

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED **AUG 8 1979**
DATE ENTERED **OCT 10 1979**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC **Van Veghten House**

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

S of Somerville off NJ 28
STREET & NUMBER **At end of Industrial Park roadway, 1/4 mile in west of Findere Avenue. (Presently a blinker light at intersection)**

CITY, TOWN **Somerville, N.J.** NOT FOR PUBLICATION
Bridgewater Township CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
VICINITY OF **5th**

STATE **New Jersey** CODE **034** COUNTY **Somerset** CODE **035**

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER: Hist. Soc.

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME **Somerset County Historical Society**

STREET & NUMBER **P.O. Box 917 Van Veghten House**

CITY, TOWN **Somerville** VICINITY OF **New Jersey** STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. **Somerset County Administration Building**

STREET & NUMBER **North Bridge & East High Streets**

CITY, TOWN **Somerville** STATE **New Jersey**

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE **New Jersey Historical Sites Inventory # 510.6
HABS-NJ-661**

DATE **1962**
1940 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS **State of NJ DEP, Bureau of Parks; State Library Archives**

CITY, TOWN **Trenton** STATE **New Jersey**

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Michael Van Veghten made his first land purchase -- site of the house -- in 1694 and baptized a child "at the Raritans" in 1699. It is clear that he had some form of dwelling during these years.

The Early Brick House -- Prior to 1722

Part of the extant dwelling was in existence at this location by 1722, for it appears on a map prepared that year for property in the area. One long wall (south facade) and one gable wall (west) survive, indicating a structure 22 by 25 feet, story and a half high and two bays wide. In dimensions and in height it can be considered typical of a Lowlander's house in Somerset County during the period of settlement at the beginning of the 18th century.

Certain features of the facade tend to confirm the early date of construction. The brickwork is laid in Flemish bond with black glazed headers. Later in the century in Somerset County it was unusual to have these color contrasts. Wide-spanned segmental arches of brick voussoirs are mounted well above the window heads, not as integral weight-bearing elements of the walls as is customarily seen in later usage, but rather as a decorative feature. Arched window heads did not come into general use in Somerset County until the 1740's. There is a possibility that the fenestration consisted of double casement windows, a belief fostered by the still evident size of the original openings (later bricked in), which were more square in shape and about half the width again of the present large windows.

On this same wall is exhibited still another feature that is associated with early "Dutch" building practice - the attachment of iron beam anchors to the long wall of masonry houses for strengthening purposes, and at the same time made a decorative element. There are several examples of this practice on early houses of upper New York State, but in Somerset County this is rare. Those on the Van Veghten House provide an attractive embellishment.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Van Veghten House has figured prominently in the history of Somerset County.

During the Middlebrook Encampment in the American Revolution the house provided quarters for Quartermaster General Nathaniel Greene. While the present building no longer appears as it did in the 18th century the strategic geographic location of the plantation along the Raritan River is still effectively portrayed.

Owned by the Van Veghten family from around 1700 to the 1840's and later by other farmers, this was one of the finest farmsteads in the area. The house is a good example of an early prestigious 19th century farmhouse and is one of the last such farm estates on the Raritan River in Somerset County.

The Van Veghten family in Somerset County dates back to the seventeenth century. Michael Van Veghten, who in 1694 bought the property on which this house is located, described himself in his will as a "yeoman". However; he was surely a man of means to have acquired such large land holdings as he did on both sides of the Raritan. His will mentions these tracts as well as property he owned near Albany.

Michael served in 1711 as an Assistant Justice of Somerset and Middlesex Court of Sessions. (2)

When Michael died in 1737, his son, Derrick, took over the homestead plantation. Derrick Van Veghten had been appointed in 1735 a Commissioner of Highways. (5)

In 1743/4, Derrick was chosen to be a Member of the 13th and 14th Assemblies as a representative of Somerset County. (6) Also, in 1751, he was called to serve on the Grand Jury for the Court of Oyer and Terminer for Somerset County. (7)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheets

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

QUADRANGLE NAME Bound Brook

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>18</u>	<u>534860</u>	<u>4489460</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property occupies city block 5114, lot 3

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE Robert P. Herfurth, Trustee
Ursula Brecknell, Trustee, Nan Cooper, Trustee

ORGANIZATION Somerset County Historical Society

DATE May, 1979

STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box 917

TELEPHONE 201-526-1707

CITY OR TOWN Somerville, New Jersey 08876

STATE

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

Deputy [Signature]
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

7-21-79

TITLE Deputy Commissioner, Department of Environmental Protection DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

[Signature]
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 10-10-79

ATTEST: [Signature]
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 10-10-79

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In Somerset stone was the common choice for masonry houses, as evidenced by the real estate advertisements and by other surviving pre-1750 houses. Brick construction did not come into its own until the late 18th century.

The early walls rise from a fieldstone foundation that projects slightly, creating in effect a water table. The bulkhead, with replacement doors and hinges, is located against the facade. A second outside stairway was cut into the opposite facade at an unknown date prior to the time the 19th century exterior trim was added. This bulkhead has since been removed and the opening closed with bricks.

The early 18th century construction is visible in the cellar. The adzed floor timbers measure approximately 11" x 9" and are spaced about four feet apart. About two-thirds in from the long wall thick stone piers, possibly 22" wide, divide the cellar into compartments. Of different lengths, one juts perpendicularly from the gable wall, and the other is free-standing, with a space of about eight feet between them. These piers do not now serve as bearing walls. The east pier was later extended with a brick wall when the original house was doubled in size. In one corner, traces remain of the foundation wall for the original east gable. In the compartmented space back of the piers square bricks serve as flooring.

The chimney base is centered on the gable wall. Wide, deep, and vaulted, it is constructed of salmon-colored bricks seemingly laid up in Flemish bond (although this fact is hard to determine because of the deteriorated condition of the bricks and the remains of a coat of whitewash).

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The original wide floorboards of the first floor still remain in place, but can only be seen from the cellar, for a modern floor has been laid. The boards were cut out to make them lie flat over the girts. The floorboards of the second story, seemingly of the same age, may have been relaid. They rest on the heavy, hewn timbers that are anchored to the exterior wall.

The Second House (by enlargement), circa 1760 (?)

The HABS survey made in 1940 felt that the existing house could have been built before 1779 (the year of General Nathaneal Greene's occupancy) or c. 1830-40, the period represented stylistically by the decor.

As it stands today, the house is a two-and-a-half-story rectangular box, with a matching two-and-a-half-story wing of lower height. The new walls of the main block, including an entirely new north facade, are laid in common bond, with clapboards filling the gable peaks. The boarding on the east wall extends further downward, covering part of the second story level. This is the wall to which the kitchen wing is attached. Within the attic of the wing, the wall is found to be of brick. The facade is symmetrically composed with five bays but lacks a central window over the front entrance, an omission that seems to hint at an enlargement in stages. The new walls are mounted over a similar stone foundation but are not set back in the manner of the original walls. Those portions of walls added above the Flemish-bond sections, however, are set back some four inches, conspicuously creating two planes. Doubtless the change in bond created a thinner wall, but no effort was made to conceal the transition. The later brickwork is not crisp and cleanly delineated, leading to the speculation that perhaps the bricks were reused.

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The fenestration consists of double sash, the upper fixed, containing 12/12 panes on the main floor and 12/8 above. The entranceway lacks a formal architrave, and the door is recessed. The shallow jambs and soffit are filled with single, recessed panels outlined with heavy applied moulding, in Greek Revival style. The effect of a multipaned transom over the door has been created by placing nonfunctional muntins over a single sheet of glass.

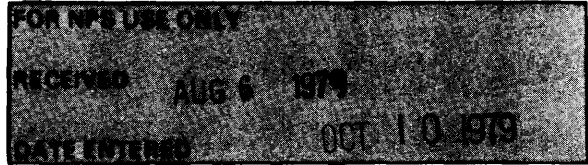
The floor plan basically is that of a center-hall house with four rooms to a floor, but more recent changes have modified the space distribution. The interior walls and ceilings are of lath construction, plastered over.

The cellar of the east half of the house differs, but not markedly, from that of the original section. The remaining original timbers are almost of the same size and are placed about the same distance from center. The chimney base is of solid stone, with boulders more noticeable protruding near the floor. Next to the base, there is an opening in the foundation wall to give admittance to the crawlspace under the present kitchen wing. In this crawlspace can be seen two wood steps, the only survivors from a flight that once ran from the floor above to the outside. This exterior stairway was made useless when the wing was enlarged to its present size.

The attic is reached by an enclosed single-run flight of stairs located in the middle of the house above the main flight. Its entry door has been turned 90 degrees to face the side hall to allow for the enclosing of a new bathroom. The joists that support the attic floor are sawn. The floorboards range in size between 16 and 22 inches. A few contain Roman numerals. The roof is supported on rafters approximately 3 x 4 inches, pegged and numbered. The attic and roof were constructed c. 1830-40. The brick chimney at the west gable end and its paired single-sash windows of 6 panes each are later replacements.

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Argument can be found to support the 18th century date. The manner in which the original walls were raised to two-story height would not have mattered to a society accustomed to frank expression of building components but would hardly seem acceptable to the architecturally sophisticated of the next century. The installation of 12/12 and 12/8 sash also better suits the earlier date for such old-fashioned windows would have been a stylistic anachronism for an entirely new house planned as a Greek Revival showpiece.

Since the house was large enough to accommodate General Greene, his wife, and his aides during the Middlebrook Encampment in 1778-79, it seems believable that it had acquired its two-story spaciousness by that date. The inventory taken following the death of Van Veghten in 1781 indicates a house of several rooms, and a stair landing large enough to contain a "chist."

The Greek Revival House, circa 1837

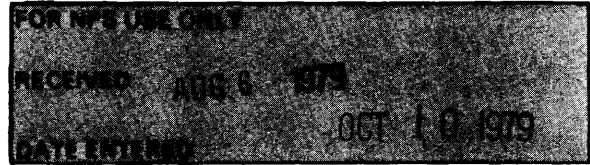
Today, the main house basically reflects the taste of the 1830's -- bold, simplified elements of style recalling Greek classicism. The window and door openings on both long sides are punctuated by heavy oak lintels, those on the upper floor seeming to crowd the rather flatly molded board cornice. The front entrance is characteristic of the style. Almost all of the doors, including the two entrance doors, consist of two recessed, vertical panels trimmed with wide mouldings. The interior window architraves have typical large-scale mouldings and plain, plastered jambs. The baseboards stand 7-12 inches high.

All four mantelpieces are Greek Revival in style: the two most ornate, with detached stout columns and paneled friezes, are to found in the two main-floor rooms. That in the master bedroom (now library) is only slightly different, having paneled pilaster strips rather than columns. The fireplace openings are shallow, with

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splayed brick jambs and forward-angled backs. The hearthstones appear to be slate. In two instances, the floor of the fireplace opening has been raised at the rear.

These motifs were probably introduced into an already existing house when the ownership changed hands after the death of the second Michael, son of Derrick, in 1831. For a few years the property remained in sheriff's possession to satisfy a mortgage, and then Michael's son Richard bought it back in 1837. He is the likely remodeler.

The Kitchen Wing

The present kitchen wing originated as a one-and-a-half-story structure narrower than the house proper, with symmetrically pitched roof. The outline of the roof apex remains on the brick wall of the east gable of the house. The wing is now a full two stories, with an attic, but with lower ceilings than the main block. The original rear wall was removed in order to extend the unit southward to a distance several feet beyond the rear facade of the major structure. Evidence of this extension can be seen in the attic and in the crawlspace. Since the ridge line was not changed at the same time, the roof now has an asymmetrical slope. The rafters are the same size as those in the main house and are lapped, but nailed rather than pinned.

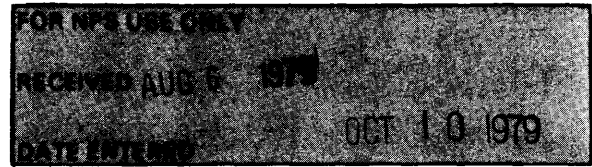
The north (front) facade is on the same plane with the main block and matches it in brickwork and oak-lintel trim, but the windows are smaller and contain 1/1 sash.

There are two rooms on the main floor and four on the upper. The cooking fireplace is 19th century vintage, framed with wide boards, the horizontal member being carried over the adjacent wall where the bake oven is located. A boxed-in winding stairway stands on the opposite wall. The walls of this room have wide, beaded wainscotting almost to the ceiling and a plain thick-edged chair-rail. The same kind of vertical boarding is seen in the small front bedroom on the upper floor.

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The oldest feature found in this unit are three doors with imprecise raised panels and ovolo moulding. Two contain five panels. They are thicker-stiled than the typical 18th century door, and one contains the outline of a Suffolk latch. All now have small, square, iron boxlocks. These doors may be survivors of the pre-1830's interior, "recycled" in the wing. Otherwise, most of the woodwork fits the period 1840-60.

Porches, post-1850

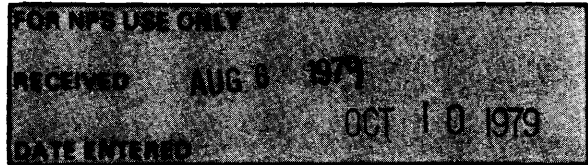
There are three porches: a veranda, with lamb's tongue wood posts on stone bases and a wood, shed roof, c. 1860; a porch at the rear entrance of the main block, c. 1880; and a more recent, screened side porch attached to the wing. (Old photos show it as an open porch, with shed roof).

Shutters

The recessed-panel shutters have been removed and are now stored in the attic. The pintles still remain in place.

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While operating his business in town, he apparantly had all the help he needed to run the farm, as his will inventory lists more than two dozen black servants. (12)

Derrick Van Veghten was a staunch patriot of the American cause. When General Greene and his troops occupied the property during the Middlebrook Encampment, he gladly sacrificed his privacy and shared what he had. According to his obituary,

"This gentleman possessed the virtues of patriotism and hospitality to a high degree; - warmly attached to the cause of his country, he took... pleasure in rendering it any service in his power, and when his property was very essentially injured by the winter quarters of a division of our army being affixed on his possessions, like a good citizen, he submitted without repining, to suffer as an individual, to promote the public good..." (13)

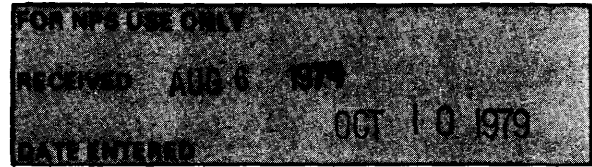
Of course, the single most important fact about the Ven Veghten house is that General Nathanael Greene lived here during the winter of 1778/9. (13a)

As to the old house itself, its significance has several aspects. It is undoubtedly important in that it represents one of the few remaining Raritan River mansions. The seventeenth century Codrington house and Cornelius Van Horne's "Kells Hall," both built along the north bank of the river to the east, are long gone without trace, and the only other survivors which could possibly be considered "river mansions" are the Old Dutch Parsonage, the Frelinghuysen house and the TenEyck house, all to the west. (Michael Van Veghten used the term "mansion house lot" in conveying the property to a grantee in 1797).

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Another aspect of the houses's uniqueness is that of the brick construction. There are few early brick houses in Somerset County. Apparently considered a "prestige" building material, the brick homes in the area of early vintage are the Old Dutch Parsonage and the Frelinghuysen house (both National Register.) These were both built as two-story structures, but the early brick section of the Van Veghten House was a one-story house. In this earliest section, the bricks are laid up in Flemish bond with glazed headers, and the window arches, still preserved on the river side, are obviously very early.

In 1797 Michael Van Veghten (b. 1764) sold the property (three Bridgewater Township tracts including the 75-acre "homestead and mansion house lot") to a Thomas Nesbitt.

The property was conveyed back to Michael by deed of April 7, 1817. Michael apparently resided in the house until his death in 1831.

After Michael's death the farm was seized to satisfy a mortgage held by his son-in-law, Peter Z. Elmendorf (married to Michael's daughter, Mary, or Maria), and a few years later in 1837, Michael's son, Richard, was able to obtain it at a Sheriff's sale. In 1843 the farm was purchased from Richard by Charles G. Wilson and wife, Fanny, of Hunterdon County.

The Wilsons sold the river mansion in 1853 (7) and moved to a smaller house next door on the same farm tract.

John S. Schenck, the next owner, was an unscrupulous character, as many court complaints are recorded against him. In 1862 he lost the property claims for debts and damages, listed in great detail in the indenture of March 8, 1862, when Caleb T. Ames acquired the property at a Sheriff's sale. Although the farm passed out of Schenck's hands on that date, he continued to harvest certain crops throughout 1862.

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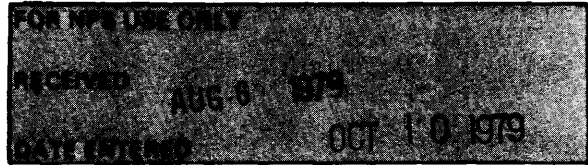
Ames kept the property until 1876, when it was purchased by two women, Agnes J. Whitenack of Bernards Township and Mary H. Horning of Bridgewater and their respective husbands. The property stayed in their hands until 1897 when it came into the Meyer family.

At present the Van Veghten house is owned and used by the Somerset County Historical Society which is at work in several fields in a sincere and dedicated effort to make the stirring events of yesterday meaningful and relevant to the people of today. This work comprises in-depth research into the architectural evolvement of the house, monthly programs held in the meeting-room to which the public is invited without charge and the establishment of a library available to scholars and interested readers.

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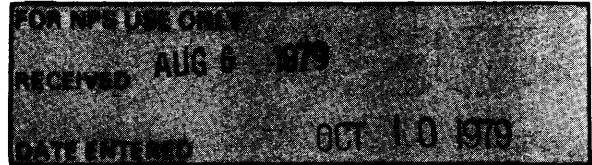
PAGE 1

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- (1) Will, Michael Van Veghten, May 20, 1734, proved March 24, 1737/8, Lib. C-191, N.J. State Library, Trenton, New Jersey.
- (2) Snell, James P., "History of Hunterdon and Somerset Counties," p. 644, Everts & Peck, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, 1881.
- (3) Ibid., page 652.
- (4) Somerset County Historical Quarterly, Vol. I, page 102.
- (5) op.cit (2), page 647.
- (6) Honeyman, A.V.D., "Our Home," Vol. I, 1873, page 55.
- (7) op.cit(4), Vol. III, pages 6,7.
- (8) N.J. Archives, 1st Series, Vol. Xii, "The Pennsylvania Journal," September 1, 1748.
- (9) Ibid., Vol. XXVIII, "The N.Y. Gazette or the Weekly Post Boy," July 1, 1754.
- (10) Ibid., "The N.Y. Gazette; and the Weekly Mercury," No. 1095, October 19, 1772.
- (11) Ibid., 2nd Series, Vol. III, "New Jersey Gazette," Wed., May 19, 1779.
- (12) Will, Derrick Van Veghten, April 17, 1777, proved March 13, 1782, N.J. State Library, Trenton, New Jersey.
- (13) op.cit.(11), Vol. V, "New Jersey Gazette," January 2, 1782.

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- (14) Ibid., Vol. III, "New Jersey Gazette," October 27, 1779.
- (15) op.cit(2), pages 648-9.
- (16) Martinsville Historical Committee, "North of the Raritan Lotts," page 86, Neshanic Printing Co., Inc., Neshanic, New Jersey, 1975.
- (17) Bailey, R.D., "Pre-Revolutionary Dutch Houses and Families," pages 23-4.
- (18) Ibid., page 479.