

An Old Farmer's Talk: Stephen L. Vanderveer's *New Lots* Recollections.

Source: *Brooklyn Eagle*, September 19, 1886, p. 6

<http://eagle.brooklynpubliclibrary.org/APA2.5.122/PrintArt.asp?Title=Id%3D696%20%3>

The article in a recent SUNDAY EAGLE on old graveyards was very interesting, but why we were left out I can't understand, because the burying ground I remember since boyhood, and where all my American and many of my Holland ancestors are interred, is to me, and may be to others, as interesting a spot of the kind as there is in Kings County."

"How is that?" I asked.

"When the flat lands nearest to the sea began to get overcrowded with farmers, the immediate descendants of the original settlers began moving eastward and located in what they called the New Lots, where I and my father were born. No well regulated community can get along without a place to deposit their dead. For a time the deceased members of a family were buried on the farms, but as the residents became connected by marriage and other ties and attended church in Flatlands, they concluded to have a burying ground of their own, and thus resolved they located it two miles from here, on the New Lots road and directly opposite the church we now worship in, and the cemetery we know as the new one. You may doubt me, but that old graveyard is nearly two hundred years old and many of my ancestors are resting therein: the last one I remember of was my great uncle, Johnnes Vanderveer, who died at the ripe old age of 87 years. In those days there were as many Negroes as whites in this neighborhood. The latter were buried in front by the roadside and the former away back near the swamp. Go down and look at it, and you will see the white fence I put up at an expense of \$11.

"How about the present cemetery and the church alongside?"

"As I have already stated, we worshiped in Flatlands, while we buried our dead up the New Lots road. In 1824 our people thought it best to have a place of worship near the last resting place of our forefathers, and at an extra meeting of the Classic, held on August 12 of that year, it was decided to build the new church. Abraham Vansiclen and his wife, Cornelia, deeded over to Tunis Schenck, Isaan Snedlker, John Blake, Christian Duryen, John Wckyoff, John Williamshon, Jr., Nicholas Linnington, and my granduncle, Johannes Vanderveer, one fourth of an acre for the sum of \$35. The witnesses to the deed were Charity Rapalje and Phebe Vansiclen, and the edifice was erected at a cost of about \$3,500. My sister, Anne, was the first child christened in the new church, and she still lives on the New Lots road. The Rev. William Crookshank was our first pastor. We paid him semi annually the sum of \$150, and as he received the same amount from the church in Flatlands he could very well keep the wolf away from the door. Here is a receipt of Mr. Crookshank for a half year's pay and another for rent of parsonage at Flatlands.

"The first reads as follows:

FLATLANDS, MAY 1, 1828

Received of the Church of New Lots by the hands of Johannes Eldert the sum of one hundred and fifty dollars, being the amount of salary due at this date. [signed] WILLIAM CROOKSHANK

"The other is a receipt given by John A. Voorhees, now living, at the age of 87, for \$25, being the rent due for parsonage for one year.

"In 1841 we saw the necessity of having a new burying ground, as the black people were overcrowding us in the old one. Therefore we purchased the ground alongside the church and removed a great many of the dead from across the road. I have not taken up all my people yet, but I expect to do so ere long. The first person buried in the new grounds was a young man named Jim Cozine. He took the measles down in Brooklyn and caught cold while his father was bringing him home and died. This is about all I can tell you at present, but I think if you go down there you will find something to interest you," said Farmer Vanderveer in conclusion.

I recently took a mile and a half walk through Wyckoff lane, and entering the New Lots road the church and resting places of many former worshipers became visible. Along the route the descendants of the dead I was about to visit were ploughing in manure and planting different kinds of seed, giving little heed to the time drawing nigh when they will be laid alongside those who have gone before. The scene was a busy and interesting one to the pedestrian not initiated in the mysteries of farming, but when the peaceful abode of the dead was reached the

interest became greater. Not a living soul was seen and a quietness prevailed that seemed almost sad, but the gentle south wind whispered through the leaves, preventing me from feeling entirely lonely. As the new cemetery appeared the most inviting it was the first one entered. There are three things in it that will attract the attention of the visitor instantly. The first is the costly monuments erected to the memory of the departed by the wealthy farmers of the Twenty-sixth Ward; the second will be the natural conclusion one will come to that nearly all the dead were related in life. The Wyckoffs, Elderts, Schencks, Duryeas, Vanderveers, Rapeljes, Cozines, Vansiclens, Linningtons, Hegemans, Van Cotts, Ryersons and Van Brunts have intermarried so much that the whole might justly claim each other as part of one family. In many cases the full maiden name of the deceased wife appears on the headstone, and to the casual observer it would seem as if they got things mixed by having people of different names in the same lot; but the truth is that the sturdy Dutch farmers and their descendants seldom left home in search of a wife, believing that their neighbors' daughters were as beautiful and healthy as those from a distance, including East New York, and therefore it is that all the white residents living on or near the southern boundary line of the Twenty-sixth Ward are near or distantly related. The third thing that will be noticed is the long lease of life the departed have had, which is proof positive that the old New Lots road is a healthy locality to live in. In one lot of the Wyckoffs there are ten graves in a row. Among them are mentioned Eldert Gilliam Wyckoff, aged 61 years, 7 months and 1 day. Maria, the relict of Isaac Wyckoff, lived to be 98 years, 3 months and 27 days. Johannes Wyckoff put in 79 years, 3 months and 4 days, and his widow, Sarah, who, from the following lines upon her monument, must have been sickly, managed to stay above ground for 78 years, 2 months and 23 days.

*Affliction sore long time she bore,
Physicians tried in vain;
'Till God was pleased to take her home
and free her from all pain.*

Near by Sarah is a head stone bearing the simple inscription: "Phebe Smith, aged 80 years, 6 months and 22 days." Jacob and his wife, Anne Snedlker, died in their 65th year, and Michael S. Duryea and his wife Lucretia were 78 and 72 respectively when they departed. John Vanderveer died at the age of 68, and his wife, Elda, followed him when 77. Peter Rapelyo's monument records his age at 81 years, 0 months and 8 days, and an inscription states that Patience Wyckoff lived to be 78 years, 6 months and 2 days. Charles B. and Maria Vansiclen Vanderveer who were husband and wife, are buried alongside of each other, and their tablet states that they were 83 years, nine months and 1 day, and 81 years, two months and 24 days old when they died. Stephen L. Dicker and his wife Alletta lived to be 88.