

BRONX COMMUNITY BOARD NO. 8

**MINUTES OF THE LIBRARIES & CULTURAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE
MEETING HELD ON JANUARY 14, 2016
AT THE VAN CORTLANDT PARK MANSION MUSEUM
VAN CORTLANDT PARK AT WEST 246 STREET AND BROADWAY**

Present

Marvin Goodman
Sylvia Alexander
Amy Joy Robateau
Marty Wolpoff
David Gellman
Nan Siegmund
Peter Pamphile

Affiliation

CB8, Committee Chair
CB8 committee member
CB8 committee member
CB8 committee member
CB8
Community resident
Library Manager, Van Cortlandt Branch

Absent

Manuel Felix
Philip Friedman

CB8 committee member
CB8 committee member

The meeting began at 4:00 p.m. at the downstairs meeting room of the mansion. The Chair commented that there had been a recent community gathering in that room to celebrate the Feast of St. Nicholas. The minutes of the December meeting were approved unanimously. We then went to the main floor to meet Michael Grillo, the Museum educator, who was dressed in a revolutionary war outfit and was our museum guide to take us on the tour of the mansion.

The Van Cortlandt House was built in the Georgian architectural style by Frederic Van Cortlandt in 1748 for his family and is the oldest standing house in the Bronx. Frederick died before the completion of the building and his son, James Van Cortlandt inherited the property. During the Revolutionary War the house was used by George Washington, Lafayette and Rochambeau. The house is a 2 ½ story, L-shaped house, with a double hipped roof.

The Van Cortlandt family had established a grain plantation and a grist mill on this property and the family became a mercantile family prominent in New York affairs. One group of the family moved further north, to Croton-on-Hudson, in Westchester County and built the Van Cortlandt Manor there.

In 1989 The Van Cortlandt family sold the Mansion and the property to New York City, after 140 year occupancy. The Van Cortlandt Park and the Mansion have been part of our city's treasures since that time. The house was designated a historic house museum in 1897, the first in New York City and the fourth in the country.

Michael Grillo, our guide, took us on an extensive tour of the whole mansion. Despite the family wealth, living in the house was not easy. The master bedroom had a two-level encurtained bed where the parents slept on the top level of the bed and the six children slept on the lower level of the bed. At one corner of the bedroom was a covered potty-chair where the sleepers could go

to relieve themselves at night. Our guide showed us the ample dining room and the beautiful view of the roadway, outside the main entrance, that went all the way to Boston.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:30 p.m.

The next meeting will be February 11, 2016 at the Kingsbridge Library at 5:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Marvin Goodman
Chair, Libraries and Cultural Affairs Committee