established himself in Staten Island, remained in Flatbush working as a farmer and serving various offices in the Town of Flatbush. Jeremias lived and worked on the family property and owned multiple slaves. Jeremias served as town Constable from the year 1742 to 1743 and he also served as Supervisor for the town from 1759 to 1763 (Aris Jensen also served this position years earlier).

John Vanderbilt (b. 1752) was also a farmer in Flatbush, New York. He married Marritje Ditmars (b. 1757) and had several children. During the American Revolutionary war, John was a member of a local militia and was involved in rounding up arms for a visiting battalion. Like other members of his family, he was also involved in local appointments and politics, serving as town clerk for Flatbush from the years 1792 to 1794. Documents in the collection also refer to John as one of the "peoples Justices of the Peace for Kings County," including documents written by John which establish license for individuals to operate an inn and tavern in their home. John owned and purchased slaves; a slave bill of sale from his sister Mary Vanderbilt is seen in the collection. John is listed in the 1790 census stating the ownership of ten slaves and listed in the 1800 census stating the ownership of nine slaves and one "free person not taxed." John died in 1812.

John Vanderbilt (b. 1794) is the son of John Vanderbilt and Marritje Ditmars. He lived in Flatbush and worked as a young boy at a store and counting room in New York City. John married Sarah Lott (b. 1795) in 1817 and they resided on Lott family property. He was principally a farmer. John owned and purchased slaves and is noted for manumitting two of his estates slaves in 1822 under a laws passed in 1781 and 1788 which gradually granted slaves freedom through various processes. John died in 1842. He is the father of judge John Vanderbilt (b. 1829), who was an influential member of Kings County, New York and husband of Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt.

A note on names: In this collection Vanderbilt is spelled in multiple ways including, Vanderbilt, Van Der Bilt, Van der Bilt, van der Bilt, and V. D. Bilt. The name Ryerson is also spelled as Reyerson. First names appear with alternate spellings or in familiar forms: Jeremias is sometimes spelled Jeremyes, Jerimyas or Jeremyas and Jeromes is sometimes spelled Jeromus.

Scope and Contents

The Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt collection contains the legal, financial and business records of members of the Vanderbilt family in Flatbush, Kings County, New York from 1737 to 1818. These materials provide insight into some of the political and economic forces surrounding Flatbush and Brooklyn in the periods before and after the American Revolutionary war.

This collection contains wills, deeds, indentures and slave bills of sale relating to the property matters of the Vanderbilt family. Multiple indentures for property involve Jeremias Vanderbilt (b. 1695), specifically one between himself and his brother Jacob Vanderbilt (b. 1692).

Business documents display the leasing of property in the City of New York, including two indentures of lease from John Vanderbilt (b. 1752); one to John Wilmont and David Berdan, and the other to John Schench. A contract for the hire and negotiated pay of John Vanderbilt (b. 1794) for work in a store on Water Street, in the City of New York is also contained.

Local political procedure and happenings can be seen in the court records included in the collection, specifically in a document created by Justice of the Peace John Vanderbilt (b. 1752), concerning a trial between Nehemiah Denton and Hulet Mott; it states the right of the constable to summon six jurors based on his judgment for the case. Official documents which allow for the license of an individual to keep an inn or tavern at their home in Kings County are also present. These licenses also mention the voidance of the document if any method of gambling is found on the property at any time.

This collection also contains a document stating the decision of the arbitrators regarding the boundary dispute between Flatbush and Brooklyn in 1741; arbitrators include Samuel Hubbard, William Courvenhove, and Johannes Nevins.

Documents concerning the death of Jeromes Ryerson and the guardianship of his children, Kelly and George, in 1796 are also found in the collection, specifically the release of estate matters and responsibility of George Ryerson upon his maturity to legal age from John Vanderbilt (b. 1752), Fernandus Suydam, and Martin Ryerson. Also included is a detailed assessment of Jeromes' property with assigned value to each item, including furniture, household items, slaves and animals.

References to enslaved African-Americans appear in this collection, particularly seen in the legal documentation concerning their sale and inheritance through wills. The collection contains three bills of sale, two of which involve the purchase of slaves by members of the Vanderbilts, and one seemingly unrelated slave bill of sale from Michael Vreeland to Sejtie Hegeman. Mention of slaves is also seen in the list of property in the will of Jeromes Ryerson.

The names John Lefferts, Peter Lefferts, Corneilus Van Der Veer, Jeremiah Lott appear in business documents in the collection as witnesses and members of various local appointments.

Arrangement note

The Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt collection was found to be roughly organized into individual folders chronologically at the beginning of processing in 2010, with some folders labeled. There was no

indication that the material was in its original order. The materials were then arranged, and a folder level description was imposed by the processing archivist.

Users of the collection should be aware that the documents created by, and surrounding a specific individual will be found in folders with the individuals name, separated further by subject matter.

Oversize materials were removed from their original folders and placed in an oversize folder. Notes appear in each folder where oversize materials were found and they are also noted on the container list. The oversize material can be found in one oversize folder, separated by notations.

There appears to be little consistency in how to correctly form the name Vanderbilt in both the collection and surrounding scholarship on the family, with some document signatures appearing Vanderbilt, and others Van Der Bilt, or V.D. Bilt. For the purposes of this collection, the spelling Vanderbilt is used to describe all of the Vanderbilt family members represented in materials; Vanderbilt, Van Der Bilt, van der Bilt, Van der Bilt, and V.D. Bilt.

Administrative Information

Publication Information

Brooklyn Historical Society October 2010

Conditions Governing Access

Open to researchers without restriction.

Conditions Governing Use

Material in this collection is in the public domain.

Immediate Source of Acquisition note

The Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt Collection was presented to the Long Island Historical Society (now the Brooklyn Historical Society) in 1931 from Sarah Walden.

In acquisition of the materials, a note from Sarah Walden states that the materials were collected by Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt relating to Flatbush, New York. They may have been research materials used in writing her book on Flatbush society, *The Social History of Flatbush; and Manners and Customs of the Dutch Settlers of Kings County*.

Processing Information note

The Gertrude Lefferts Vanderbilt Collection was processed in October 2010 by Rachel M. Oleaga

Related Materials

Related Archival Materials note

Brooklyn Historical Society holds materials concerning Aaron, Auris and Peter Vanderbilt in the Bennett Ryder Collection (collection ARC 001).

John Vanderbilt (b. 1829) is referenced in the Anita Lott Cruickshank papers, held by Brooklyn Historical Society (collection 1974.126).

Controlled Access Headings

Family Name(s)

- Vanderbilt family -- Archives

Genre(s)

- Deeds
- Estate records
- Indentures
- Leases
- Slave bills of sale
- Wills

Geographic Name(s)

- Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.)
- Brooklyn (New York, N.Y.) |x Boundaries
- Essex County (N.Y.)
- Flatbush (New York, N.Y.)
- Flatbush (New York, N.Y.) |x Boundaries
- Kings County (N.Y.)

- New York (N.Y.)

Occupation(s)

- Municipal officials and employees

Personal Name(s)

- Vanderbilt, Jeremias, b. 1695
- Vanderbilt, John, d. 1812
- Vanderbilt, John, d. 1842

Subject(s)

- arbitration
- Genealogy
- Judges |z New York (State) |z Kings County
- Slavery |z New York (State) |z Kings County
- Taverns (Inns) |x Law and legislation

Bibliographic References

Information on members of the Vanderbilt family in Flatbush, N.Y. can be found at Brooklyn Historical Society in the following:

Miller, Heather. *Old Brooklyn families : genealogies of the Hegman, Holgersen, Joosten, Nagel, Polhemius, Rapalje, Remsen, Stryker, Vanderbilt, and Van Wyck families*. Santa Barbara, CA; 1896. Call number CS69.O45 1986

Strong, Thomas M. *The History of The Town of Flatbush in Kings County, Long Island*. Brooklyn, NY: Frederick Loeser & Co., 1908. Call number F129.B7 S776 1842

Thompson, Benjamin F. *History of Long Island from its discovery and settlement to the present time*. New York, NY; R.H. Dodd, 1918. Call number F127.L8 T46 1918

Vanderbilt, Gertrude Lefferts. *The Social History of Flatbush; and Manners and Customs of the Dutch Settlers of Kings County*. Brooklyn, NY: Frederick Loeser & Co., 1909. Call number F129.B7 V36 1881

Collection Inventory

	Dates	Box	Folder
Jeremias Vanderbilt (b. 1695) Indentures and wills.	1737-1756	1 (A0060)	1
General note			
Moved to oversize box: one indenture, 1750.			
John Vanderbilt (b. 1752) Indentures.	1772-1797	1 (A0060)	2
General note			
Moved to oversize box: entire contents.			
John Vanderbilt (b. 1752) Court Documents.	1796	1 (A0060)	3
John Vanderbilt (b. 1752) Account Statements.	1805-1818	1 (A0060)	4
Jeromes Ryerson Estate Records.	1792-1810	1 (A0060)	5

John Vanderbilt (b. 1794) Indenture and Slave Bill of Sale.	1810-1816	1 (A0060)	6
Border Dispute between Brooklyn and Flatbush Arbitration.	1741	1 (A0060)	7
Slave Bill of Sale.	1783	1 (A0060)	8
Oversize materials.	1750-1797	2	1