

# *The Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum*

## Pre-Visit Material



The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House  
P.O. Box 723, 3055 River Road  
Bedminster, NJ 07921  
(908) 396-6053  
[www.jvanderveerhouse.com](http://www.jvanderveerhouse.com)

## GENERAL VISIT INFORMATION

### ARRIVAL

For safety reasons, please access the Jacobus Vanderveer House via River Road and enter through the River Road Park entrance. Follow the park roadway to the gravel cul-de-sac at the end and unload. Then follow the hay trail to the main entrance of the house. Please instruct school busses to park on the side of the gravel roadway and not on the grass.

### TEACHERS & CHAPERONES

It is suggested that there be at least one (1) adult chaperone or teacher for every 10-15 students. At the end of the visit, teachers will be given packets with handouts for the students upon your return from the Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum. Teachers and chaperones are expected to monitor their classes and correct any inappropriate conduct.

### FACILITIES

The Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum has two unisex restrooms, one in the foyer of the Visitor's Center on the main level near the Kitchen Wing, and the other is located on the second floor accessible from the staircase in the foyer of the Visitor's Center. The museum is handicap accessible to the first floor only.

Unfortunately there are no indoor lunchtime facilities available at the Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum. Classes who wish to eat on the grounds may do so "picnic style". Picnic tables are not available at this time.

### MUSEUM BEHAVIOR

Being a good museum visitor is very much like being a good visitor in other places. We know that when we go into stores or other people's homes we shouldn't touch things that might break. We know that when we are in a movie theatre we shouldn't talk loudly. So if you know how to behave when you visit other places then you already know how to be a good museum visitor. Please keep in mind the following when visiting the Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum:

#### ***Look, don't touch!***

- Only touch the objects that the museum educator invites you to touch as many items are very old and delicate.
- Don't lean on the walls.
- Don't lean or sit on the furniture.

#### ***Listen, don't shout!***

- Listen when someone else is talking. Listen to your teachers, chaperones, the museum educators and your fellow students.
- Raise a quiet hand if you have something to say.
- Use your indoor voice.

#### ***Stay safe!***

- Stick together and don't wander away. Be sure to stay with your assigned group.
- If gets crowded in the house's narrow hallways. Please be patient and don't push!
- Walk, don't run, when using the stairs.

***Please no food, drinks or gum in The Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum!***

## **About the Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum**

For over two centuries, the Jacobus Vanderveer House has been at the center of Bedminster Township's rich and colorful history. The house is the last surviving building in Bedminster associated with the Vanderveer's, a family prominent in Bedminster Township history from its earliest settlement through the mid 19th century.

The home was built in 1772 by Jacobus Vanderveer, who later changed his name to James. He was the younger son of a wealthy Dutch miller, and his father and brothers lived and worked nearby. Jacobus married Mariah Hardenbergh, the daughter of Jacob Ruten Hardenbergh, minister of the Dutch Reformed Churches in Bedminster, North Branch, Neshanic, Raritan, and Millstone. The couple set up their household against the backdrop of increasing hostilities between England and the Colonies, so the house may have been scaled back with the understanding that when the hostilities were over it could be expanded as needed.

In early 1778, Vanderveer was approached to lend the residence to General Henry Knox, who was coming from Boston to command a new artillery encampment and training academy that the Revolutionary Armies were setting up on the mountain high above the village of Pluckemin. Knox and his wife Lucy occupied the house until June or July 1779 and the Jacobus Vanderveer House served as headquarters for General Henry Knox during the winter of 1778-79, when the Continental Army artillery was located in the village of Pluckemin during the Revolutionary War's Second Middlebrook Encampment.

Although the artillery park and its academy, the forerunner of West Point, no longer remain, the Vanderveer House is the only building known building still standing that was associated with the Pluckemin Artillery Cantonment. The artillery park and military academy is considered to be the first installation in America to train officers in engineering and artillery and predates the United States Military Academy at West Point (est.1802) by twenty four years.

The Vanderveer family house was later enlarged with two additions in the nineteenth century, remodeled in the twentieth century, and subsequently abandoned. The Township of Bedminster purchased the home and the surrounding area as part of River Road Park in 1989. The home has been restored by The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House, a non-profit group of inspired volunteers dedicated to developing the house as a museum and educational center to share the home's magnificent story and its' role in the history of the United States.

## Pre-Visit Activity

Dear Teacher,

The following pages are images and descriptions of objects from the Jacobus Vanderveer House museum collection. Prior to your visit we encourage you to take the time to do this activity as these objects will pop up again during your tour and will help engage students. Please feel free to photocopy and share the images with your students.

Work as a class or in groups to ask questions about each item. What is it made out of? Is it old or new? Why? How do you think it was used? Why do you think that? Included is a questions worksheet "Discovering Objects" to get you started. Every answer, right or wrong, helps your student learn!

After your visit to the museum, you and your students can check to see what you guessed correct. Information about each item is included in this packet. Also included are two activities that may be appropriate depending upon your students' age. Please choose what works for you.

We hope you and your students enjoy your visit to the historic Jacobus Vanderveer House & Museum.

Sincerely,

*The Friends of The Jacobus Vanderveer House*

# Discovering Objects

*Use descriptive language to answer the following questions about each object*

## Description

1. What do you think this object is? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do you think that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. What do you think this object is made out of (ex. wood, metal, clay, glass, fabric)? It is made from more than one material? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Do you think this object is old or new? Why? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
5. What shape can you see in or on the object? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Use

1. What do you think this object was used for? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. Why do you think that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. Who do you think used this object? Were they rich or poor? Young or old? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. Why do you think that? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## Other

Is there anything else you notice about the object? \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**OBJECT #1**



OBJECT #2



**OBJECT #3**



**OBJECT #4**



**OBJECT #5**



OBJECT #6



OBJECT #7



**OBJECT #8**



OBJECT #9



OBJECT #10



**OBJECT #11**



**OBJECT #12**



## Items at the Museum



### 1. Rolling Herb Grinder

Herb grinders were used in colonial kitchens to cut fresh herbs grown in their nearby kitchen gardens for cooking and medicinal purposes. Herbs were very important in the 18<sup>th</sup> century home and more than likely, the colonial gardener would have arranged things so she could put her hand on whatever she needed instantly -- something to stop bleeding, freshen a drink, flavor a stew or lend a neighbor in childbirth, to freshen the air in her home, or for a sick hog or cow or an ailing horse. Typical herbs often grown in kitchen gardens included an assortment of perennial herbs including mint, lemon balm, lavender, thyme, yarrow, lovage, lamb's ears, garlic chives, sage, rosemary and santolina.



### 2. Spider

A spider is a three-legged iron cooking utensil that was used to fry items in the fireplace without having to stand and hold the pan.



### 3. Clay Marble

In the colonial days everyone was very busy, but there was still time for games and recreation. Children would play games to help them with skills like running, jumping and throwing. All of their games were made from things they had because there were no factories or stores that made toys. Some of the games and toys helped the children to learn how to solve problems. Archery helped the boys aim, making hunting easier for them. Quoits, a game played with rope circles and stones, helped the children practice their aiming and throwing. They also liked to shoot marbles.

Marbles in the 18<sup>th</sup> century were made of baked clay ranging in size from 1/2 to 3/4 of an inch in diameter. Most were made of the natural color of clay (brownish grey), or with two colors of clay mixed together, but a few were made from white pipe clay. These would have been used as targets in a game of marbles.

#### **4. Measures**



Culinary historians say that colonial homes had plenty of cups and spoons but very few reliable scales, if any. To maintain consistency in recipes, households often used a set of “measures” to determine the amount of ingredients used for cooking and making home medicines. A “cup full” literally meant all that a cup would hold, but “cups” varied in size. The second cup from the left pictured here was known as a “gill” which equals a  $\frac{1}{2}$  cup measure today. Cooking ingredients were also measured by comparing the amount of ingredients to common items such as “butter the size of a hazelnut” which equals 1 teaspoon, and “Butter the size of a walnut” which is 1 tablespoon as we know it.



#### **5. Chamber Pot**

A chamber pot is a portable container used as a toilet in the bedroom. The chamber pot was generally made of metal or ceramic and placed in a piece of furniture such as a bench or stool with a lid for covering the chamber pot. The chamber maids were entrusted with the work of emptying and cleaning the chamber pots. Chamber pots were often referred to by other names such as *po*, *a Jordan* or *a gazunder*, *a potty* or *a piss pot*. The word chamber pot may have been derived from the French “*pot de chamber*”.



#### **6. Doll**

The origins of the doll have been traced back by historians to religious rites of primitive societies. Historians further speculate that as beliefs faded, the importance of the doll waned. As a result, the dolls were handed down to children as toys. There is evidence of the link between the doll and religious rites in ancient Greek literature and more recently the practice of the Hopi Indians who, at the conclusion of ceremonial rites, gave the dolls to the children to play with.

Colonial dolls, despite economic status, were modeled after grown women dressed in the fashion of the time with clothing often made of remnants from family clothing. They were often made of wood with painted faces

## 7. Ink Stand

An **inkstand** is a stand or tray used to house writing instruments, with a tightly-capped inkwell and a sand shaker for rapid drying. They were made of silver, pewter, led, earthenware, or porcelain. Silver was the most fashionable material used throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Later inkstands contained a wide variety of accessories, such as a taper stick (a candlestick to hold small tapers), pounce box (for sprinkling pounce, a powdered gum that fixed ink to paper), and wafer-box (to hold wafers used to seal letters).



Inkstands with tightly closing lids, often finely made (such as the one pictured here), were part and parcel of a traveling kit until the widespread use of the fountain pen or “reservoir pen” in the late 1800’s. Inkstands were status symbols, with some being rather ornate. The famous “Syng” inkstand was used in the signing of the United States Constitution.



## 8. Quill Pen

Quills needed to be kept damp with water to stay viable. Quills were commonly made from the outer wing feathers of geese, but could also have been made from swan or crow feathers. The feathers were dried and the inner membrane removed. They were then cleaned and hardened, and the end of each feather was cut using a pen knife to create a nib. The hardness of the quill determined how often the nib needed to be re-cut.

## 9. Hearts on Frock

A frock is a moderately informal style of a man’s coat in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, with a collar either standing or falling and cut loosely. This particular frock is the uniform worn by George Washington’s Continental Line. It is a regimental coat of blue wool with red wool facings, lined in white, with white “turnbacks”. Heart appliques hide the hook and eye that secure the “turnbacks” for field duty.



## **10. Plate & Ring Furniture Handle**



Oval plate & ring handles became popular towards the end of the 18th century in the styles of furniture promoted by cabinet and chair maker George Hepplewhite. He designed a distinctive style of light, elegant furniture fashionable in the late 1700's. George Hepplewhite opened a shop in London and after he died in 1786, the business was carried on by his widow, Alice. In 1788 she published a book with about 300 of his designs which set the tone for furniture designers through the following centuries.

Plate and ring handles were set on medallion-like back plates and were either round, oval, octagonal or other shapes. They were made of brass and often of fine detail because the thin sheets of brass could be pressed between dies. The designs were often patriotic, classical, romantic or floral designs.

## **11. Wattle-and-Daub Insulation**



Pictured here, found in the Jacobus Vanderveer House during the restoration effort, is called "wattle-and-daub" which is an earlier form of housing insulation. To finish walls and fill in space in between timbers, many historic buildings used this type of wattle-and-daub construction in which a woven lattice of wooden strips called "wattle" is "daubed" with a sticky material usually made of some combination of wet soil, clay, sand, animal dung and straw. Wattle-and-daub has been used for at least 6,000 years and is still an important construction material in many parts of the world, and the technique is becoming popular again in more developed areas as a low-impact sustainable building technique.

## **12. Cask**



Cask means "container" from the Spanish word *casko*. Casks were essential, commonplace items of colonial life and commerce. They were tough, versatile, and easily moved because they rolled. Almost everybody used them. England's trade depended on them. Shippers sent them throughout the empire, packed with such luxuries and necessities such as flour, wine, shoes, books, and leeches used in medicine. Casks were made of wood, and are often inaccurately referred to today as barrels, but barrels were a different type of cask. To accommodate a variety of goods casks came in varied sizes. Some were small, like the handy gunpowder keg. Others were huge, like the hogsheads built to hold 1,200 pounds of tobacco. The unglamorous yet versatile cask of the 1700s was as necessary, varied, and unremarkable as today's cardboard box.

Casks were made by coopers. Coopers specialized in tight work (for liquids), dry tight work (for powdery materials like flour), and slack work (for dry goods). By specializing, coopers could increase their revenues because they were paid by the cask. For the industrious, cask making provided a comfortable living.

# Activity #1

## Make Your Own 18<sup>th</sup> Century Marbles

Below are the instructions for making your own set of 18<sup>th</sup> century marbles.

### Materials:

- Salt
- Water
- Cornstarch
- Aluminum Foil

### Directions:

1. Combine 3 cups of salt with 1 cup of water in medium saucepan over medium heat.
2. Add in 1 cup of cornstarch gradually a tablespoon at a time, stirring well after every addition.
3. Stir the mixture continuously until it thickens, becomes a sticky mass and pulls away from the pot.
4. Spoon the mass of cornstarch clay onto a sheet of aluminum foil. Allow it to cool to the point that you can handle it comfortably.
5. Knead the mass until it is a stiff dough that is no longer sticky.
6. Break off small pieces of the dough and form them into marbles; rolling them in your hands until they are ball shapes.
7. Set the marbles on a dish on the counter to air dry for 24 to 48 hours. The marbles will have a smooth, hard finish suitable for painting, if you wish.

### How to Play Marbles:

- Draw a large circle on the floor using chalk, masking tape or yarn approximately 10 feet round.
- Make a big "X" or criss-cross in the middle with 13 marbles.
- Give each player a big marble, called a "shooter"
- Then take the big marble and rest it on the bottom of your index finger.
- Put the nail of your thumb under your index finger and flick your thumb up to hit the marbles.
- Try to knock the target marbles out with your shooter.
- Now three things can happen: (1) You could knock a marble and your shooter out of the circle, (2) You could knock a marble out, but not your shooter, or (3) You can hit nothing.
- The marbles you knock out are yours.
- You keep your turn if your shooter stays in the circle.
- The Winner is the one who collects seven (7) marbles first!

## Activity #2

### Make Your Own 18<sup>th</sup> Century Quill Pen

#### Materials:

- Large feathers
- Bowl or tub of warm tap water
- Scissors
- Penknife or craft knife (to be handled only by an adult)
- Cutting board
- Bottle of ink
- Scraps of felt or cotton
- paper

#### Directions:

1. Soak the tip of the quill (the hollow, spiny shaft of the feather) in warm water for about 15 minutes to soften it.
2. If necessary, use scissors to trim off some of the lower feathers so that you have 3 to 4 inches bare at the end of the quill.
3. An adult only using the penknife or craft knife, cut the tip of the pen in a gentle curve on a cutting board. The cut forms the “nib” of the pen.
4. The adult then cuts a small slit in the center of the nib to help control the flow of ink.
5. Dip the quill into the ink and blot in gently on the scrap of felt or cotton.
6. Practice writing on a sheet of paper by holding the quill at different angles. Re-dip and blot the quill as often as needed.

