

Vanderbilt Mansion

National Historic Site • Hyde Park, New York

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF
THE INTERIOR: J. A. KRUG, *Secretary*
National Park Service, Newton B. Drury, Director

Vanderbilt Mansion

National Historic Site

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, at Hyde Park, New York, is a magnificent example of the type of great estate built by financial and industrial leaders in the era of expansion which followed the

War Between the States, and represents an important phase of the economic, sociological, and cultural history of America. It was the home of Frederick W. Vanderbilt, a grandson of "the Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt, who founded the family fortune in steamboating and railroading. The mansion itself, figuratively a royal palace brought over from Europe, was designed by the famous architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White, in 1898. Much older than the house as a portion of an estate is the 211-acre grounds, maintained as a country seat by prominent individuals since colonial days, with fine old trees, spreading lawns, and interesting gardens which have been carefully developed for generations.

Hyde Park in Colonial Days

Hyde Park, as the estate was first called, is said to have been named by Peter Fauconnier, the private secretary of Edward Hyde, Viscount Cornbury, later third Earl of Clarendon and Governor of New York from 1702 to 1708. Fauconnier was a Frenchman and is said to have left France to avoid persecution for his Protestant beliefs. He held office in the Colony as

Collector and Receiver General and also owned extensive tracts of land, including a part of the patent of Hyde Park. This patent was granted in the reign of Queen Anne, April 18, 1705. The town of Hyde Park, established in 1821, took its name from the estate.

Development of the Estate by the Bard and Hosack Families

After the death of Fauconnier in 1745 or 1746 his share in the patent eventually passed to his granddaughter, Suzanne Val-leau, and her husband, Dr. John Bard, who later came to own all of the original grant. Also of French descent, Dr. Bard was a noted physician and pioneer in hygiene. He is said to have participated in the first systematic anatomical dissection for instructional purposes made in the Colonies. When yellow fever was raging in New York City, his efforts resulted in the establishment of a quarantine station on Bedloe's Island (where the Statue of Liberty now stands), and he became first health officer of the port of New York.

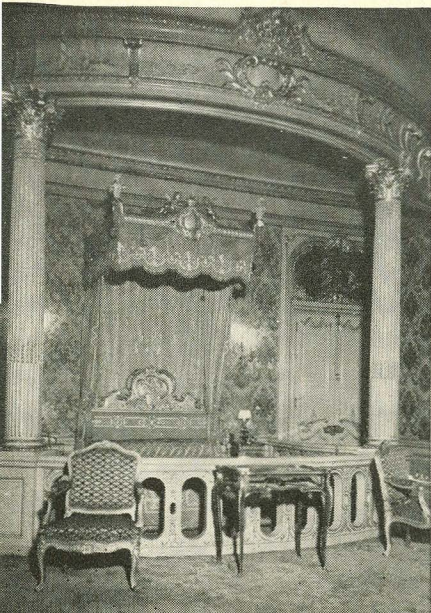
Dr. Bard lived principally in New York City until about 1772, when he moved to

Hyde Park and built a house on his estate, just north of the present St. James Church. This was called Red House. He developed an orchard of seven or eight hundred apple trees and many trees of grafted fruit, choice English cherries, pears, and plums. After the Revolution, having lost considerable money through investments in mining and ironworks, he returned to private practice in New York, where he assisted his son, Dr. Samuel Bard, as attending physician to George Washington, then in his first term as President of the United States. Dr. John Bard retired to Hyde Park a second time in 1798, and there, a year later, he died.

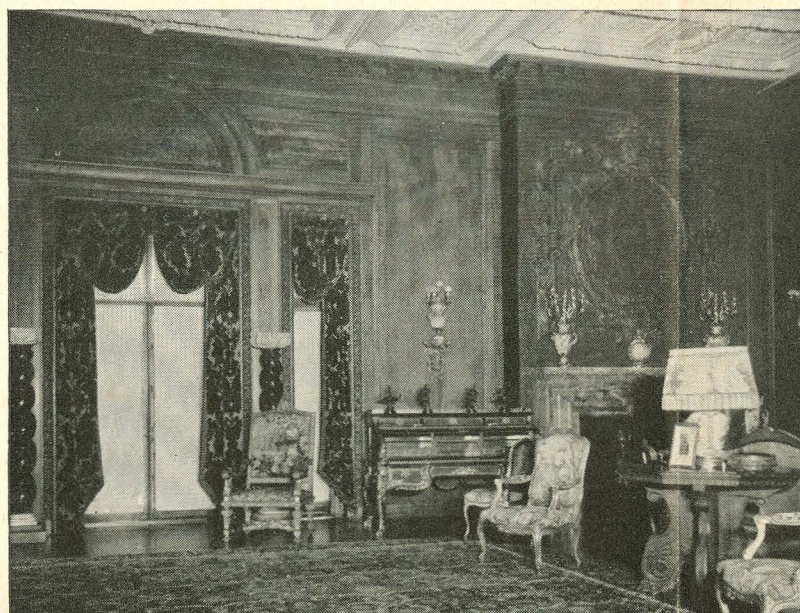
Dr. Samuel Bard received the property by transfer shortly before his father's death. Educated at Columbia College and in Edinburgh, where he received his medical degree in 1762, he also was an eminent physician. He became a founder of the Medical Society of the State of New York, helped to establish the New York Hospital, and was chiefly instrumental in founding and directing the institution which later became the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Columbia University.

Dr. Samuel Bard built a new mansion at Hyde Park. This was a large house on the

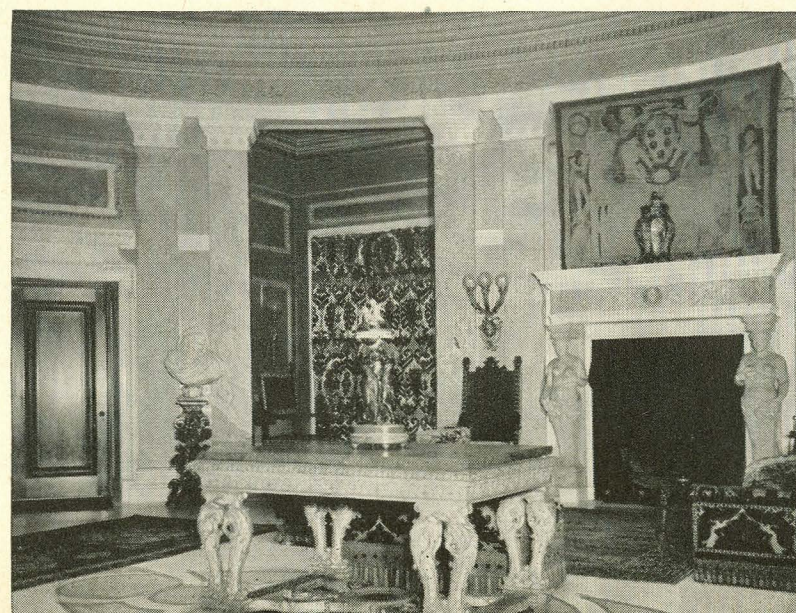
*Bed is copied from one of the period of
Louis XV*



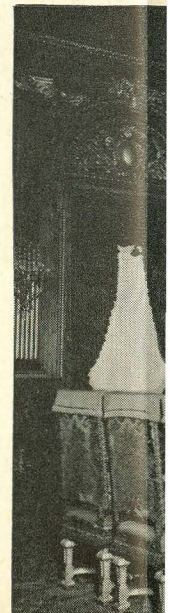
The drawing room combines Italian and French decoration



Main entrance hall



On the fl



high elevation rising about 300 feet above the Hudson River and commanding a superb view of this beautiful stream, of the Shawangunk Range to the west, and of the Catskill Mountains to the north. Improvements were made in the grounds, for, to his interest in trees, which he shared with his father, Dr. Bard added an interest in horticulture and farming. He imported small fruits from England, larger ones from France, melons from Italy, and vines from Madeira. The Society of Dutchess County for the Promotion of Agriculture made him its first president (1806), and in this connection he encouraged the use of clover as a crop and gypsum as a fertilizer. Dr. Samuel Bard and his wife, Mary, lived at Hyde Park until 1821, when they both died, within about 24 hours of each other.

Their only surviving son, William Bard, inherited Hyde Park, then reduced by land sales to 540 acres, but lived there only until about 1827, when he sold the estate to Dr. David Hosack, of New York City. Dr. Hosack, who had been a professor of Natural History at Columbia College, was a former partner of Dr. Samuel Bard, and the legatee of the latter's medical practice when he retired. Deeply interested in

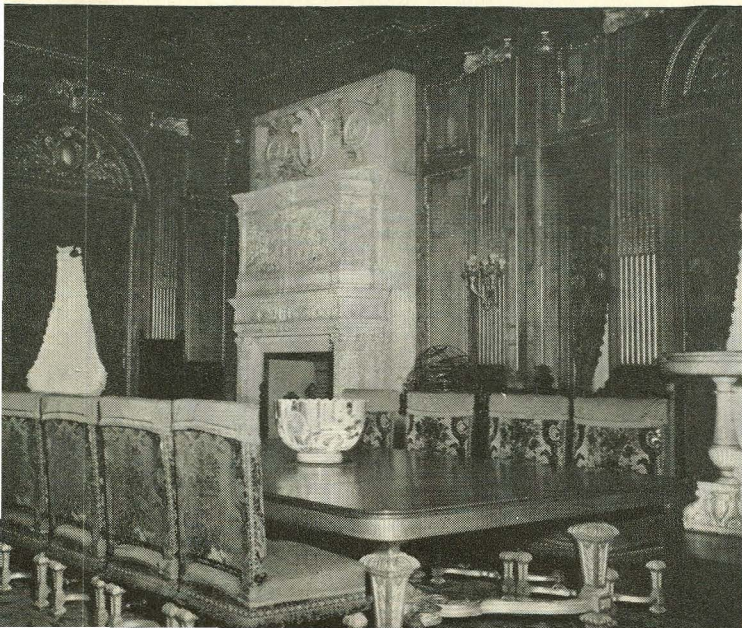
plants, flowers, and trees, Dr. Hosack founded the Elgin Botanical Garden (1801), in New York City. This garden covered 20 acres, part of it being on the site of the present Rockefeller Center district.

Dr. Hosack continued his interest in horticulture and gardening at Hyde Park, where he engaged Andre Parmentier, a Belgian landscape gardener, to lay out roads, walks, and scenic vistas. This work was done probably between 1827 and 1830. The many rare and exotic specimens which grace the lawns and park appear to date principally from that time.

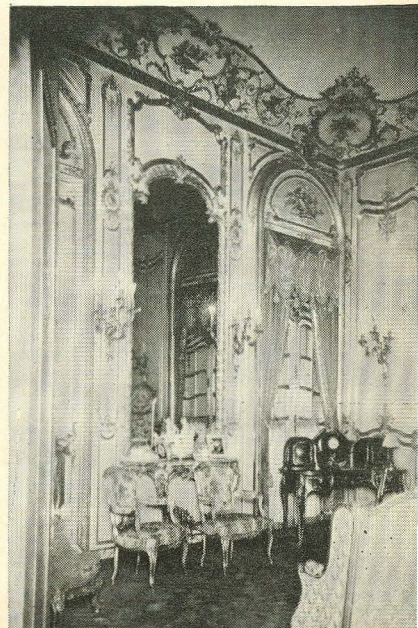
The Langdon and Vanderbilt Periods

In 1840, five years after the death of Dr. Hosack, his son and daughter-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Alexander Hosack, sold the mansion tract to John Jacob Astor. Mr. Astor almost immediately made a gift of the estate to his daughter, Dorothea Langdon, and her children, Eliza, Louisa, Walter, Jr., Woodbury, and Eugene Langdon. Walter Langdon, Jr., eventually bought out the property interests of his mother, sisters, and brothers, and by 1853 had become sole owner. He continued to live at

On the floor of the dining room is an Ispahan rug over 300 years old



The gold room, a French salon of the Louis XV period



Hyde Park until his death in 1894. During this long period the greenhouses and flower gardens were enlarged, the farmland east of the Albany Post Road was reunited with the property (by purchase in 1872), and Mrs. Langdon laid out the paths through the woods on the farm side of the estate.

The Langdons had no children, and when Hyde Park was offered for sale in 1895, Frederick W. Vanderbilt purchased it. He had the old mansion torn down and erected the present structure. This was completed in 1898 and is one of the finest examples of Italian Renaissance architecture in the United States. Its elaborate furnishings, chiefly Continental, with the emphasis on Italian and French, were chosen with care and good taste. Mr. Vanderbilt built new carriage houses, stables, and farm buildings; erected new entrance gates and gatehouses; and greatly improved the gardens and grounds. Mrs. Margaret Louise Van Alen, Mrs. Vanderbilt's niece, inherited the estate on Mr. Vanderbilt's death in 1938.

The Historic Site

The Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site was established in July 1940, as a unit of the scenic and historical areas set aside in perpetuity by the National Government for the benefit of the people. This was made possible by the gift of the estate to the Government for that purpose by Mrs. Margaret Louise Van Alen. The site comprises the 211 acres of beautiful grounds overlooking the Hudson River, together with the mansion house of the late Frederick W. Vanderbilt, related buildings, and formal gardens.

How to Reach the Historic Site

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site is situated on the western side of U. S. Route 9 at the northern edge of Hyde Park, N. Y., about 6 miles north of Poughkeepsie. Rail and motorbus service is available to and from the principal eastern centers.

Visitor Service and Facilities

Entrance to the grounds is by the south gate on U. S. Route 9. This gate is just north of the village of Hyde Park. There is no admission charge to the grounds which are open daily.

There is an admission charge to the mansion of 30 cents for each person 12 years of age or over. Guided tours of the mansion are conducted every hour on the hour from 9 to 5 daily except Monday. Efforts are made to run these tours at more frequent intervals on busy days. Visitors may walk about the grounds at leisure.

Passing through the entrance gate, traffic follows the main drive to a parking area near the mansion. Exit from the site is by the north drive and gate on U. S. Route 9. The exit drive affords especially fine views of the Hudson and the mountains beyond.

Vanderbilt Inn, on the grounds, serves luncheon in season. There are no accommodations for picnicking, dinner, or overnight stays on the site.

Administration

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. All inquiries relating to the area should be addressed to the Superintendent, Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, Hyde Park, N. Y.

A 16-page illustrated booklet dealing with the significance of the Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site in American history may be obtained from the Superintendent of the Site or from the Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington 25, D. C., at 10 cents a copy.

