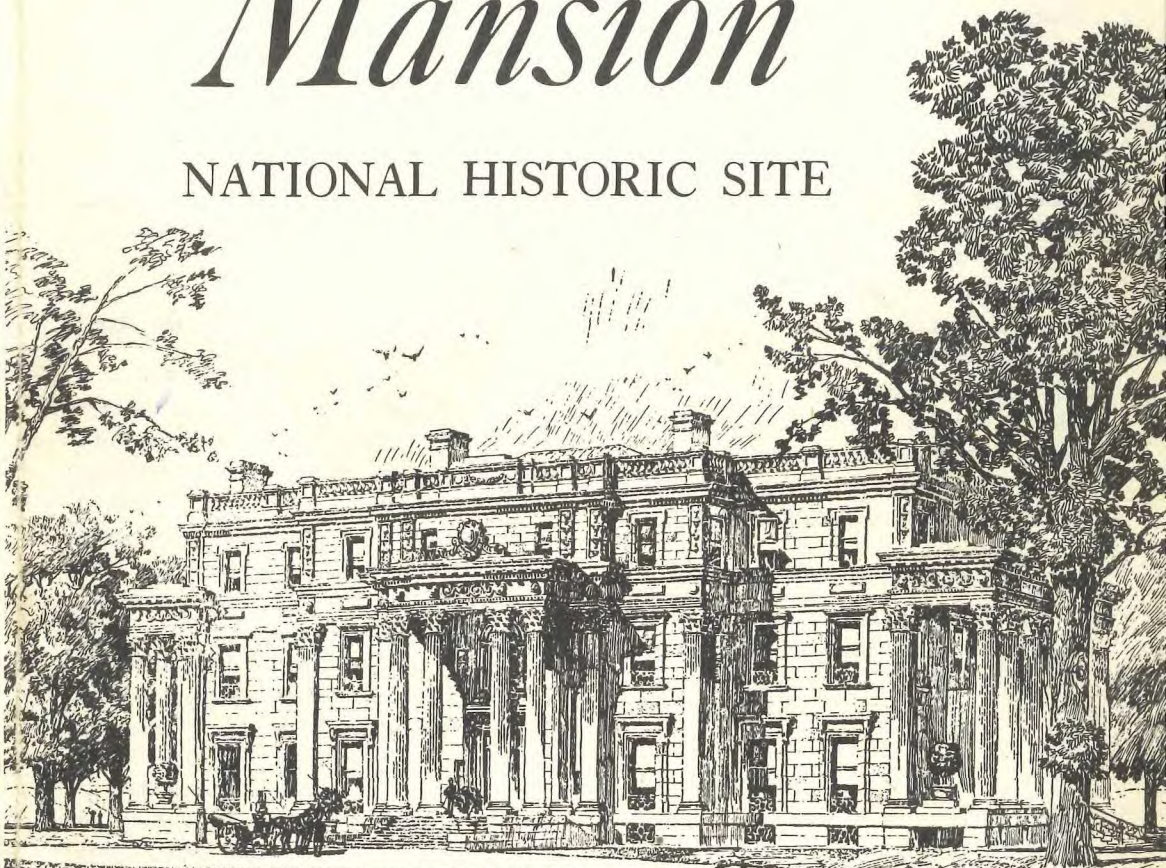


Vanderbilt Mansion

NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE



HYDE PARK, NEW YORK

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UNIQUE AMONG THE GREAT COUNTRY HOUSES OF AMERICA, THE VANDERBILT MANSION HAS WELL BEEN CALLED "A MONUMENT TO AN ERA."

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site, at Hyde Park, N. Y., is a magnificent example of the great estates developed by financial and industrial leaders in the era following the Civil War. It was the country home of Frederick W. Vanderbilt, a grandson of "the Commodore" Cornelius Vanderbilt who founded the family fortune in steamboating and railroading. The mansion was designed and built by the famous architectural firm of McKim, Mead, and White, 1896-98. A royal palace from Europe, figuratively speaking, it is one of the finest examples of Italian Renaissance architecture in the United States.

Hyde Park in Colonial Days

The history of the 211-acre grounds goes back much further than that of the mansion. The grounds have been maintained as a country seat by prominent individuals since colonial days. The fine old trees and spreading lawns have been carefully developed for generations.

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 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 on 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

Dr. John Bard, noted physician and pioneer in hygiene, acquired the entire Hyde Park patent during the two decades following the death of Fauconnier in 1746. Dr. Bard lived principally in New York City until about 1772, when he moved to Hyde Park. He built a house just north of the present St. James Church and began to develop the virgin land of the estate. After the Revolution, Dr. John Bard returned to private practice in New York. Here 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 again 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 at Edinburgh, he, like his father, was an eminent physician.

The National Park System, of which this area is a unit, is dedicated to conserving the scenic, scientific, and historic heritage of the United States for the benefit and enjoyment of its people.



View from Hyde Park, 1837

Dr. Samuel Bard built a new mansion at Hyde Park. This was a large house on the 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. Continuing to improve the grounds, Dr. Samuel Bard also undertook experiments in horticulture and farming. He imported small fruits from England, larger ones from France, melons from Italy, and vines from Madeira. Dr. Samuel Bard and his wife lived at Hyde Park until 1821, when they died within a day of each other.

Their only surviving son, William Bard, inherited Hyde Park, which had been reduced by land sales to 540 acres, but lived there only until about 1828. In that year 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 received the latter's medical practice when he retired.

Dr. Hosack, who was deeply interested in plants, flowers, and trees, revived horticultural experimentation and gardening at Hyde Park. He engaged André Parmentier, a Belgian landscape gardener, to lay out roads, walks, and scenic vistas. This work was probably done between 1828 and 1830. The rare and exotic specimens which grace the lawns and park appear to date principally from that time.

The Langdon and Vanderbilt Periods

In 1840, 5 years after the death of Dr. Hosack, John Jacob Astor bought the mansion tract from the heirs. Mr. Astor almost immediately made a gift of the estate to his daughter, Dorothea Astor Langdon, and her children. Walter Langdon, Jr., a son, became

the sole owner of the estate in 1853. He continued to live at Hyde Park until his death in 1894. During this period the greenhouses and flower gardens were enlarged and the farmland east of the Albany Post Road was reunited with the property by purchase in 1872.

The Langdons had no children, and when Hyde Park was offered for sale in 1895, Frederick W. Vanderbilt, gentleman and financier, purchased it. He had the old Langdon House torn down and erected the present structure, which was completed in 1898 at a cost of \$660,000 without furnishings. Its elaborate furnishings, chiefly Continental, with 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 grounds.

The Vanderbilts occupied the mansion during the spring and fall. Entertaining on the large estates in this mid-Hudson Valley during the early 1900's was usually limited to weekends.

On Mr. Vanderbilt's death in 1938, he willed the estate to Mrs. Vanderbilt's niece, Mrs. Margaret L. Van Alen, now Mrs. Louis Bruguiere.

The Site

Vanderbilt Mansion was designated a national historic site on December 18, 1940, following Mrs. Van Alen's gift of the estate to the United States for that purpose. The site consists of 211.65 acres of beautiful grounds overlooking the Hudson River, together with the mansion house and related buildings.

Travel Routes to the Site

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site

is on the New York-Albany Post Road, U. S. 9, at the northern edge of Hyde Park, N. Y., about 6 miles north of Poughkeepsie, N. Y. From New York City, 82 miles away, you can reach it most conveniently by automobile over the Hendrick Hudson Parkway, the Saw Mill River Parkway, the Taconic State Parkway, U. S. 55, and U. S. 9. Approaches from the west side of the Hudson River are by the Mid-Hudson Bridge at Poughkeepsie or the Rip Van Winkle Bridge at Catskill.

About Your Visit

You enter the grounds by the main gate on U. S. 9. This gate is just north of the village of Hyde Park. You leave the site by the north drive and gate on U. S. 9, near St. James Church. The exit drive affords especially fine views of the Hudson River and the mountains beyond.

The mansion is open every day, except Monday, from 9 a. m. to 5 p. m. There is an admission charge to the mansion of 25 cents for adults. Children under 12 years of age, or groups of school children 18 years of age or under, when accompanied by adults assuming responsibility for their safety and orderly conduct, are admitted free.

The *Home of Franklin D. Roosevelt National Historic Site*, administered jointly with this site, is 2 miles south of the village of Hyde Park on U. S. 9. It is open every day, except Monday, from 10 a. m. to 5 p. m.

Administration

Vanderbilt Mansion National Historic Site is administered by the National Park Service of the United States Department of the Interior. A superintendent, whose address is Hyde Park, N. Y., is in immediate charge.



United States Department of the Interior
Douglas McKay, *Secretary*
National Park Service • Conrad L. Wirth, *Director*



Guide to the Mansion

With this guide, we believe that you will be enabled to tour the mansion enjoyably and satisfactorily. Each room is labeled so that you may readily identify it. You may take all the time you wish; you may linger to enjoy whatever appeals to you especially. You will find the uniformed tour leaders ready to answer any questions you may have.

The First Floor

RECEPTION HALL. All the marble is Italian. Large green velvet sofas and bearskin scatter rugs, which formed a setting before the fireplace, have been removed. The top of the old Italian table is of porphyry; the clock on the table is French. The mantel is from an Italian palace, and the old throne chairs around the walls are also of Italian origin. Two French Renaissance cabinets stand at either side of the doorway. *Please turn to your left.*

STUDY. Woodwork is Santo Domingo mahogany. The plates on the wall are Chinese. A painting by the French artist, Lesrel, hangs over the desk. Above the fireplace early Italian pistols are grouped about an old Flemish clock. A hand-carved Renaissance panel forms the back of the desk chair. From this room Mr. Vanderbilt conducted his local business, mainly estate affairs. This consisted principally of tree culture and the operation of the greenhouses and gardens, and his 350-acre dairy and stock farm across the highway.

LIBRARY. The library is decorated with wood carvings that were made by Swiss artists brought to this country for that purpose. The Staffordshire clock and candelabra on the mantel were a gift from Mrs. Vanderbilt's mother. The guns on the opposite wall are antique wheel locks. The library was the family living room. Mrs. Vanderbilt wrote



The Gold Room

letters on the table at the right. Mr. Vanderbilt's favorite chair stands beside the far window.

SOUTH FOYER. On the old Italian dower chest at your right is a model of one of Frederick W. Vanderbilt's yachts, the "Warrior." On the other is a small bronze group depicting a Russian winter scene. Above the chests are 16th-century Brussels tapestries showing incidents in the Trojan War.

DRAWING ROOM. The furniture in this room is predominantly French, except for the Italian refectory tables and the Chinese lamps. Two of these lamps have silk shades with hand-painted designs copied from the bases. The piano is an American Steinway which was sent to Paris to be decorated with gold leaf and medallions of noted composers. Florentine tapestries on the end walls bear the coat of arms of the Medici family. The wall paneling is Circassian walnut from Russia. The

twin fireplaces are of Italian marble. French doors open to a porch from which a path led to the gardens. Formal entertaining in this room might be tea near the piano, after-dinner coffee, several tables of whist, and, on occasions, a spring dance.

GOLD ROOM. The Gold Room is a reproduction of an 18th-century French salon. As evident, gold leaf was not spared in decorating it. The desk of inlaid tulipwood is Louis XV style. The clock is a copy of one in the Louvre. The tapestry panel is Aubusson. Though this room was probably designed for Mrs. Vanderbilt, it is reported that she did not care for it after its completion. Here guests would gather for sherry before dinner.

NORTH FOYER. The large chest on the left is a Florentine storage chest of hand-carved wood decorated with gold leaf and lacquer. Above the chest is a 17th-century Brussels tapestry. Opposite is an 18th-century Aubusson tapestry. Overhead is a Venetian lantern matching the one in the South Foyer.

The Drawing Room



DINING ROOM. This room is 30 by 50 feet. The huge Oriental (Ispahan) rug measures 20 by 40 feet and is more than 300 years old. The dining room furniture is a reproduction of Louis XIV. The large table could be extended to seat 30 people. At either side of the doorway are 18th-century planetaria— instruments for the study of the sun and the planets. The old Italian ceiling, the court chairs around the walls, and the two Renaissance mantels all emphasize the spaciousness of this room. The hostess made it a point to blend the color of the flowers, the cloth, and the china. If yellow flowers were being used, the lace cloth would have a yellow undercover, the service would be gold-plated, and the china would be white with a gold stripe.

The Stairway

On the wall opposite the foot of the stairway is an 18th-century Flemish tapestry. The floor in the lower stair hall is old Italian marble. The chair and birdbath are Italian

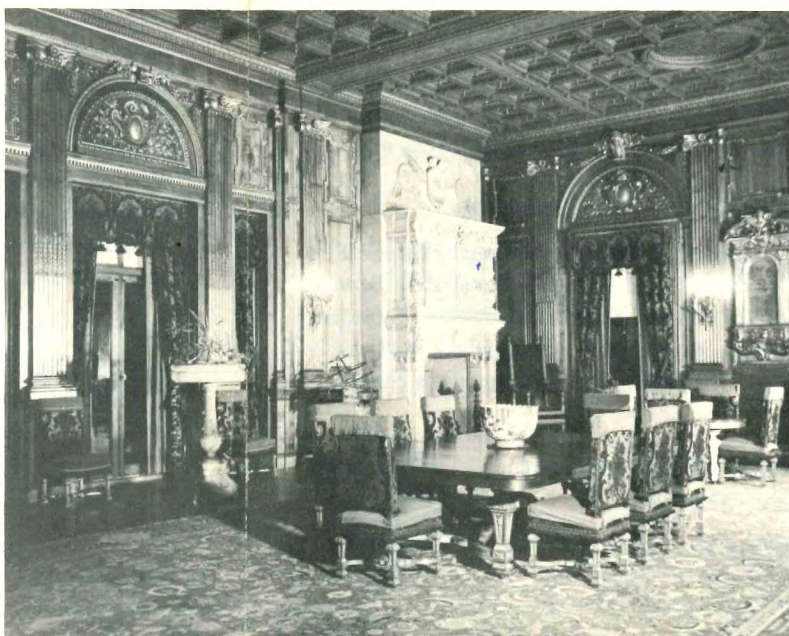
pieces. The large Chinese bowl, about 500 years old, dates back to the Ming Dynasty. The original stair runner has been replaced with service carpet; however, a piece of the original can be seen at the top landing. Italian busts and statues occupy the niches along the way. At one of the landings is a painting by a French artist, Adrian Moreau. An early 18th-century Beauvais tapestry hangs on the wall at the top landing. The second floor consists of the master bedrooms and guest rooms.

The Second Floor

SECOND FLOOR HALL. As you enter the hall, *please turn to the left.*

NORTH FOYER. On the Louis XVI table stands an incense burner fashioned of marble and cloisonné. The chandelier is of beaded crystal. Original paintings by Schreyer, Bouguereau, and Villegas adorn the walls. Mr. Vanderbilt was not a collector of paintings as was his father, William H. Vanderbilt. The

The Dining Room



mansion was decorated at the time it was completed and apparently few changes were made thereafter.

BLUE ROOM. Largest of the guest rooms, this room was occupied by Mrs. Van Alen. The windows of this room command a splendid view of the Hudson and the mountains beyond. A white onyx French clock and companion pieces adorn the mantel, and a rare old prayer rug (Ghiordes) is spread before the fireplace.

Common features of all the guest rooms were the 18th-century style of furniture and the use of a distinct color scheme. Each room has a bath and one or more closets. The bathroom accessories always matched the color scheme of the room.

MAUVE ROOM. This guest room has a finely woven Persian dowry rug in the center of the room. The pieces on the mantel are of the French Empire Period.

Mrs. Vanderbilt's Room



SECOND FLOOR HALL. When the mansion was built, the second floor hall had a solid floor. Eight years later, in 1906, the opening was cut and the surrounding balustrade added to give more light in the main lower hall from the skylight. This skylight is double, one above the other, and the inside walls of the third floors are built around it. *To the right* of the balustrade are the Red Rooms.

TWO RED ROOMS. These rooms are connected by a doorway to form a two-room suite. The frieze on the mantel in the larger room is Greek.

SOUTH FOYER. This leads to the master bedrooms. French doors can be closed to separate this wing from the rest of the second floor. In the foyer are paintings by Kellar-Reutlingen and Firman-Girard.

MR. VANDERBILT'S ROOM. This room has carved woodwork of Circassian walnut from Russia and walls covered with 17th-century Flemish tapestry. The bed and dresser were designed as part of the woodwork. The velvet on the chairs in this room is deteriorating from age. From time to time it is being replaced with new velvet and the old appliqué is being transferred. One of the touches of luxury throughout the mansion is found in the silk lampshades, the designs of which are hand painted from the figures on the Chinese bases.

MRS. VANDERBILT'S ROOM. In this room, as in the Gold Room downstairs, there was an at-

tempt at accurate reproduction. This room is a reproduction of a French queen's bedroom of Louis XV period. The bed is enclosed by a railing. (In French practice, courtiers gathered outside the railing for morning levees.) The wall at the head of the bed is covered with hand-embroidered silk. The other walls are wood paneled inset with French paintings. The French Aubusson rug, very heavily napped, was made especially for this room and weighs 2,300 pounds. The furniture is a reproduction by Sourmani of French Louis XV-Period pieces. A curio case in front of the bedrail contains French fans, and inside the rail is a prayer table and kneeling cushion.

The Third Floor

The third floor, which is not open to visitors, contains 5 additional guest rooms and rooms for 17 maids. While the guest rooms on the third floor are as elaborate as any of those on the second floor, the maids' rooms are simpler in decoration and furnishing. When the 9 guest rooms in the mansion could not accommodate everyone present, the Pavilion was used as a guest house.

The Grounds

The grounds are open to the public. Many of the trees are marked. From the west side of the mansion there are unsurpassed views of the Hudson and the Catskill Mountains beyond. You are welcome to spend as much time on the grounds as you wish.

*Cover: Vanderbilt Mansion, from architect's drawing, 1898.
Courtesy, Hyde Park Historical Association*