

D. THE VANDERVEER FAMILY IN AMERICA

1. Cornelius Janse Vanderveer arrives in New Netherland in 1659

Although it was once believed that Cornelius Janse Vanderveer, the progenitor of Vanderveer family of Long Island and New Jersey (Figure 4.3), had come to America from Alkmaar in North Holland, more recent research suggests that he was from the Netherlands but not actually from Holland (Bailey 1968:458; Mapes 1937:202). Rather, he was born in the village of Wemeldinge in Zeeland, the southern province of the Netherlands bordered by modern day Belgium. Studies have demonstrated that immigrants from Zeeland represented about 2.3% of New Netherland's population (Cohen 1992:20). To further complicate the matter, he had not been born Cornelius Janse Vanderveer. His birth name was Cornelius Janse Dominicus and the first time he appears in the written record as Cornelius Janse Vanderveer occurs in reference to his immigration to the New World on the passenger list for a 1659 voyage of the ship *Otter*. This notation identifies his profession as farmer and this is important for it identifies him as a typical Dutch immigrant. Mapes (1937:202) conjectures that "Dominicus" may have been "a family name, a patronymic or even a double patronymic." This would suggest that his father's name was Dominicus. It appears Cornelius Janse Dominicus' father was Jan Cornellise Domenicus (also known as Cornelis de Seeuw), who married a Neeltje Kemple with whom he had Cornelius in 1622/1623. There has also been some speculation whether Cornelius Janse Dominicus could have been the son of Cornelis Van der Veer but more recent research has discredited that lineage (DeBoer 1913; Conover 2006).

David Stevens Cohen has shown in his book *The Dutch-American Farm* that although many earlier historians had associated roots of much Dutch colonial culture with Holland's urban merchant class, the vast majority of New Netherland's settlers were farmers, craftsmen or soldiers, and that those who were New Amsterdam's Dutch merchants were among the first to acculturate to English ways. It was in the outlying agricultural communities that "Dutch-American" culture was longest entrenched, and it is thus fitting that the Vanderveer family would be among the stalwarts of this group (Cohen 1992: 4-5, 21).

Cornelius Janse Dominicus, or Cornelis Janse Vanderveer, or Cornelius Janse Seeuw (translated to Cornelius of Zeeland) as he also sometimes referred to himself, settled in the Dutch community of Flatbush on Long Island in 1659. After Cornelius Janse Dominicus settled in Long Island, he dropped the name "Dominicus" in favor of "Vanderveer" and married Tryntje Gillis de Mandeville in 1667. Cornelius Janse Vanderveer and his son-in-law, Daniel Polhemus erected a dwelling house and barn and, on a "certain kill or creeke call Fresh Kill" a "corne mill or greize mill" (Hoffman 1942). When he departed the Netherlands, Cornelius had not disposed of all of his real estate and had entrusted it to his brother Jacob. In 1661, a record in the archives of Wemeldinge indicates that Jacob Dominicus represented his brother "Cornelis Dominicus who is absent from this country" and was owed land rent from a lessee (cited in Conover 2006). In a land transaction dated 1678/1679 for a property in Midwout (Flatbush), "Cornelis Jansen Van der Veer" was identified as the grantee but signed his name "Cornelis Janse Seeuw" on the document (Flatbush Records cited in Conover 2006). Cornelius Janse Vanderveer died *circa* 1703 and two years later, his widow Tryntje Jillis appointed her son Dominicus Dominicussen van der Veer to accumulate the monies due to his father's estate (Hoffman 1942; Conover 2006).

In 1696, Daniel Polhemus sold his stake in the property to Jan Cornelise Vanderveer, Cornelius Janse Vanderveer's eldest son. The year previous, Jan Cornelise Vanderveer had taken a wife, Femmetje Bergen and begun a family that would ultimately include ten children. Four of these children would eventually relocate to New Jersey. Included among these four was Jacobus Vanderveer Sr., the first member of the Vanderveer family to own the property on which the Jacobus Vanderveer House now stands.

2. Jacobus Vanderveer, Sr. and New Jersey

Jacobus Vanderveer married Femmetje (Phoebe) Ditmars and, over the course of thirteen years, would have six children, all of whom would live to adulthood. However, two, Joseph and Jan Vanderveer, would die within two years of each other, at the ages of thirty-five and thirty-two respectively. Joseph Vanderveer had been Jacobus and Femmetje's first born. Upon his death, he left behind a widow, Catharina and at least two children, Jacob and Femmetje. Jacobus Vanderveer's only daughter, also named Femmetje married Jacob Van Doren and outlived both her father and mother. His three surviving sons Jacobus, Louwrens and Elias would also outlive their parents.

Jacobus Vanderveer, Sr. died a wealthy man with an estate valued at close to £4000. One of the many differences between the "Dutch-American" and "Anglo-American" cultural traditions during the 17th and 18th centuries occurred in the division of estates. The English typically followed the practice of primogeniture, which left the full estate of a father to his eldest male son, or at least a modified form of it. Female children were often left dowries or outright cash but were relatively rarely left land. The Dutch, on the other hand, favored partible inheritance, which provided for a more equitable division of property between all surviving children. Both male and female heirs received divisions of land. In many cases, the eldest son was favored but offsetting this was the fact that the core portion of a homestead farm frequently passed to the eldest son still living at home. The eldest male child often was already established in his own home with his own family by the date of his father's death.

In the case of Jacobus Vanderveer Sr.'s estate the homestead tract and his mills passed to his youngest son, Elias. Louwrens, the eldest male heir, was given a plantation near Roycefield, N.J. whereon he already lived and Jacobus Vanderveer Jr., the next eldest child, was given a 560 acre tract of land on which the Jacobus Vanderveer house would shortly be constructed. Other lands in Virginia were also divided amongst the brothers but, in accordance with Dutch custom, their sister, Femmetje Van Doren also received land in Virginia, along with 70 acres of Jacobus Sr.'s New Jersey farm. Femmetje's son, Jacob also received land set off from the family farm. Jacobus Vanderveer Sr.'s will demonstrates that at least in regard to the division of inheritances, the family continued to follow "Dutch-American" cultural practices with all of the children, both male and female, sharing directly in the division of their father's real estate.