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Archaeological Excavations at Van Cortlandt Park,
The Bronx, 1990-1992

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Nestled in the southern half of the park which bears its name, the Georgian-style mansion of the Van Cortlandt family gazes south towards the Spuyten Duyvil and Manhattan. Here, in three summer excavation campaigns between 1990 and 1992, 79 students under the guidance of two faculty members from Brooklyn College uncovered new information about the lives of this eminent New York family. Forty-three trenches of various sizes were opened, and over 15,000 artifacts were collected, washed, catalogued, and analyzed in at least a precursory fashion. Among these finds are over 2,500 complete or reconstructible bottles and plates, as well as a broad spectrum of other remains. The following is a short report detailing preliminary results of these excavations and the ensuing analyses, as well as a concise history of the house and its grounds.

The Van Cortlandt mansion was built by Frederick Van Cortlandt beginning around 1748 as the main house for the large wheat farm that was his family business (Mursberger 1990b). Its location on the Albany Post Road (as Broadway was then known) made it possible for the occupants to enjoy the benefits of their rural farmstead while still maintaining close ties to the city and its urban life. Despite two periods of remodeling--first in the late 18th century and then in the early 20th century (Herman 1994)--the house appears at casual inspection to stand almost as it did two centuries ago.

The immediate impression of an unchanged and unchanging 18th century house is misleading, however. There is a world of difference between a well-kept house museum (its present use) and the living nerve center of a farming and industrial complex. At one time, the mansion was the hub of a small community which included mills, forges, workers, animals, and a place for civic and social activities of all kinds. A primary goal of the excavations was to see what archaeology could reveal about these facets of the mansion's past.

Felicitously, the fieldwork served both the educational mission of Brooklyn College and the public mission of the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation. Students in the Brooklyn College Summer Archaeological Field School learned correct excavation techniques and gained first-hand field experience on an important historic site. The Department of Parks and Recreation obtained more information about one of the historic structures in its charge, as well as inexpensive archaeological monitoring of sensitive areas adjacent to the mansion where subsurface work was planned or in progress. The project was thus a cooperative venture between two New York City institutions that met both their needs at almost no cost to taxpayers. This partnership was successful at many levels and has continued over the years.¹

BACKGROUND HISTORY

The 17th Century

From the late Woodland Period (ca. A.D. 1000) onwards, Native Americans used several sections of the land on which Van Cortlandt Park now stands, as shown by excavations in the late 1890s conducted by J. B. James (Ultan 1983). During the second half of the 17th century, large tracts in lower Westchester were acquired by the Dutch. In 1646, Adrian Van der Donck bought a 16-mile spread of land from the Weckquaskeck family of the Mohegan tribe of the Algonquin nation. The complete Van der Donck holdings covered what would later become most of the Bronx and Yonkers, and a small part would eventually become the territory of the park.²

After Van der Donck's death in 1655, his property underwent several subdivisions (cf. Scharf 1886; Mursberger 1990a). In July of 1668, George Tibbitt (or Tibbett) and William Betts bought a large portion, and by the end of the 1670s, the remaining tracts of Van der Donck land were owned by Frederick Philipse (Mursberger 1990a).

From 1638, when the Van Cortlandt family arrived in the New World, its members were prominent in the affairs of New Amsterdam/New York. Oloff Stevense Van Cortlandt was the first to settle in New Netherland. By 1674, he was the third richest man in the colony and was living on Brouwer Straat (Street) (Wilson 1893, Vol. I). In 1691, Oloff's son, Jacobus (1658-1739), returned to New York from the West Indies, where he had been managing the family's shipping business. He married Eva Philipse (Hoff 1993), who over the next nine years gave birth to five children. Four years later, in 1694, Jacobus bought his first plot of land in what would later become Van Cortlandt Park (Herrick 1992).

The 18th Century

In the early 18th century, Jacobus began his civic service to the city of New York. He was elected mayor for a two-year term in 1710, and again in 1719. In this, Jacobus succeeded his older brother, Stephanus Van Cortlandt, who in 1677 had become the first native-born mayor of New York (Wilson 1893, Vol. II).³ Other members of the family would later also serve in civic capacities (Butler 1978). Like his father, Jacobus was a merchant. As the bulk of the family fortune was in shipping, a trade then in decline, the family began to develop farming, brewing, and farm-related work--especially milling--(Mursberger 1990a). By 1732, Jacobus had systematically purchased all the original lands of Van der Donck in the Bronx and parts of Westchester. Around the turn of the 18th century, a mill dam was constructed across Tibbetts Brook. The water power thus produced turned the wheels of various mills (Ferris 1897; Bolton 1881; Ultan 1983). When Jacobus died in 1739, he was buried in the family plot on a hill northeast of Tibbetts Brook in present-day Van Cortlandt Park and later known as Vault Hill (Ultan 1983).

Jacobus's son Frederick, who inherited his lands upon his passing, began to build "a large stone dwelling house on the plantation" on which he lived in 1748 (Mursberger 1990a). This is the house that still stands in Van Cortlandt Park, east of Broadway at about 254th Street. Frederick died in 1749, before his mansion was completed, and his son, James, took control of the property (Mursberger 1990b). After James died without children in 1781, the house and lands passed to his brother Augustus (1728-1823), who moved his family there when the Revolutionary War ended (Herrick 1992; Mursberger 1990a, 1990b).

During the War, the Van Cortlandt house was an important locus of action. In the battle for New York, Augustus, who was then City Clerk, was ordered to hide all the city's records from the British attackers. The records were stashed in his backyard in Manhattan until 1776, and soon thereafter they were moved to the family's burial plot on Vault Hill (Herrick 1992). In 1776, Colonel Bernardus Swartwout used the family grounds to house troops. In October of that year, George Washington used the mansion as a headquarters prior to the Battle of White Plains (Herrick 1992; Judd 1976).

Only one battle was fought in Van Cortlandt Park. On August 31, 1778, some Stockbridge Indians (fighting on the side of the rebel Americans) encountered combined British, Hessian, and Tory troops. The Native Americans were ambushed, and 37 were killed, including the chief, Abraham Ninham. The bodies were buried in the area of the park that would become known as Indian Field (Zaboly 1977; Ultan 1983).

After the fall of New York, the Van Cortlandt mansion became headquarters for General Howe and remained close to or behind British lines for the duration of the War. Even with the British in control of New York, most of the Van Cortlandts still remained at the house. General Washington once again used the house on his way back to New York in 1783 (Herrick 1992).

The 19th Century

After Augustus's death in 1823 at the age of 95, the property came into the possession of his grandson, Augustus White, with the stipulation that, henceforth, all who inherited the mansion would take the Van Cortlandt name. In 1839, at the death of Augustus Van Cortlandt White, the house went to Henry, his brother, who died six months later. The estate then went to Augustus Van Cortlandt Bibby (1825-1850), nephew of Augustus Van Cortlandt White. Under Bibby's ownership, the house was renovated, and much of the nearby land was intensively farmed (Mursberger 1990a).

With the growth of New York, the city needed more fresh water and more efficient transport for people and goods. A new aqueduct, part of the Croton system, was opened along the northern ridge of today's Van Cortlandt Park on July 4, 1842, and, with improvements, it remained in use until 1897 (Smith 1938; Ultan 1983). By 1879, the New York and Boston Railroad Company ran lines through a section of the Van Cortlandt lands just north of the lake to gain access to Albany and New England. Beset by monetary difficulties, these railways had a succession of owners and users. Although a "flag stop" station was built in the northern end of the park near the Mosholu in 1888, for the most part the lines running through the park were rarely used (Gallo & Kramer 1981; Ultan 1983).

In 1874, the southernmost part of Westchester west of the Bronx River--which contained the Van Cortlandt land--was annexed to New York City. Fifteen years later, the remaining members of the Van Cortlandt family line deeded the house and remaining properties to the city of New York. It is possible that at least one member of the family resided in the house after the sale to the city (Elizabeth Leckie, personal communication 1994). Thus ended 140 years of Van Cortlandt life in lower Westchester.

Between 1889 and 1896, the house and grounds were used by the New York Police Department and the National Guard. At one point, a large herd of bison was kept there before being transferred to the Bronx Zoo. In 1896, the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York entered into an agreement with the city to operate Van Cortlandt House as a public museum. The house was opened to the public a year later (Herrick 1992; Mursberger 1990a).

The 20th Century

Within the past century, extensive renovation and restoration has been accomplished in several phases at the Van Cortlandt mansion. The Caretaker's Cottage was a wing added onto the north of the original ell (thus forming the house's current C-shaped structure) between 1913 and 1917. At the same time, Norman Isham, a Colonial Revival architect, renovated the interior portions of the house museum. The fireplaces (reduced in the 19th century because of the addition of stoves) were enlarged to recreate their original size. Interior shutters were added to the rooms. The radiators were offset into the window niches and covered over by window seats. Paneling was added to certain parts of the house (Herrick 1992). The Caretaker's Cottage and some of the hidden infrastructure of the house were modernized in the 1960s (Herman 1994), and in 1988, the East and West Parlors were restored to their original paint colors (Herrick 1992). Renovations and repairs are still continuing today, while replacement of portions of the roof is planned for the near future.

Like many 18th century rural houses, the structure is a center-passage dwelling. It contains two living floors and a basement. Brick chimney stacks with exposed backs are visible, closely resembling the architectural tradition of the Hudson Valley. The incorporation of multiple chimney stacks, an unusual feature, ensured that most of the house was heated. The fieldstone construction, with brick around the windows, is also distinctive.

Three rooms for formal entertaining are situated on the first floor of the house, an arrangement typical of rural architecture of the time. In an urban household, rooms for entertaining would have been situated on the second floor (Herman 1994). In other details, the house built by the Van Cortlandts differed from a simple rural farmhouse. It was more imposing, with three full stories. There was a service wing so that all labor would be "hidden" from

visitors. Although the location of the original kitchen has yet to be determined (Herrick 1992), by the 19th century, it was in the basement under the main section of the first floor, similarly hidden from visitors.

THE EXCAVATIONS

The archaeological excavations at the Van Cortlandt mansion were spread over three field seasons and investigated many areas of the grounds (Map 1). Preliminary reports on the first two season's excavations have been previously distributed (Bankoff & Winter 1992). For clarity, the following description will combine the results of all three seasons and present the findings by area, beginning with the trenches to the east of the house.

The East Lawn

In 1990, digging began in the lawn to the east of the house. The first five trenches were positioned to investigate an area that had been partially disturbed by the construction of a sewer line in 1985. At that time, local newspapers carried a story reporting that the sewer installation had disturbed archaeological deposits and building foundations. The initial trenches of 1990 revealed no foundations or architectural remnants, however. Only scattered pottery fragments and other artifacts from the 18th through 20th centuries were recovered.

The Daily News (1990) reported that one of the five trenches had come down upon a prehistoric dog burial. In fact, the dog bones found in the trench represented only a partial skeleton and were found in association with 19th century Euro-American pottery, thus precluding the possibility of the remains belonging to a pre-colonial Native American dog burial.

In 1991, two more 2x2 m. (6½x6½ ft) trenches were excavated to the east of the house, considerably beyond the group of five trenches excavated in 1990. One, positioned just within the east perimeter fence of the grounds, revealed traces of a gravel pathway that would have linked the house to its pond and mill farther to the east.

The East Field

The East Field lies east of the current perimeter fence, between a late 19th century field house and the now abandoned railway line, beyond which is the 17th century Tibbitt family burial plot and Van Cortlandt Lake. The area was investigated in 1992 with four 2x2 m. (6½x6½ ft) trenches and 36 auger tests, all excavated to sterile soil--the natural underlying base. The trenches were located so as to sample areas of differing elevation and varied ground cover. Sterile soil was reached approximately 30 cm. (1 ft) below the modern ground surface. No archaeologically significant features were encountered in any trench. Evidence of prior occupation included meager amounts of flint debris (waste flakes possibly from stone tool manufacture) and sparse historic materials found as disturbed and scattered trash throughout the surface layer.

The auger tests were arranged in two lines at five meter intervals running east to west along the southern edge of the field. A power auger was used to produce holes approximately 45 cm. (18 in.) in diameter.⁴ Only one test encountered cultural deposits. It produced darker soil and chunks of asphalt which can be interpreted as traces of an old path that might have run parallel to the rail line.

The East Field was scheduled for development as a tennis facility by the Department of Parks. The excavations and auger tests were undertaken here primarily to aid the Parks Department in making an informed judgment about a site slated for development. No remains were encountered that would preclude construction in this area.

South of the House

Excavations on the south lawn in 1990 and 1991 were conducted for research as well as more practical reasons. Not only was the ground sinking around the site of an old cesspool which would need replacement by a more modern system, but sewer construction in 1910 had exposed what was then thought to be old foundations on the very spot. Possibly, these foundations belonged to a structure predating the Van Cortlandt house, built perhaps by Van der Donck or Tibbett.

The southeastern corner of an unmortared fieldstone foundation was indeed uncovered in 1990 at the bottom of a 2x2 m. (6½x6½ ft) trench, approximately 2¼ m. (7¼ ft) below the ground surface (Plate 1). Due to the prior disturbance, however, no intact 17th or 18th century layers were found.

In 1991, a 5x5 m. (16½x16½ ft) trench was dug which incorporated the area of the 1990 trench. The foundations were again exposed, this time more extensively, and revealed three dry-laid courses of fieldstones rising approximately 45 cm. (18 in.) high and buried in a sandy fill containing only limited amounts of archaeological material. No undisturbed deposits contemporary with the construction of the foundation were found, and it appears likely that the 1910 sewer excavation removed most of the associated sediments from this buried structure. Whatever artifacts were found at that time were not saved for scholarly use.

Several small stem fragments from kaolin tobacco pipes were recovered, however. The diameter of the borehole in the stem has been used by archaeologists to obtain approximate dates for the pipes, since previous research has shown a progressive decrease in size from the 1600s until the early 19th century. Borehole dating suggests that the pipestems were produced in the 17th to early 18th century.

In May 1991, an electrical resistivity survey of the area was conducted with the help of Dr. Allan S. Gilbert of the Department of Sociology & Anthropology at Fordham University.⁵ The resistivity tests suggested that the sand fill extended downward to about 4 m. (13 ft), although they did not distinguish more of the foundation wall from its surrounding sandy fill.

The House Foundations

To investigate the foundations of the Van Cortlandt house prior to a proposed installation of a new drainage system, three trenches were excavated around the perimeter of the 1748 structure. All trenches encountered late 19th to early 20th century ceramic drain pipes and other modern intrusions, some of which extended into the sterile soil below (Plate 2).

The trenches revealed that the character of the foundation supporting the east facade differs at its northern and southern corners. The foundation protruded farther and was constructed of larger stones on the northern end. This finding may be an indication that the north wing of the house was a somewhat later addition, possibly added after Frederick Van Cortlandt's death. Other architectural details, such as the treatment of the roof, seem to argue for a unified construction program. A paint and mortar analysis of the cellar is needed to settle this point (Herman 1994).

No foundation trenches were found in the excavations, indicating that the basement walls of the house were constructed from inside the house pit and were pushed outward, flush to the dirt face of the hole. Based upon these results, it appeared that the proposed drainage project, if carefully monitored, would probably not destroy undisturbed archaeological contexts.

The Herb Garden

Between the south wing of 1748 and the modern Caretaker's Cottage wing to the north, an herb garden was created in the 20th century. The garden was investigated during each field season since it was originally the area behind the house where kitchen refuse might have been thrown. For at least part of the 19th century, there was a lean-to shed against the northern wall of the south wing (Harpers Weekly 1884:665). The shed might have served as an auxiliary kitchen, and if so, archaeological finds from the garden may

eventually provide some insight into the diet of earlier Van Cortlandts.

In order to minimize damage, trenches were situated within the open planting areas between the ornamental brick pathways of the herb garden layout. Household refuse from the 18th and 19th centuries was indeed recovered within one of these trenches, in addition to a stone foundation that must mark the position of the former lean-to wall--approximately 3.75 m. (12 ft) from the north wall of the south wing (Plate 3).

Herb garden deposits were substantially disturbed during the construction of the Caretaker's Cottage wing in 1917. However, two trenches at the northern end of the herb garden contained cultural deposits that continued downward to a depth of 3.5 m. (11½ ft). The artifactual material consisted of bricks and pottery, apparently dumped into a large empty opening such as a well, large cistern, or foundation pit. The pottery was from the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

Because excavations were restricted to the planting zones only, which resulted in trenches that were less than 1.5 m. (5 ft) wide, safety considerations made it impossible to dig to the bottom of this deposit. Expansion of the excavation would have necessitated an unacceptable amount of damage to the herb garden walks, and therefore the nature of the buried debris remains unexplained. The trenches in the herb garden and along the road flanking it to the west indicate that this buried feature did not exceed an area of approximately 4x4 m. (13x13 ft). Its overall shape and total depth are still undetermined.

The layers of sediment discovered within the herb garden trenches suggest that, at the time of initial construction in 1748, there was a considerable slope up to the house on the north and west. The change in topography brought about by filling and leveling during the two-and-a-half centuries since the house's construction was confirmed by other trenches to the north of the Caretaker's Cottage wing and in the baseball field. Thus, in the days of the Van Cortlandts, the house probably stood on a knoll looking out and down on the family's holdings to the north, south, and west.

West of the House

Trenches excavated in this area were intended to investigate the line of a previous roadway that ran east to west, passing directly in front of (to the south of) the 1748 south wing. This road connected the house with Broadway, approximately 250 m. (800 feet) to the west. Hard-packed earth and macademized road surface were found along the line of the roadway, which is indicated today by flanking rows of trees.

Trenches were also placed farther west to learn something about the natural stratigraphy of the land on that side. It was not anticipated that significant archaeological remains would be discovered, but serendipitously, this location proved to be the site of a Native American shell pit (Plate 4) reminiscent of ones described in late 19th century excavations within Van Cortlandt Park (Bolton 1972). The fill of the pit consisted mainly of oyster shells accompanied by a few clam shells and a very limited quantity of ash. No pottery was present, but some quartz projectile point fragments as well as flakes of quartz and flint from tool making were recovered. The pit appears to date to the Late Woodland period (ca. A.D. 1000 to 1600).

North of the Caretaker's Cottage: Parade Ground and Playing Field

The Caretaker's Cottage wing abuts onto the north wing of the original house. Excavations were conducted to the north of the cottage in the expectation that intact deposits dating to periods prior to its construction might be found. A drawing in Harpers Weekly (1884:666) indicated that there was a frame out-building approximately 10 m. (32½ ft) north of the house. The spot is today occupied by a monumental statue. One 2x2 m. (6½x6½ ft) trench was positioned to the east of the statue, while a cluster of four trenches totaling 16 sq. m. (170 sq. ft) of coverage was excavated to its west. All

trenches in this area bear witness to the extensive landfilling concurrent with the construction of the Caretaker's Cottage. These fill deposits extended more than a meter (39 in.) below the modern ground surface. Remains that had lain to the north of the original house and were disturbed in the course of building the cottage were eventually dumped farther to the north. No evidence could be found of either the 1884 out-building or other features which could be dated prior to the cottage.

The area around the statue revealed two buried finds that reflect upon the later history of house renovation. To the west of the statue, a ceramic water pipe 20 cm. (8 in.) in diameter was encountered approximately 1.25 m. (4 ft) below the modern ground surface. This was apparently part of the early 20th century sewer system for the cottage.

About 2 m. (6½ ft) farther to the west, and extending into the three neighboring trenches, a rubble paving was exposed about 20 cm. (8 in.) below the surface. Consisted of a single course of rough cobbles, the paving was at least 3 m. (10 ft) wide and may have been part of an early 20th century barn forecourt or carriage turnaround. In order to determine whether the cobbled paving continued under and beyond the modern road, a 4x1 m. (13x3¼ ft) trench was opened in the playing field on the other (north) side of the road. No extension of the paving was found in this trench, although some 20th century construction debris appeared. Topsoil was unusually deep here, extending nearly a meter (39 in.) below the ground surface. This is another reminder of the extensive filling and leveling operations that were carried out on this field in the late 19th century, when the Van Cortlandt farm was transformed into a public parade ground and park.

The Barn Area

In 1990 and 1991, excavations were conducted at a site where 19th century illustrations indicated that a large barn once stood. The location appeared to be just at the south edge of the Van Cortlandt Park baseball field, and in 1990, elements of a fieldstone wall or foundation had been discovered there in the course of laying an electrical conduit.

Although no walls or foundations of such a barn were found, excavation did reveal two subterranean stone structures, each approximately 1.75 m. (5½ ft) square and 3 m. (10 ft) deep (Plates 5 & 6). Built of dry-stone walling, possibly with wooden floors laid over a bed of sand, the stone shafts had been filled with a mixture of rock rubble and earth, including an assemblage of largely intact bottles, plates, and other artifacts. There is still no conclusive explanation of the use these stone structures served. Comparison to similar constructions at related and contemporaneous historic houses, such as Washington Irving's home at Sunnyside in Irvington, New York, suggests that they might have been root cellars. Midwestern parallels hint that they might have functioned as underground silage pits.

Artifacts retrieved from the two stone chambers included ceramic dinnerware of various types, chamber pots, crocks, unguent containers, bottles for medicine and other substances, glass syringes, the decayed remains of a number of pairs of high-heeled shoes, kaolin smoking pipes, cutlery, toothbrushes, and an upper plate from a set of vulcanite and porcelain false teeth. The artifacts--which, except for a few earlier pieces, date exclusively from the 19th century--appear to have been introduced into the stone shafts in a single, late 19th century dumping. The filling episode seems likely to have been associated with the mansion's transition from private to public ownership in 1889.

Ceramics include both Chinese porcelain and British and American earthenwares. The Chinese porcelain is found in both Nanking and Canton styles (Plate 7), and the pattern is the popular "Willow" motif (illustrated in Howard 1984; Mudge 1986).⁶ Dates for such ceramics range from the 1790s to the mid-1850s (Noël Hume 1969). Recovered shapes comprise soup bowls, dinner plates, cups, and serving platters. Although imported from China, these dishes were very popular and abundant in New York at the time (Howard 1984;

Lee 1984; Salwen & Yamin 1990).

Five exceptional pieces of "tree style" pattern with gold leaf around the rim were also unearthed. These are some of the oldest pieces in the assemblage, dating from the early 1730s until the late 1750s (Mudge 1986). A metal staple was used to repair one that had split in half, possibly attesting to either the plate's cost or its sentimental value. These plates were probably over a century old when they were discarded within the stone shafts.

Various types of British and American earthenware turned up in the assemblage. Varieties of English blue transfer-printed wares in the "Willow" style (Noël Hume 1969; Godden 1992; Coysh & Henrywood 1982, 1989) were represented by flat plates, bowls, serving dishes, and pitchers (Plate 8). Again, these wares are commonly recovered on 19th century sites (Noël Hume 1969; Salwen & Yamin 1990).

Teapots and cups, a symbol of wealth and higher social rank during the 19th century (Miller 1994; Shackel 1993), are not common items on every historic site, but, as might be expected, the assemblage from the Van Cortlandt's stone boxes included three teapots and several kinds of cup.

Other New York sites provide confirmation that social class plays a significant role in shaping the composition of a ceramic assemblage. In Greenwich Village, porcelain and earthenwares similar to those found at the Van Cortlandt mansion, including many transfer-printed wares, were uncovered from a 19th century domestic site belonging to a physician (Salwen & Yamin 1990). In contrast, a nearby tenement site produced an assemblage comprising common plates and other food storage vessels with little porcelain and fewer tea-related items (Geismar, et al. 1989).

Pearlware, creamware, and ironstone (the latter also called white granite and china white) wash basins and chamber pots were also recovered. There are over 15 different types of chamber pot, including chair pot types. Some are highly decorated with transfer printing and, in one instance, with thick applied bands referred to as Mocha cording (Rickard 1993). Several other pieces of Mocha design ceramics included a chamber pot, mugs, and bowls. It is difficult to judge whether they were made in America or Britain, since this cheap everyday ware was being made on both sides of the Atlantic during the 19th century (Miller 1980; Rickard 1993). The items most likely to have been produced locally are stoneware and redware storage jars and crocks, yellowware plates, and brown slip-ware plates. These were the common types of food preparation and storage vessels in the 19th century (Turnbaugh 1985; Ketchum 1987, 1991).

Very little stoneware emerged from the large ceramic assemblage. It would appear, therefore, that the stone structures did not contain a kitchen dump nor were they the final resting place of utensils that came from a kitchen pantry or food preparation area.

Over three hundred complete and another six hundred reconstructible bottles and glass artifacts were excavated from the stone shafts. The bottles come in many shapes, styles, and molds: free-blown and machine-made; single, double, and three piece, or "Ricketts" molds; embossed and non-embossed. The use of two- and three-piece molds dates the majority of the collection to between 1810 and 1888 (Jones & Sullivan 1985). The wine and champagne bottles date from the late 18th to the early 19th century. Since these types are long lived, some of the free-blown wine bottles could possibly date to the late 17th or early 18th century (Jones & Sullivan 1985). Although it is possible that earlier wines might have been brought into the house after its construction in the mid-18th century, or that earlier bottles were retained for antiquarian interest or reuse, such an early dating seems unlikely. There are also several styles of champagne glasses and tumblers. Unlike the bottles, many of which survived intact, few of these drinking vessels were recovered whole.

Most of the bottles held either alcoholic beverages or medicinals. Alcoholic beverages are represented in the assemblage by bottles which would have contained whiskey and other liquors, ale, still wine, and champagne. At the Van Cortlandt mansion, medicine bottles held both prescribed medicines (dispensed by doctors) and patent medicines (bought over the counter). Some

of the bottles were embossed with the names of the pharmacy, the location of the store, and the medicine.

An examination of similar material from the Sullivan Street excavation in Manhattan (Howson in press) shows a trend over time toward more "regular" medicine bottles as the century advanced, although some patent medicines were still used. There was also an apparent connection between a more rapid adoption of prescribed medicines and higher socioeconomic status. It is impossible to assess the Van Cortlandt assemblage in the same way because the deposit was not gradually accumulated and therefore provides no means for following changes in behavior through sequential layers.

A number of artifacts that might be associated with women were found (cf. Wall 1994). For example, there are over 20 pieces of what may have been cosmetic holders: small "checker-like" ironstone "dishes," approximately one inch in diameter, some with a gold leaf band around the rim. Ironstone and glass cold cream jars and several heels from women's shoes were also recovered. In addition, a glass syringe came to light that compares to a type associated by Howson (in press) with 19th century feminine hygienic practices. It is possible that at least part of the assemblage had its origin in a woman's dressing room or bath. It may also be of interest to note that, while bone toothbrushes and hairbrushes are present, no traces are found in the assemblage of shaving brushes or razors.

This, then, is the assemblage from one specific context at the Van Cortlandt mansion. As noted above, this material seems to have been introduced into the subterranean stone structures during a single or several almost contemporaneous filling episodes, possibly at or slightly after the purchase of the property by the city in the late 19th century. No stratigraphic differences were determinable within these structures, and no signs of weathering or gradual infilling were observed. It is highly unlikely that these structures served as primary dump sites for day-to-day trash, but, judging from the artifacts found, the materials came originally from several discrete locations in the house. These locations probably include a dressing room or bathroom, a dining room china closet or cabinet, and a bottle storage area. Possibly, the items were left behind when the house was transferred to the city, and disposal took place shortly thereafter. Discard into the stone boxes served not only the need for disposal of abandoned articles from the Van Cortlandt household but also the removal of a possible hazard to the public represented by the empty stone-lined pits.

SUMMARY

The assemblage from the stone structures is the largest collection of informative artifactual evidence unearthed during the three field seasons. The recovered objects span the entire period of house occupation, from the mid-18th through the last quarter of the 19th century, and, as part of a secondary refuse deposit, they indicate that there was probably a diverse range of items, from older to more modern things, in the house at the same time. In contrast to the consistency of the architecture and furnishings presented by the museum restoration, the assemblage offers a microcosm of the mundane dynamics of life at the mansion. Chamber pots, toothbrushes, hairbrushes, and liquor bottles are rarely exhibited, but were as much a part of the family environment as the formal silver. The artifacts and the house complement each other and provide a more complete picture of the everyday life of the Van Cortlandts.

The deep feature in the herb garden and the earlier foundations south of the mansion may illuminate other aspects of life at the house at various times. Analysis of these and other discoveries is still in progress.

Aside from producing artifacts, the 1990-1992 excavations at the Van Cortlandt mansion have succeeded in the other goals set by the project. They have tested and determined the archaeological sensitivity of areas slated for possible construction and renovation. They have indicated the extent of landscape remodeling and leveling which has taken place in near unobtrusive increments around the house. They have confirmed the existence and probable

date of an earlier structure to the south of the present building and have hinted at the possibility that further remains might be preserved beneath the herb garden and the area formerly occupied by the barn. The shell pit to the west of the house provides additional evidence of Native American use of the southern part of Van Cortlandt Park. The excavations have thus begun to bring us closer to a more complete picture of the Van Cortlandt house in its historic and natural context.

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Endnotes

1. We would like to thank the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, and especially the Historic House Trust, for the support and encouragement given to the archaeological work in Van Cortlandt Park throughout the years. We would also like to thank the National Society of Colonial Dames in the State of New York, and the Colonial Lords of Manors for their hospitality, interest, and financial backing of the project. Of the numerous people who have been indispensable to our efforts at one time or another, we must single out Mary Ellen Hearn, former director of the Historic House Trust, Linda Dockery, Parks Administrator for the Bronx, Nancy Zeigler, Elizabeth Leckie, and Julie Mursberger. Of course, a monumental debt is owed to the students of the Brooklyn College Summer Archaeological Field School, without whose labor and dedication none of this would have been possible.
2. The name Yonkers comes from the term 'Jonkheer', or gentleman, as it referred to young Adrian Van der Donck. Van der Donck arrived in the New World in 1641 to serve as schout, or administrative and judicial officer, in charge of Rensselaerswyck, the New Netherland patroonship belonging to Killaeen Van Rensselaer that encompassed a large area of the northern Hudson Valley surrounding Albany. Van der Donck moved downriver in 1646 (at the age of 26), purchased 24,000 acres of land in southwestern Westchester and northwestern Bronx (which he called Colen Donck), and settled down with his wife, the former Mary Doughty, to raise corn and operate a saw mill (that also gave its name to the present-day parkway). His Beschrijvinge van Nieuw Nederlant (1653; English transl. A Description of the New Netherlands, 1841) remains a classic early colonial document, penned while Van der Donck was in Holland appealing to the Dutch States-General concerning the needs of the American colony and the numerous disagreements colonists had with its director, Pieter Stuyvesant.
3. Stephanus later moved upstate to the Van Cortlandt Manor in Croton-on-Hudson. The house still stands and has been renovated to reflect the period immediately following the Revolution. It is currently operated as a museum restoration by Historic Hudson Valley and contains many of the original Van Cortlandt furnishings.
4. Soil augers are tools that permit the removal of cores from the ground by screwing or pounding a casing down, then extracting the column of earth thus captured. Analysis of the recovered sediment can provide information about soil type, stratification, and the presence of buried archaeological sites. Most augers used for soil analysis and archaeological application are small (1 to 4 inches in diameter). The unusually wide boring at Van Cortlandt Park was obtained by using a mechanical post hole digger.
5. Electrical resistivity is a form of subsurface sensing in which a low voltage current is passed through the ground in order to determine the electrical resistance of the earth. When very high resistances are encountered, it is possible that a dense or non-conducting structure, such as a wall, sand layer, or bedrock mass lies within the path of the current. Techniques permit depths to be determined, and the taking of numerous measurements across a site allows a map to be drawn up showing the areas of high and low resistance which sometimes trace out the sunken shapes of buried foundations or other remains of archaeological significance.
6. The Willow pattern originated out of Chinese traditional motifs, but the exact design emerged in the early 19th century based upon elements popularized in the late 18th century by Thomas Minton in Staffordshire, England. One of the most fashionable patterns of Victorian times, it comprised three figures crossing a three-arched bridge in the direction of a pagoda and pavilion. A willow tree overhangs the bridge, and a zig-zag fence appears in the foreground. Chinese artisans eventually copied this western invention to capitalize on its marketability and perhaps concocted a legend--of which there are several

versions--to explain the scene.