



Vanderveer-Knox House

The oldest part of the Jacobus Vanderveer House was built in the early 1760s. It is typical of the Dutch frame houses that dotted the countryside before the American Revolution. Much of the original fabric of the house remains intact. Important is a wall in the west parlor that features raised wood paneling above the fireplace with a barrel-back cabinet to the side. Original flooring is of wide pine boards.

The house gained a Federal style addition in the early 1800s.

Later 19th and 20th century alterations imposed "bungaloid" features such as exterior stucco, a north porch and roof dormers. These modern elements were removed when the restoration returned the exterior of the house to its circa 1813 appearance. The interior of the house will interpret both the west Georgian section when Knox may have been in residence and the more spacious east Federal addition with its higher ceilings.

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 use the home as a museum and educational center.

ca. 1772

Sometime between the fall of 1772 when Jacobus Sr. wrote his will, and the spring of 1778 when Jacobus (James) Jr. is assessed £3738 for 575 acres of improved land, the Jacobus Vanderveer Jr. House was constructed.⁶ The original 1770s house is a 1½ story, three bay, frame structure with a kitchen wing attached to the west end. Paneling, hardware, nails, saw marks and construction methods confirm a pre-Revolutionary War date. Original configuration was 1-1/2 story; 7 structural bents; four rooms at ground floor plus kitchen wing; entry at south. Stair location and configuration of kitchen wing remain a puzzle.

ca. 1813

East rooms added by Henry Vanderveer's daughter Mary Hardenburg. Style of mantel and molding profiles, windows, nails, lath and saw marks indicate pre-1820 date. Changes include:

- two windows on east wall of ground floor removed.
- south porch (no longer extant) may have been added at this time.

1833-1868

House owned by Dr. Henry VDV (Elias' son), but not occupied by him. Changes include:

- south porch (no longer extant) may have been added at this time.

1875-1909

House bought by Henry Ludlow at auction. Plans for development of the property at this time. Used as rental. Changes include:

- gas installed
- kitchen wing remodeled
- Parlor cabinet altered to become doorway to kitchen wing

Docent Information Sheet – Last Updated October 1, 2009

- west wall of house re-framed and re-sided
- Room 1 dividing partition remove~ and ceiling plastered

1909-1916

House owned by Frank Ballentine. He claimed to have "repaired, stuccoed and added porches".

Changes include:

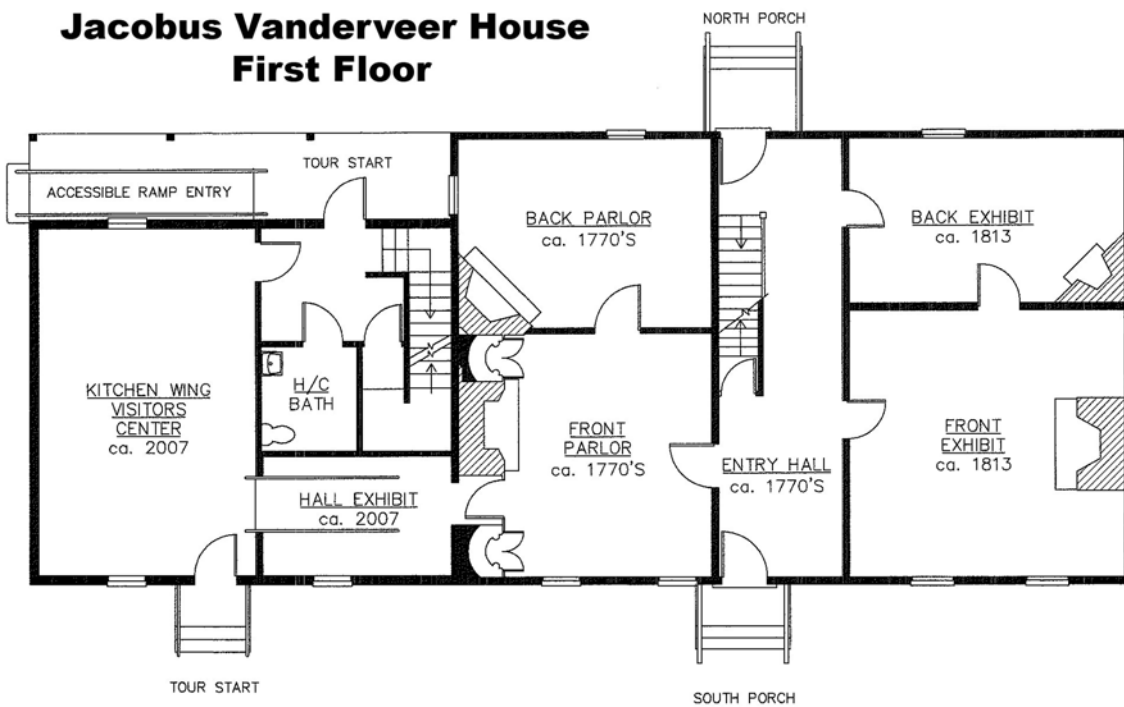
- main entry relocated to north side
- new doors and paired 1/1 windows on north elevation
- hall stair relocated and widened
- doors to Rooms 1 and 4 relocated
- center hall opened and ceiling raised
- new flooring installed (much of which has been removed)
- dormers added
- 2"d floor east rooms constructed
- steam heat added
- plumbing installed

1917-1989

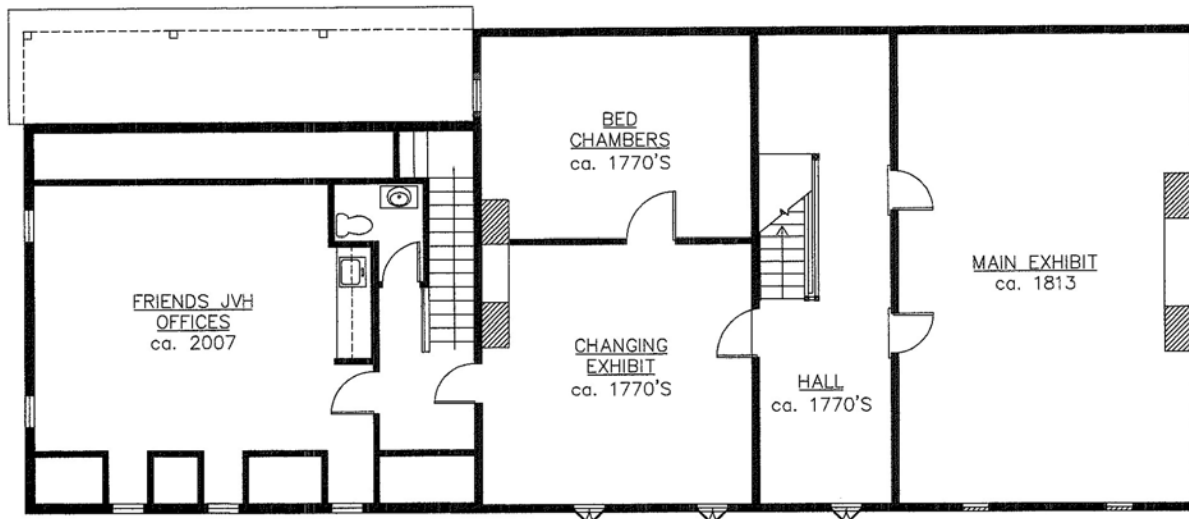
Owned by Schley family that owned the entire Schley (pronounced Schl – 'eye'. Used by the local polo club as well.

1989

Township buys property with Green Acres funds.



Jacobus Vanderveer House Second Floor



The Vanderveers

There have been numerous spellings to the Vanderveer name once they landed in New Amsterdam back in the mid 1600's. Van Derveer, V. D. Veer, Van Der Veer, Vander Veer, Vandiver, and our favorite ...Vanderveer. For various reasons, whether by mistake or not, the Vanderveer name originates from the term "of the ferry" or "of the village of Veere". The common spelling of the time was Van Der Veer. While the family name goes back nearly a thousand years, our journey starts back to 1659 when Cornelius VanDerVeer landed in America.

Cornelius Jans VanDerVeer, also known as Cornelius Janszen Dominicus Vanderveer had come to New York from Wemeldinge, Zeeland near Veere in southern Holland (Netherlands) back in 1659. Cornelius was referred to as the "New Netherlands' immigrant," or New Amsterdam immigrant, who settled in Flatbush, Kings County, Long Island landing on February 17, 1659 according to manifests from the city known as Veere in Holland. Cornelius was one of the original founding families of Flatbush and understood to be the founder of the "Long Island Vanderveers".

Jacobus, pronounced "*Jake-o-bus*", was born on October 29, 1686 in Flatbush, Kings County, Long Island (now Flatbush, Brooklyn). He was the ninth of ten children of Cornelius and Tryntje (De Manderville). Father to Jacobus and Grandfather to Jacobus, it was Jacobus who became the Vanderveer to travel west and eventually settle in the Pluckemin (Bedminster) area.

The Vanderveer legacy to the Pluckemin area began when Jacobus Vanderveer made major purchases along the east and west side of the North Branch of the Raritan River in 1743. At that time he purchased 439 acres on the east side from Lewis Johnston and his wife Mary. At approximately the same time he purchased a large tract of land on the west side of the Raritan River from Major Daniel Axtell. Jacobus built a house on the east lot around 1745. By the 1760s he had built a grist and saw mill along the river as well.

While Pluckemin was predominately Scot, the Dutch farmers settled throughout the Raritan valley. You see, Pluckemin in the seventeen fifties, was a hamlet of about a half dozen houses, with a store or two and Jacob Eoff's famous tavern. Jacob's brother Dominicus went further west and settled west of the Raritan Valley

Jacob Janzen Vanderveer died on November 17, 1776 at the age of 72 and was buried at what is now the Bedminster (Dutch) Reformed Church Cemetery, once the northern end of the Vanderveer property.

With all the genealogy mishaps, it is true that Jacobus is latin for the name "James". You'll see alterations, modifications, and pure mis spellings at times as well. Many times, as people settled into the new world, they began to alter their names to a more anglican pronunciation. Thus, Jacobus became Jacob or James, Maria became Mary, Lowrens became Larry, Hendrick became Henry, Femmentje became Phebe, Johan became John and you get the idea.

The same held true for the surname as well. Van Der Veer became Vanderveer, Vandiver, and Vander Veer. It certainly makes for tough research.

Common Questions

Q: How did Vanderveer House come to be preserved?

A: The house was acquired by Bedminster Township in 1989 when it bought the 100-acre River Road Park tract under Green Acres. The residence was rented to tenants until the township believed it was unsafe, and plans were made to tear it down. In 1994, the Township Historic Commission stepped in to save the structure. In 1997, the commission hired an architect to prepare drawings for a proposed restoration and in the same year gave the go ahead for demolition of buildings surrounding the house that were thought to be of a later period. In 1999, The Friends of Jacobus Vanderveer House assumed full responsibility for the restoration, interpretation, funding, and administration of the house.

Q: What is the historic significance of Vanderveer House?

A: The house 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 was setting up its 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 Gen. 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. Although the artillery park and its academy, the forerunner of West Point, no longer remain, Vanderveer House is the only building extant from that period. It is a priceless piece of 18th century history.

Q: What is the architectural significance of Vanderveer House?

A: Vanderveer House is fine example of vernacular Dutch-American architecture modified and enlarged in the federal period. The main block of the house, built in 1772, is a representative 18th century Dutch dwelling with mud walls, sturdy wooden beams, and fireplaces tiled in Delft from Holland. It was extended to the east in 1813, three years after the death of Jacobus Vanderveer, and has the classic federal style.

Q: What will be interpreted when Vanderveer House open as a museum?

A: Slated to open in 2009, the museum will interpret both Dutch colonial life in America and the stay by Gen. Knox and his family as well as the importance of Pluckemin Artillery Park. To that end, the museum will have a rotating display of the 190,000-plus artifacts found during an archaeological dig at the artillery park site from 1979 to 1989. These artifacts are currently being examined and catalogued before being put on display. Many believe information gathered from these artifacts may influence the way historians interpret the condition of General Washington's army during this phase of the war. In addition to displaying the artifacts, The Friends of Jacobus Vanderveer House will furnish the four period rooms as they would have looked while occupied by the Knox and Vanderveer families at the time of the Revolution. Extensive research is now being conducted into the profile and style of Vanderveer furnishings, including a ledger from the old Boylan Store in Pluckemin that lists purchases made by the Vanderveers.

Q: How do we know Henry and Lucy Knox actually lived at Vanderveer House?

A: We cannot say with absolute certainty that the Knoxes lived in the house during Knox's command of Artillery Park. There was another house across the road owned by Jacobus's brother, Elias. This house was dismantled and is now at East Jersey Olde Towne in Piscataway. However, a 19th century history of Somerset County identifies Vanderveer House as the residence of General Knox. And Knox's infant daughter is buried in the Jacobus Vanderveer plot at the cemetery to the

north of the house. There are accounts of a Feb. 18, 1779 ball presided over by General and Mrs. Knox that was planned at Vanderveer House.

This spectacular ball commemorated the first anniversary of the alliance between the United States and France. General-in-chief George Washington was there, as were all the principal officers of army. So were Martha Washington, local gentry, and a vast concourse of spectators from every part of New Jersey. Artillery, much of it captured from the British at Fort Ticonderoga, was displayed for all to inspect, and entertainment was provided by General Knox and the officers of the artillery corps at the academy. The celebration started at 4 p.m., marked by a discharge of 13 cannons. The company and invited guests then sat down to dinner in the academy. After dinner, there were spectacular fireworks over Schley Mountain. When the fire-works were finished, the ball began, which was opened by Washington and his partner, Lucy Knox.

Q: Will there be more renovation to Vanderveer House or reconstruction on the house site?

A: Vanderveer House is complete with its new kitchen wing and visitor center built during 2006 and 2007 and dedicated in November 2007. The construction cost \$350,000. By the 2012, the property will include historically appropriate landscaped grounds, a reconstructed multi-purpose barn, and other outbuildings and visitor amenities such as freestanding toilet facilities and adequate parking. A large township-owned tract to the north of the house may also become a part of the grounds. This would be fenced and cleared, to be used for future historic re-enactments, military parades, and even recreation and hiking. A path currently exists across this land connecting Vanderveer House with the Bedminster Dutch Reformed Church Cemetery. It is in this historic cemetery where the Vanderveers are buried along with Julia Knox, the infant daughter of Gen. Henry Knox, who died in 1779.

The Pluckemin Cantonment (Can-tone-ment)



Before the Academy at West Point, There Was Pluckemin

Move over West Point, there are some historians that believe that before the famed United States Military Academy was established by President Thomas Jefferson's signed legislation in 1802 and artillery training at the site goes back to 1794, there was an earlier army training academy established in 1778, nestled in the Somerset Hills behind the second Watchung Mountain in Pluckemin, New Jersey. While the Pluckemin Academy no longer stands and was only in place from October 1778 thru June 1779, historians are uncovering evidence that Pluckemin was in fact home to America's first military training academy.

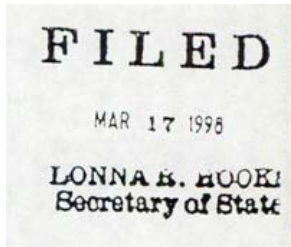


General Knox

General Henry Knox had seen the need for more than an educated officer corps and he had been asking for one since the before the war began. He felt equally committed to standardizing and upgrading the performance of the enlisted men. John Seidel, archeologist and historian wrote in 1982; "To this end he (General Knox) ordered that from April 16, 1779 on a line of 16 fieldpieces was to be maneuvered in the field to a new order of file and drum commands which he had composed. The men were to practice this for two hours each day until thoroughly familiar with it and then to continue to practice until the Army was again ready to take up active campaigning."

The Friends of the J Vanderveer House

The Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House (JVH) is a **501 c3 non profit organization** that registered with the Secretary of State of New Jersey on March 17, 1998.



The mission of the Friends of the Jacobus Vanderveer House is to restore, develop and operate the Vanderveer House property, significant in United States military history, as a nationally important historic site and an educational and community resource.

Jacobus Vanderveer Jr, son Jacobus Sr, a wealthy Dutch miller, built a small gregorian style farmhouse just west of the North Branch of the Raritan River on the northern outskirts of Pluckemin. In 1778, Vanderveer and his wife Maria lent their home to General Henry Knox, who was to command a new artillery encampment and training academy being established by the Continental Army on a hillside above the village of Pluckemin. General Knox, along with his wife Lucy and family, occupied the house thru the winter of 1778 thru the summer of 1779.

The Vanderveer House is now the only remaining building from that chapter in Bedminster history, as the artillery park and its academy – a forerunner of West Point – no longer stand. “It is truly a priceless piece of our history,” commented JVH President Jay Petrillo, noting that the house and artillery park are listed on the state and national *Registers of Historic Places*.