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van Voorhis



*The **van Voorhees/Voorhis Family** is said to be the largest Dutch family in the United States. Steven Coerte van Voorhees was born in the province of Drenthe, Netherlands in 1600. At the age of 60, Steven brought his family to the colony of New Netherlands and settled in the community of Nieuw Amersfoort (Flatlands) in current-day Brooklyn, Long Island. My maternal grandmother Juliet Robbins Falkenburg descends from this Steven. Our van Voorhis family lived on Long Island for more than three hundred years.*

Emma (van Voorhis) Robbins was my father's maternal grandmother. The family name van Voorhis is one of many spellings of which the most common are Voorhees, Vorhies and Voorhis. In his book *Genealogy of the Van Vorhees family in America*, Elias W. van Voorhis describes the origin of the family name. Voor-



Hees is about 56 miles ENE of Amsterdam and 16 miles west of the border of Germany.



Hees is located about 1 mile South of Ruinen

hees (the original family name) has its roots in Holland. Van (meaning from) voor (meaning before or in front of) and Hees “being a small village about a quarter of a mile south of the town of Ruinen, in the Province of Drenthe, Netherlands, which in 1660 contained nine houses and about fifty inhabitants.” [11.1]

Early documents (from the late twelfth century) mention a farm in the small town of Hees referred to as Voorhees. [11.2]. It is believed that the van Voorhees family who eventually settled in New Netherlands leased this farm. The



17th Century Drench Farmhouse (from Netherland Open-Air Museum, Ahem). This would be much like the voorhees farm. [11.3]



View today of farmland along the road from Ruinen to Hees

hamlet of Hees is located 65 miles ENE of Amsterdam within sixteen miles from the modern German state of Upper Saxony. It is located one mile SSE of Ruinen. Originally the farm voorhees belonged to the monastery of Ruinen, and likely was located in the farmland between Ruinen and Hees¹¹⁻¹ shown in the Google Earth image on the last page.



The family van Voorhees was awarded a coat of arms to either Albert of Voorhees or an ancestor. Little is known regarding why the coat of arms was registered to the family. In some cases, an individual elected to the position of magistrate or schepens, was permitted to adopt a coat of arms to affix to legal documents. Some family lore suggests that the arms could have been earned through valor in a battle. In his Historical Handbook of the Van Voorhees Family, Stephen J. Voorhies states:

“The field of the shield was quartered and tinctured and blazoned most nobly; Two quarters emblazoned with oak trees, and two were with castles resplendent, noting a union of lines of equal position and standing. the crest of the shield was a castle while beneath on the scroll was the motto. Firm set, of deep root, were the oaks, unheeding the winds that as-

11-1 voor Hees or before Hees likely refers to its location on a trip from Ruinen before reaching Hees.

sailed them. While under their wide-spreading branches they offered protection and shelter. The castles on red fields ...[the] motto in letters resplendent claimed Virtue, their castle or fortress; and 'Virtue my Castle or Fortress'— the motto we proudly inherit: One to be cherished and loved by all their long line of descendants." [11.4]

Our American van Voorhis family descends from Steven Coerts¹¹⁻² van Voorhees who was born at the Drenthe farm, voorhees in 1600. Steven Coerte married Aeltje Wessels in 1625. The first child was born on the farm in 1638 and was named Coerte Stevense¹¹⁻³ van Voorhees. The Steven Coerte van Voorhis family had three other children before Aeltje died. Steven remarried Willemtje Roelofs Seuberinge, by whom he had another six children. In 1660 Steven Coerte, Willemtje Roelofs and seven children sailed to Nieuw Amsterdam aboard the De Bonte Koe (the Spotted Cow). In the snippet from the passenger list, Steven's name is spelled Steven Koorts; This alternate spelling appears in several documents. The children likely included sons Coerte Stevense, Lucas Stevense, Albert Stevense, and Jan Stevense as well as daughters Hendrickje Stevense, Jannetje Stevense and Aeltje Stevense.¹¹⁻⁴

Steven Koorts from Drenthe, wife and 7 children; 22, 10, 8, 6, 4, 2 yrs old

Passenger list De Bonte Koe

11-2 *Steven son of Coerte from Vorrhees. Coerts is alternately written as Coerte, Coerten, or Koorts.*

11-3 *His given name Coerte honors his grandfather and Stevense denotes that he is the son of Steven.*

11-4 *Prior to the adoption of surnames, many families used the father's name (often ending in e, s, se or en) as a patronymic designation. Coerte Stevense was Coerte son of Steven. His father Steven Coerts was Steven son of Coert. While the passenger list for De Bonte Koe lists seven children, only six ages are given. One explanation may be that daughter Hendrickje was married and was on the ship with her husband Jan Kiërs. Perhaps she was counted as one of the seven even though she is also listed with her husband on the passenger list.*

The Migration of Steven Coerten and his Family to the New World

“The family journeyed overland to the Zuider Zee, and then by boat to the harbor and the docks of the Dutch West India Company. “Here Steven Coerten and his family assembled for official inspection... The rate was 36 guilders for each adult, but what reduction was made for small children is not stated. It was a wholesome family that presented itself that day before... the company’s agent, for all passed inspection, and Steven Coerten, his wife, and seven children, were entered upon the company’s books and on the passenger list....

Now they behold for the first time the ship that for six, perhaps eight long weeks was to be their sea-tossed home. De Bonte Kou was a trim and sturdy vessel that had been in the service at least three years. If it resembled others of the time it was about 170 feet long, 49 feet beam, and about 20 feet depth of hold. There were two decks, a high stern and low bow, three masts and a long bow sprit. The vessel was deemed seaworthy, and those who took passage were expected to endure many limitations, and to enjoy only such comforts as Dutch vessels of the period afforded.

The business completed Steven Coerten and his family go aboard and see for the first time the conditions amid which they are to live during the voyage. They examine the bunks where they are to sleep, the tables at which they are to eat, and the decks where children may play, and men and women take needed exercise... Wednesday, April 15th, the day for sailing, has now arrived. Mindful of advice to prepare for emergencies, Steven Coerten has secured extra supplies of food which are safely stowed away after the custom of the time. All are ready to watch the work of weighing anchor, hoisting sails, and easing the vessel out into the channel... The momentous voyage has begun.

...All had become accustomed to the ways of the ship. The women had gained experience in caring for children in restricted quarters, and the men had tried their luck at fishing to replenish the tables... All were interested in reports of progress, for the end of the voyage was constantly in mind.

The course lies toward the Canary Islands, thence to the Indian Islands, then toward the mainland of Virginia, steering right across, leaving the Bahamas on the left, and the Bermudas on the right, where the winds are variable with with the land is made...

When conditions proved especially favorable six weeks were sufficient for the voyage. Hence we may believe that about the first of June De Bonte Kou sailed proudly into the lower bay, past Sandy Hoek, with Coney Eyland to the right; then through the Narrows, and the inner harbor until she came to anchor off the souther tip of Manhattan. How all were impressed with the view of the fort over which floated the ensign of the Dutch West India Company, within which was the Dutch Church; and with the glimpses they had of the the city lying beyond! This was indeed a far-away colony of the Fatherland. They were happy at the thought that they were to sustain at this outpost of civilization the loved and cherished characteristics of the Dutch Republic.

When all necessary formalities had been observed Steven Coerten led his family ashore, and was greeted by representatives of the company. It may be that members of the Council, and perhaps also the doughty Director General, Peter Stuyvesant, came down to welcome them...

If Sunday were near they remain in New Amsterdam and worshipped with the congregation in the Church in the Fort, giving devout thanks that the long voyage was safely over... But as they had planned to settle in New Amersfoort they sought early in the week to begin the journey thither. So one beautiful June morning they made their way to the ferry, were rowed across the East River, and at the ferry house found conveyance that took them to the little hamlet of Breukelen, and so on through Midwout until the plains of New Amersfoort greeted their eyes. They were near the place that was to be their home.” [11.5]

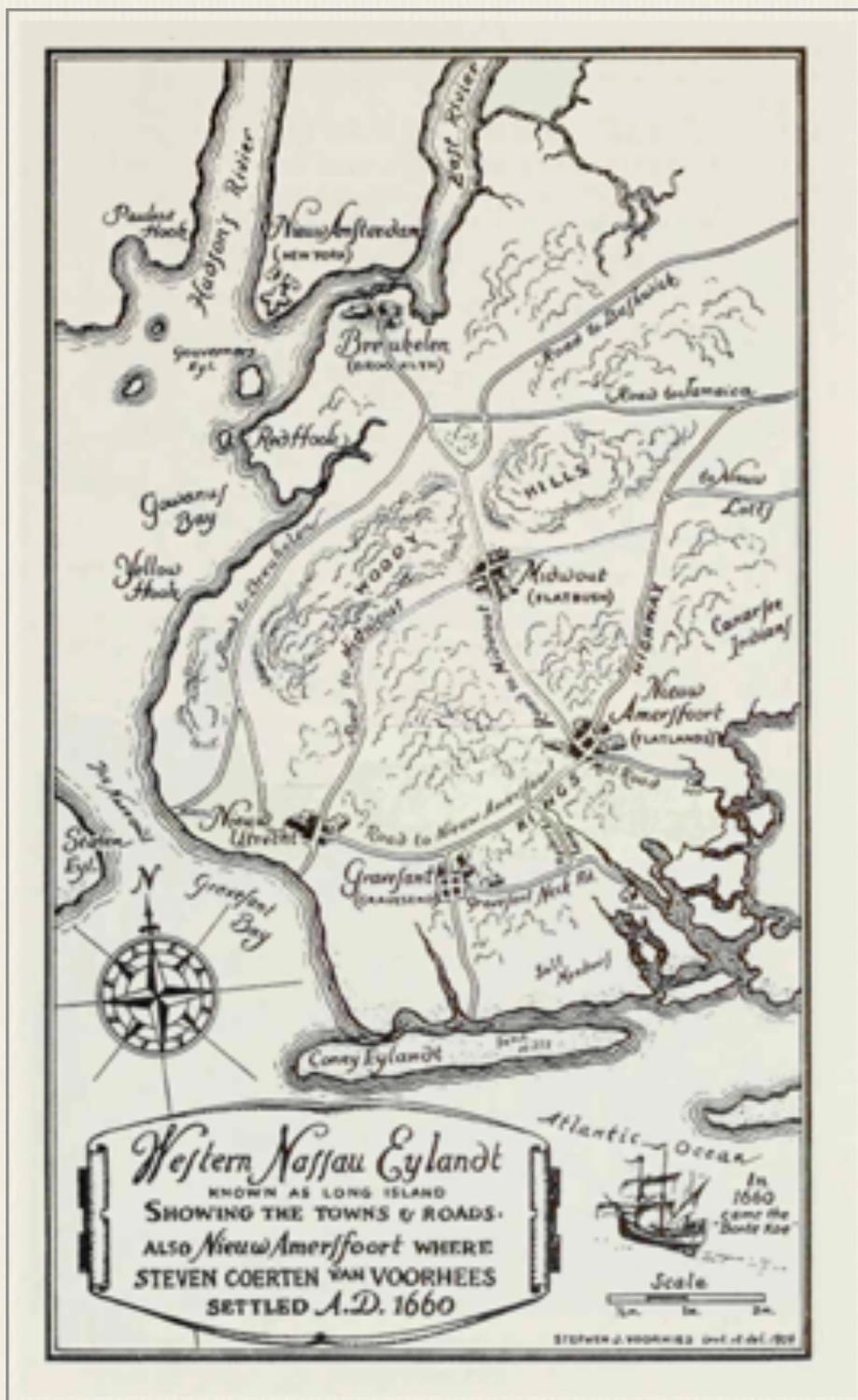


Fort Amsterdam on Manhattan Island

cult venture, especially for families with younger children. It is likely that the voyage ended in New Amsterdam sometime in mid June. In addition to the settlement on the island of Manhattan, the Dutch settled in western Long Island. Today's Brooklyn was named Breuckelen by the Dutch. Our family settled in Nieuw Amersfoort (later renamed Flatlands by the British). This area abuts Jamaica Bay.

Steven emigrated to the North American Dutch colony in 1660 at the age of 60. It seems difficult to comprehend why a sixty year-old would risk such a venture. In a 2008 paper author Manning W. Voorhees provides insight into possible reasons for the move. "Steven Coerts probably shared a motivation com-

The story on the last page is not an historical record, but it is a tale told within the framework of what is known about 17th century Dutch migration. The Spotted Cow sailed from Amsterdam 16 APR 1660. It is likely that the trip took between six to eight weeks, depending on weather and ocean conditions. Bringing a family to the New World was a diffi-



mon to most immigrants to the New World, namely 'better opportunity' for him and his family.”
[11.6] Although the Dutch embraced the reformers of the Protestant movement, civil and economic strife plagued Europe in the wake of the Reformation. The New World beckoned as a land unencumbered by the economic difficulties and hardships in Europe.

It is most likely that Steven Coerte van Voorhees and his family arrived at Fort Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan Island. The Dutch established a settlement here in 1624, intending to protect the Dutch West India Company's trade along the Hudson River. However, the Dutch colonies extended up the river and to the east on Long Island. The Canarsie tribe of the Algonquin Nation claimed the land on Long Island. In 1636 the aboriginal chief deeded the land known as Keskateuw to the Dutch; the plantations established here would be called Amersfoort, and later under English rule Flatlands. It was in this Dutch settlement on Long Island that Steven Coerte van Voorhees would establish his homestead.

Steven purchased Nov 29, 1660, *“from Cornelis Dirksen Hoagland, 9 morgens¹¹⁻⁵ of cornland, 7 morgens of woodland, 10 morgens of plain land, and 5 morgens of salt meadow in Flatlands, L.I. for 3,000 guilders, also the house and houseplot lying in the village of Amersfoort en Bergen (Flatlands), with the brewery and all the brewing apparatus, kettle-house and casks, with the appurtenances.... He and his wife Willempe Roelofse Sobering are listed as members of the Dutch Church of Flatlands in 1677 and 1683. Steven served as a Magistrate [of the town] in 1664....”* [11.7]

On 27 AUG 1664, just four years after the van Voorhees family emigrated to Nieuw Nederland, four English frigates sailed in the harbor at New Amsterdam and demanded the surrender of Fort Amsterdam. The English had a colonial presence on western Long Island, and contended that the discovery by Henry Hudson of the Great North River set precedence for British rule over the area claimed by the Dutch. Peter Stuyvesant ceded his city to the invaders. This incursion led to the short second Anglo-Dutch war and ended in full capitulation of the Dutch colony of Nieuw Nederland to the British. New Amsterdam was reincorporated under English law as New York City, named for the the Duke of York (who

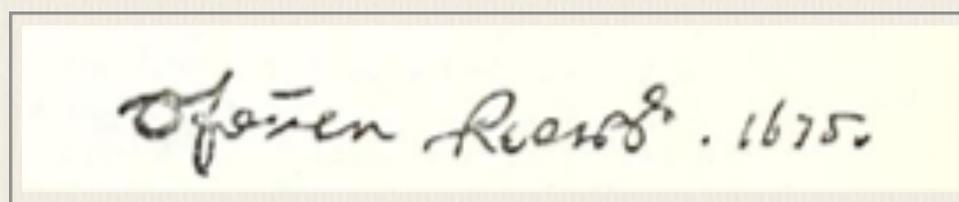
11-5 *1 morgen is about 2 acres*



would become King James II). On 4 OCT 1667 The English governor of the Province of New York Richard Nicholls granted a charter to Flatlands, thereby establishing its legal standing.

“Whereas there is a certain town situate in the west Riding of Yorkshire of Long Island, commonly known by the name Amersfoort al’s Flatlands, which is in the occupation of several freeholders and inhabitants who heretofore have been seated there by authority...I Richard Nicoll Esq. have granted and do grant unto Elbert Elberts (Stoothoff), Govert Lockermans, Roelof Martense (Schenck). Pieter Claes {Wyckoff), Wellem Gerrits (van Kouwenhoven), Tho. Hillebrauts, Stephen Coerten (Vorhees), and Coert Stephens (Vorhees), as Patentees for themselves and associates... and other parcel purchased of the native Indian proprietors...” [11.8]

Each of the patentees signed the document. Steven Coerts van Voorhees signature follows:

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in cursive script. The signature reads "Steven Coerts van Voorhees" followed by a date "1675". The text is written in dark ink on a light-colored background.

Governor Richard Nicholls who wrote in the articles of capitulation between himself and Stuyvesant included a statement that the Dutch might “enjoy the liberty of their consciences in divine worship and church discipline and *“retain their own customs concerning their inheritances”*. Each freeholder was to assent to this in an Oath of Allegiance to the British Crown. This document was signed in 1687 and included Coert Stephense van Voorhees, Albert Courten van Voorhees, Luycas Stephense van Voorhees, and Jan Stephense van Voorhees.¹¹⁻⁶

An early map of Flatlands is shown on the preceeding page [11.9]. The Voorhees properties are highlighted in yellow. No date is given on the map, and my assumption is that the designated lands are those of Stephen Coerte van Voorhees and son Coert Stephens van Voorhees. The land shown near the middle bottom

11-6 *Each of the signatories except Albert Courten van Voorhees had immigrated to New Netherlands in 1660. Steven Coerte is not on the list; he died in 1684 before the Oath of Allegiance.*

of the map is likely the property originally purchased but Stephen Coerte. It abuts the salt marsh which is described in the original purchase agreement.

Coert, son of Steven van Voorhees was an important member of the growing community of Flatlands. He was a deacon of the Dutch Church of Flatlands in 1677. The Dutch Reformed Church had three layers of leadership: Minister of the Word (the pastor), Elders (overseeing the affairs of the congregation) and Deacon.

“The office peculiar to the Deacons is diligently to collect alms and other contributions of charity, and after mutual counsel, to distribute the same faithfully and diligently to the poor, both to residents and to strangers, as their needs may require it; to visit and comfort those in distress, and to exercise care that the alms are not misused; of which they shall render an account in Consistory, and also (if anyone desires to be present) to the Congregation, at such a time as the Consistory may see fit.” [11.10]

Court Stevense served as Magistrate for the Flatlands Community in 1664 and 1673. The administration of justice in Colonial America was different from what we regard as the norm today. Magistrates had to be members of the Dutch Church. They were

“fully in charge of the colonial court proceedings. These early colonial justices firmly believed their main role was to enforce God's plan. Their aim was to force a confession from the accused and make them repent (apologize for) their sins. The goal was not necessarily punishment, but confession and bringing order back to the society. If a defendant requested a jury, he or she was viewed as disrespectful of the judge's authority. Many defendants favored not having a jury as they preferred to rely on the mercy of a judge who was often more interested in seeing that the accused give in to his authority than to provide justice.” [11.11]

| | | |
|--|---|--|
| Coert Alberts van Voorhees b. 1578 (Hees, NL); d. 1620 (Hees, Drenth NL) | + | Mergin Hendrikje b. 1580, (NL) |
| | ↓ | |
| Steven Coerte van Voorhees b. 1600 (Hees, Drenthe, NL) d. 16 FEB 1684 (Flatlands, Long Island, NY) | + | Aeltje Wessels b. abt 1605 in Ruinen, Drenthe, NL d. abt 1643 in Ruinen, Drenthe, NL |
| | ↓ | |
| Coerte Stevense van Voorhees b. 1637 (Hees, Drenthe, NL) d. 1702 (Flatlands, Long Island, NY) | + | Marretje Gerritse Van Couwenhoven b. 1644 (Flatlands, Long Island, NY) d. 1708 (Long Island NY) |
| | ↓ | |
| Cornelius Coerte van Voorhees b. 23 Jan 1678 (Flatlands, Long Island, NY) d. 23 Jun 1758 (Flatlands, Long Island, NY) | + | Altho Rapelje b. 26 MAR 1681 (Flatlands, Long Island) d. 1754 |
| | ↓ | |
| Daniel van Voorhees b. 17 Dec 1701 (Flatlands, Long Island, NY) d. 1769 (Oyster Bay) | + | Femmetje Jansen Bennet b. 24 Apr 1706 (Kings, NY) |
| | ↓ | |
| John Danielsen van Voorhees b. 23 JUN 1736 d. 6 Dec 1811 | + | Femmetje Bennet b. 18 MAR 1742 (Oyster Bay, Long Island, NY) |
| | ↓ | |
| Jeromus van Voorhis b. 14 SEP 1785 (NY) d. 1851 (b. East Norwich, NY) | + | Hannah Hendrickson b. 1789 in NY d. 22 MAY 1854 |
| | ↓ | |
| William van Voorhis b. abt 1819 (NY) d. 09 JUN 1859 | + | Elizabeth Hewlett b. abt 1819 (NY) d. 01 DEC 1865 |
| | ↓ | |
| Emma van Voorhis b. 22 Oct 1851 (NY) d. 3 Aug 1905 | + | George W. Robbins b. 18 Dec 1847 (NY) d. 17 Nov 1890 |

The descent of my family from Coert Albert van Voorhies (one of my 9th great-grandfathers) and his son Steven Coerte who emigrated to the Colony of New Netherlands in 1660. At the bottom of the chart is Emma van Voorhis who was the mother of my paternal grandmother Juliet Provoost Robbins.

From Flatlands to Oyster Bay

Daniel van Voorhis (great-grandson of Steven Coerte and my 5th great-grandfather) was born in Flatlands on Long Island 17 DEC 1701. It appears that Daniel's descendants began using the spelling Voorhis and Voorhies instead of Voorhees traditionally used by the descendants of Steven Coerte van Voorhees. Daniel married Femmetje Jansen Bennet. The first three of eight children were born in Flatlands. Sometime between 1735 and 1738, Daniel moved the family to Oyster Bay on the north shore of Long Island. Oyster Bay was originally settled by the Dutch. In early colonial America, it was the boundary between English and Dutch control. When Daniel moved to Oyster Bay it was under the jurisdiction of Great Britain. There were, however, many in the community claiming Dutch heritage. The Daniel van Voorhis family was a member of the Dutch Reformed Church of Oyster Bay. On 9 SEP 1732 a group of residents of Wolver Hollow, Cedar Swamp (now Greenvale), Eastwood (now Syosset) and Matinecock (now Locust Valley) met and committed to build a church for a Reformed Dutch Congregation. They authorized £6, New York money to purchase land for the church building. The building was completed in April 1734. Pledges to the building campaign were made by subscribing to seats in the sanctuary of the church. Daniel van Voorhis subscribed two seats—one men's and one women's seat for £2.5. The total contribution for the entire congregation was £165. [11.12]

| 21. ... | £ | s | MEN'S SEATS | WOMAN'S SEATS | NO. OF BENCH | | NO. OF ROW AND PLACE IN ROW | |
|-----------------------|-----|---|-------------|---------------|--------------|---------|-----------------------------|---------|
| | | | | | MEN'S | WOMAN'S | | |
| Vanvores Abraham..... | 2 | 5 | 4 | 4 | 13, | | No. 5-2 | |
| Vanvores Willem..... | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 6, | | No. 8-8 | |
| Voorhis Daniel..... | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 3, | | No. 2-8 | |
| Walters Willem..... | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 9, | | No. 9-5 | |
| Woertman Jan..... | 3 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 9, | | No. 5-2 | |
| Willse Martien..... | 2 | 5 | 1 | 1 | 8, | | No. 6-8 | No. 8-3 |
| | | | | | 4, | | No. 3-3 | |
| Total..... | 163 | | 75 | 70 | | | | |

Daniel van Voorhis' Subscription of seats at the Dutch Reformed Church, Wolver Hollow (Oyster Bay)

This is the period of time in the run-up to the American Revolution. Before Daniel died in 1769 the British had enacted taxes¹¹⁻⁷ against which the colonists protested. In May 1765 Patrick Henry gave his fiery speech blasting the Stamp Act, using the now famous words which ended “Give me liberty, or give me death!”

During the American Revolution most Dutch residents sided with the patriots. There was no love lost between the Dutch and British. The first Anglo Dutch War (1652-54) was precipitated by the British over trade disputes. The Dutch had gained a significant advantage over the British in mercantile trade. The British attacked Dutch merchant ships attempting to gain greater control over trade. New tension arose between Britain and the Netherlands which centered on trade with Africa, but tension quickly escalated when four men-of-war appeared in the harbor off Fort Amsterdam at the tip of Manhattan. For ten days Peter Stuyvesant tried to hold his colony, but eventually took down the Dutch flag over the fort and flew a white flag of surrender. The Van Voorhees Association maintains a list of the descendants of Steven Coerte who served in the American Revolution [11.13]

It is likely¹¹⁻⁸ that several members of the Daniel van Voorhies family served in the Revolution. A story of one Captain Daniel¹¹⁻⁹ van Voorhis (son of Daniel and brother of our direct ancestor John Danielsen van Voorhis has been preserved.

Captain Daniel van Voorhis “was a seafaring man, following navigation most of his life ; he was master of several merchant ships of which he was part owner. During the revolution he was taken prisoner three different times by the British, and each time suffering a total loss of his vessel. During an engagement one time a stanchion of the vessel against which he

11-7 1764 The Sugar Act, 1765 The Stamp Act, and 1767 Townshend Acts

11-8 There are so many similar given names to those in our direct line and little documentation regarding birth dates and other identifying information. For this reason, it is difficult to assert if those listed are sons of Daniel van Voorhis.

11-9 Captain Daniel is my 5th great uncle. At the age of fifty-two this Captain Daniel van Voorhis moved his family into the Delaware River community of Rancocas Creek, New Jersey. This is the area in which Henry Jacobs Falkenburg lived while he negotiated land deals for the Quaker Commissioners with the Lenape Indians, nearly a century earlier. Daniel moved his family into the wilderness of Western Pennsylvania and purchased land on Pigeon Creek near the Monongahela River. Here his descendants lived continuously for nearly one hundred fifty years.

was leaning was carried away by a cannon ball. With two other captains as prisoners, he was taken to some Spanish island for safe keeping, from the dangers of which they escaped only to be recaptured.” [11.14]

Four generations of our branch of the van Voorhis family lived in Oyster Bay: Daniel, John Danielsen, Jeromus (Buried at Methodist Church Cemetery, East Norwich), and William. It was William who moved his family back to Brooklyn. William van Voorhis was my 2nd great-grandfather—my grandmother’s grandfather. He was the son of Jeromus van Voorhees, and grandson of Daniel. The following citation is from the Dutch Genealogy in the Documentary History of the Dutch Congregation of Oyster Bay. [11.16] This record indicates that William Henry, son

WILLIAM VOORHIS, son of Jeromus and Hannah Hendrickson, d. June 9, 1859; m. Elizabeth Hewlitt, d. Dec. 1, 1865.
Lived at 31 Fleet St., Bn.

Issue:

Hannah Elizabeth.

Emma.

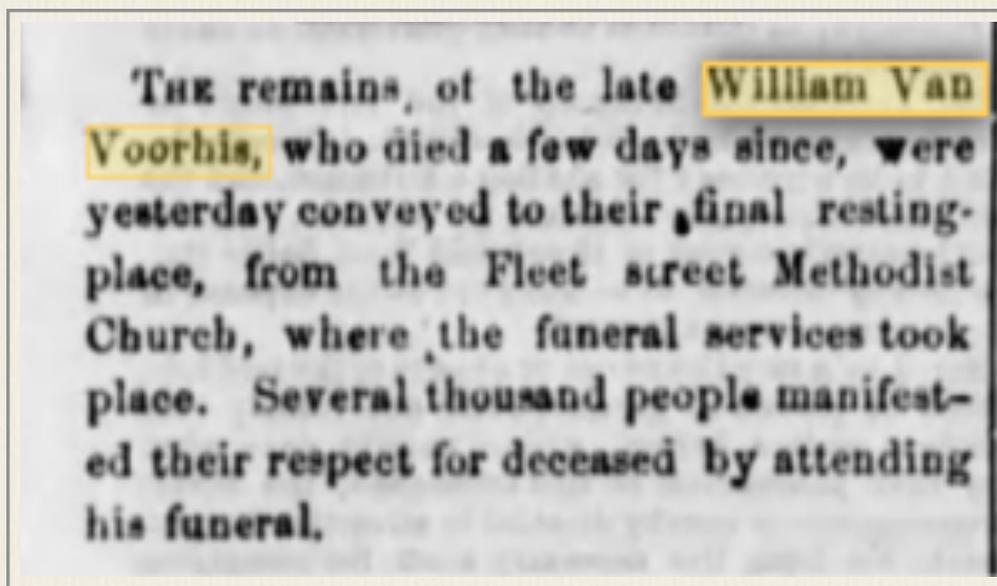
William Henry, died in the army during the Civil War.

of William and Elizabeth died in the army during the Civil War. I do not believe that this is correct. Records show that 28 SEP 1861 (age 20) William Henry enlisted as a private in the 87th infantry. About ten months later, William Henry was admitted to the hospital at Fort Wood, Beadloe’s Island 7 JUL 1862 and furloughed 8 JUL 1862. William Henry executed a will on 13 DEC 1880 leaving his estate to his wife Melinda. The will was probated 9 MAR 1881. It may be that ultimately William Henry died from wounds he had suffered in battle, but when he died, he was not in the army. I remember my grandmother telling us about reading letters written by her uncle during the War Between the States. The only detail I recall was that she and her sister cried when they read the letters. I am sure that she was talking about her uncle William Henry van Voorhis.

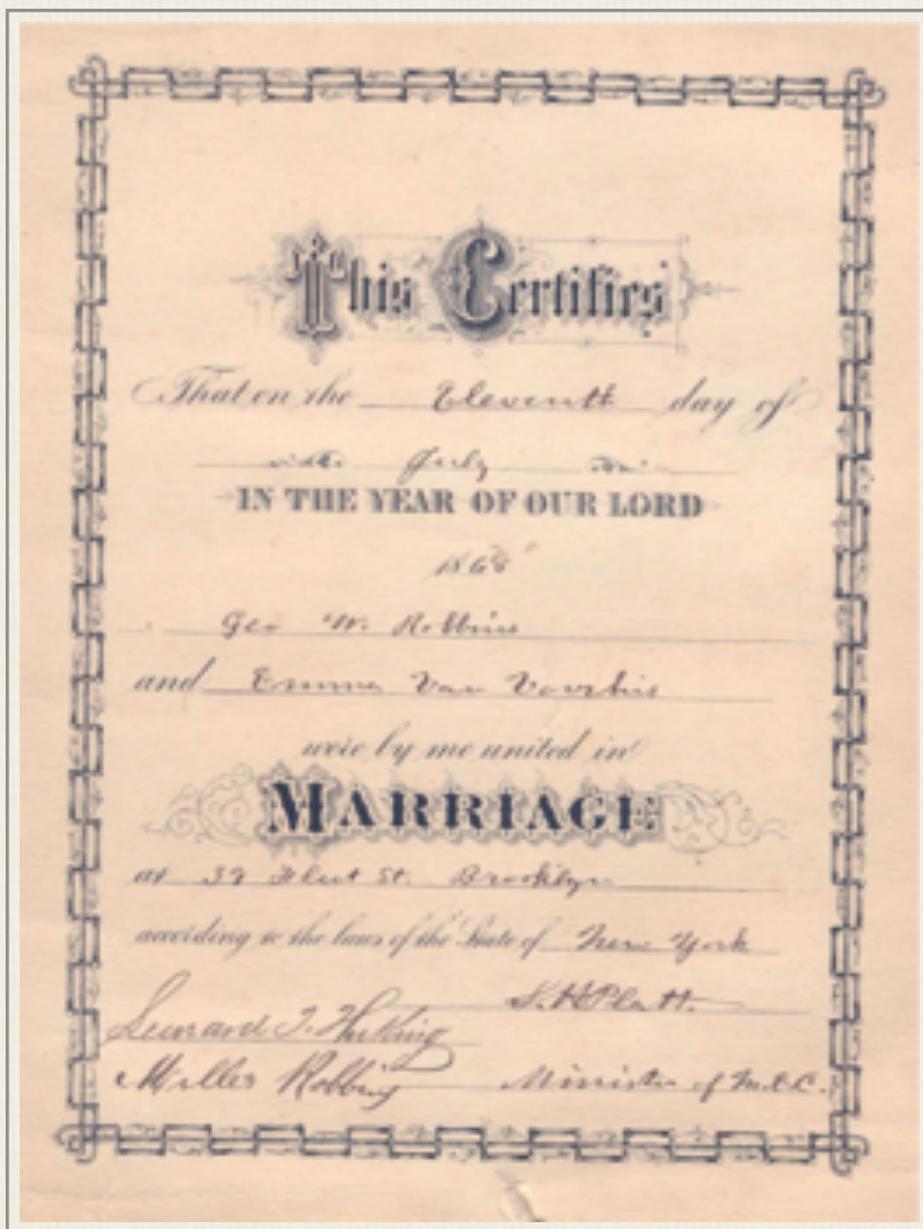
William van Voorhis appears in the 1850 United States Federal Census Brooklyn, Ward 4. Household members include wife Elizabeth (Hewlett) van Voorhis, seven year old son William Henry, and daughter Hannah Elizabeth (three years of age). My great-grandmother Emma does not appear, as she was born in 1851.

William van Voorhis was listed in the 1850 census as a mason. In the 1858 Brooklyn City Directory, William van Voorhis is listed as a builder residing at 10 Debevoise St.

William van Voorhis died at the age of 41. His wife Elizabeth was left to care for three children—eldest son William Henry (16), Hannah (12) and my great-grandmother Emma (8). The obituary in the Brooklyn Evening Star [11.15] indicates that the funeral was held at the Fleet Street Methodist Church.



Obituary William van Voorhis from the Brooklyn Evening Star.



The Fleet Street Methodist Church listed in the obituary for William van Voorhis is the congregation of which Miller Robbins was a founding member. Miller was the father of George Washington Robbins who would eventually marry Emma van Voorhis, daughter of William and Elizabeth. From this piece of information I believe that it is likely that the van Voorhis and Robbins families knew each other, perhaps through a connection at the Fleet Street Church, through business, or some other connection. At the left is the marriage certificate of

Emma van Voorhis (daughter of William and Elizabeth) and George Washington Robbins. The wedding took place at the Fleet Street Methodist Church on 11 MAR 1868. At the time, Emma was approaching her 17th birthday.

My grandmother Juliet Robbins left me the walking stick used by her grandfather William. The sterling silver grip is engraved: Presented to Wm van Voorhis from the Mechanics in his Employ. We believe that William was a skilled mason who later formed a construction company. This was likely presented to him by those who worked for him.



Walking stick owned by William van Voorhis

Story Behind the Story

When I began writing this chapter, I had little information regarding this branch of my family tree. I knew that my grandmother's mother was of Dutch lineage—a fact of which she was proud. I was fascinated by the walking stick (pictured on the last page) and wondered if I could learn more about William van Voorhis. The George Washington Robbins Bible revealed some family history. I was excited to find that the original marriage certificate for Emma and George was stuck into that family bible, along with dried remnants of flowers, likely part of the wedding bouquet.

I began to try to find more about the van Voorhis family and discovered the website for the van Voorhees Association. The Association has been very active over the years documenting the history of the family. It was through this website that I learned about the origin of the family from province of Drenthe, Netherlands. I learned that there are many variations in the spelling of the family name and that my family tree descends from Steven Coerte who emigrated to Nieuw Nederland in 1660. This is yet another branch of the family with deep roots in colonial America. The van Voorhees family claims to be the largest Dutch family in the United States. Much of the history of our family is attributed to Elias William van Voorhis who published his comprehensive genealogy in 1888. Through a series of publications, the van Voorhees Association has built on this work and published several volumes which further document the family.

I was having difficulty in making the connection between my 2nd great-grandfather William and the documented van Voorhis/Voorhees genealogies. I found a William van Voorhis who was the son of Jeromus van Voorhis of Oyster Bay. Just knowing the first name in a large family in which many generations use the same first names did not convince me that I had made the connection. I knew that William was from Brooklyn and figured that his family line had remained in the same general area since Steven Coerte settled in Flatlands. In one of my Google searches I came across “A Documentary History of the Dutch Congregation of Oyster Bay.” In addition to a description of the congregation at Wolver Hollow (Oyster Bay), there was a section entitled Dutch Genealogy. Here I found Wil-

liam, Jeromus, John Danielson, and Daniel van Voorhees/Voorhis. This made the connection to Elias W. van Voorhis' genealogy. Interestingly, I found that it was Daniel (great-grandfather of William) who left Flatlands and moved to Oyster Bay. The Documentary History cited earlier showed that he was one of the founding members of the Dutch Church, showing his subscription to the church building campaign at Wolver Hollow.

References Chapter 11

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