

A GLANCE AT THE VAN METER FAMILY IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

Centuries ago a part of the province of Gelderland, in the Netherlands was called Meteren. The origin of the name is not known. It is suggestive of a personality and may have come from one or more of the French Huguenots who there found a refuge from persecution. Others have thought the people who left that town, or village, adopted Meteren as a surname, with the addition of "Van," which represents the preposition "from," as well as a mark of nobility. However that may be, the name has been borne by people who have distinguished themselves in religious and literary labors. Jacob Van Meteren, of Antwerp, caused the first complete edition of the Bible to be printed in the English language. This book was published in Zurich, in 1536, and was a great and expensive work. It is supposed that Van Meteren made the translations himself, employing Miles Coverdale to supervise the printing to guard against errors. In 1597, Joost Van Meteren, born in Antwerp, wrote a history of Holland. In 1875, Van Meters were living in that country, respected, educated and wealthy. The description of the family coat of arms, given in J. B. Rietstap's "Armorial General," is in French (the polite language of Holland).

Meteren (van) Hollande ecartele: aux 1 et 1-4 d'argent a une fleur de lis de gueules: aux 2 et 3 d'or a deux fasces de gueules, accompagne de huit merlettes du meme, rangees en orle. Cimier la fleur de lis.

The baptismal and marriage registers of the Old Dutch Church of Kingston, Ulster County, New York (formerly Wiltwyck and familiarly known as Esopus or Sopus), are said to

show Van Meterens, Van Maitres and Van Meters on their pages. They have been transcribed and edited but, unfortunately, the compiler Mr. Roswell Randall Hoos, has never answered any question on this subject. Abraham and Jacob Lamiater are among those who took the oath of allegiance in Ulster County in 1689. Delameters and De Lametres are found in Kingston as early as 1739. They seem to indicate a French branch, if not the original family.

In the lists of passengers on the ships of olden days the name of Jansen is conspicuous. It may have been to avoid confusion that Joost Janz (also written Jansen), j. m. (young man), of Meteren, in Gelderland, Holland, living then in what is now Marbletown, New York, came to write his name Joost J. Van Meteren. In 1682, he married Sara Du Bois, j. d. (young woman), of Kingston, in the same county, a daughter of Louis and Catharine (Blanshan) Du Bois. A touching story is told of the almost miraculous escape of Catharine Du Bois from burning at the hands of the Indians. (Letters of Rev. Allen H. Brown, 1899.)

Bommel, in the Netherlands, (province of Gelderland) was the birthplace, March 10, 1650, of Kreijn, son of Jan Gysbertsen Metrn (as he wrote his name). In 1663, he came with his father a widower, to New Amsterdam. Although the father used a different spelling, in the old records of Kings county, Long Island, and on the records of the First Dutch Church of Monmouth County, New Jersey, the name is spelled Van Meteren, Van Metra, Van Metere, and in other ways. The father was well-off, financially. He married a sister of Jan Van Cleef. In 1673, he was comfortably settled at New Utrecht, Long Island, and one of the magistrates of that town. In 1683, he was a deacon in the Dutch Church. There is a tradition that "Jan Guysbertsen Metrn" refused to take the oath of allegiance in 1687, and soon after went back to his fatherland. Children may have been born after the marriage to Miss Van Cleef but, as yet, they are an unknown quantity. His son, Kreijn Janse, took the oath of allegiance to the English government in 1687. He is then mentioned as a resident of New Utrecht. He was married September 9, 1683, to Neeltje (Eleanor), daughter of Jan Van Cleef and Engeltje Pietersen, residents of the same town.

Kreijn is on the assessment roll of New Utrecht from 1675 to 1709 when he removed to Middletown township, Monmouth County, New Jersey. Kreijn J. Van Matre (a later spelling), and his wife are among the first members and organizers of the Dutch Church of Monmouth. His name is entered on the church records as Kriin Jansen, and, in 1716, when elder, as Kriin Van Metra. He purchased a large tract of land in what (in 1899) are Holmdel and Atlantic townships. His first dwelling, a log cabin, was erected on the farm where William Jones now resides in Atlantic township. The old family burying ground is on this farm, only a part of the original tract, and in it he and his wife, and many others of the past generations of the Van Maters, are interred. Kreijn died March 10, 1720, and his wife January 1, 1747. They are reported to have had the following children:

Jan, b. April 26, 1687, died young.

John, b. April 17, 1688, at New Utrecht, L. I., m. October 17, 1718, Ida daughter of Ryck Hendrickse Van Snyderam. He was a communicant in the Dutch Church in 1713 and his wife in 1731.

Ydtje (Ida), b. August 24, 1691; m. Jan, a son of Adrian Bennett and Barbery, his wife. Communicants in Dutch Church in 1731. She died September 13, 1774.

Gysbert (Gilbert), b. February 24, 1694; m. Maijke (Micha), daughter of Daniel Hendrickson and Kaatje Van Dyke, his wife. He was a communicant in the Dutch Church in 1721 and his wife in 1740. It is not known where he died or is buried.

Engeltje (Angelina), b. September 30, 1696; m. John Anderson.

Benjamin, b. January 22, 1702; m. Elizabeth, daughter of Jacob Laen (Lane) and Elizabeth Barkalow, his wife. Both were members of the Dutch Church in 1737. He died July 21, 1775, and is buried in the Van Mater cemetery.

Cornelia, b. May 24, 1704; m. Hans (John) Van Cleef.

Syrenius (Cyrenius), b. August 28, 1706; m. Abigail, daughter of Auke Lefferts and Maria Ten Eyck, his wife. Both are buried in the Van Mater cemetery. His grandson, Joseph C. Van Mater, called "big Joe Van Mater," is distinguished for freeing 100 negro slaves.

Joseph, b. in Monmouth County, February 5; baptized August 13, 1710; m. December 1, 1734, Sarah, daughter of Roelof

Schanck and Geesie, or (thesye, Hendrickson his wife, Joseph Van Mater and his wife rest side by side in the Van Mater cemetery. A number of deacons and elders will be found among the different generations of this branch of the family. Joseph lived on the old homestead where Kreijn Janse first settled. The family graveyard is reserved forever for that purpose by the will of Joseph Van Mater. To this branch of the Van Maters, Monmouth County is largely indebted for the blooded stock of horses for which the county became celebrated during the first half of the nineteenth century.

John Van Mater (son of Kreijn Janse) and his wife had eleven children: Cryn Jans; Ryek (Richard); Gilbert; Jannetje; Neeltje; Marya; Eyda (Ida); John; Cornelia, or Catharine; Cornelius; Geertje.

In 1899, there were no male descendants of John Van Mater in Monmouth County, N. J., bearing the name of Van Mater. Kreijn gave real estate to his other sons; to John, he gave money; Kreijn died in 1720, but his will was not proved until March 21, 1729. Was the delay owing to John's absence?

Nearly twenty-eight pages of "Early Dutch Settlers of Monmouth County New Jersey," much of it in fine print, are devoted to the Van Mater family; genealogies, wills, etc. The book has been freely quoted here by permission of the compiler, Judge George Crawford Beekman, of Freehold, Monmouth County, New Jersey. The reader is referred to this valuable publication for fuller particulars. The children of John are mentioned because the claim has been made that the Salem County, New Jersey, and the Virginia Van Meters are descended from him.

Let us return now to Ulster County, New York, to look after Joost J. Van Meteren and his wife. Their daughter, Rebecca, was baptized April 26, 1686. It is improbable that she was the only child and here is a line of inquiry. September 3, 1704, Rebecca Van Meteren married Cornelis Elting, a son of Jan Elten and Jacomyntje Slecht. A sister and brother by the name of Van Meteren married two of the Eltings. Rebecca may have been the Miss Van Meteren. This theory would make the Mr. Van Meteren her brother. The indefinite Mr. and Mrs. Elting had seven children: two sons and five daughters. The fourth daughter had the interesting name of Youchamanchi; one of

her great, great granddaughters married Mr. William C. Van Meter, Sr., of Moorefield, Hardy County, West Virginia. The baptisms of three of the children of Cornelis Elting and Rebecca Van Meteren reveal the names of Isaak, Zara and Alida (Eleanor). Jan Van Meteren was one of the four sponsors for Zara in 1715. Who was this Jan Van Meteren? Sara married John Hite; Eleanor married Isaac Hite and Rebecca Van Meter, daughter of Isaac Van Meter, married Abraham Hite (three of the eight children of Hans Jost Heydt and Anna Maria Du Bois). As late as 1710-11, the names of Van Meter, Elting, Du Bois and Hite—all kindred—were found in Kingston, New York. In 1899, no traditions of the Van Meters were obtainable in the county; the name was not in the Kingston directory.

Between 1712 and 1714 the region now known as Upper Pittsgrove, in Salem County, New Jersey, and beyond it, began to be settled by people from New York State (including Long Island), New England and East Jersey. John and Isaac Van Meter, Jacob Du Bois and his sister, Sarah Du Bois, from Esopus, Ulster County, New York, located 3,000 acres of land, purchased in 1714, from Daniel Cox, of Burlington, New Jersey. They divided the tract by the compass; the Du Boises taking on the north side of the line, the Van Meters on the south side. The Van Meters continued to purchase until they owned about 6,000 acres; and most of the titles to the lands held by the present occupants go back to the Van Meter titles. The name, as first recorded in the Clerk's Office, at Salem, in 1714, is spelled Van Meter and, ever since, it has appeared the same way, with and without the capital M for Meter.

A first-class school, for that period, was established by the new arrivals, and religious services (presumably after the Dutch Reformed order) were not neglected. The first house for public worship stood near Woodstown. It went down soon after 1740. The date of its building and even the memory of its site have passed away. May 22, 1739, application was made by Isaac Van Meter to the Philadelphia Presbytery, in behalf of himself and others, for the establishment of the gospel in Pilesgrove. April 30, 1741, a Presbyterian Church was organized; 49 members signed the covenant beginning with Isaac Van Meter, Hannah (his wife), Henry Van Meter (their son), Sarah Van Meter

(their daughter). The Nienkirks, Du Boises, and others followed. (History of the Presbyterian Church of Pilesgrove, or Pittsgrove, in Salem County, N. J.)

John Van Meter's name does not appear in the covenant. Is he the Monmouth County John and where did he go after locating land in Salem County? What degree of consanguinity existed between him and Isaac? There is a tradition that the Monmouth County Van Maters and the Salem County Van Meters were related. They visited each other until Time, with its inevitable changes, brought newer and stronger ties.

At this point it may be well to take up the history of the Van Meters as it has been gathered by some of the southern members. James M. Van Meter, of Martinsburg, West Virginia, (an aged man), writes in 1898: "All I know I got through my father, from the original ones, and the old V.'s never lied. The first Van Meter (from New York), John, passed through here about 1725 with a tribe of Indians going to the south branch to fight the Catawba tribe. The Catawba tribe killed all of the northern tribe except John Van Meter and two of his Indians. When John got home, he told his sons if they ever went to Virginia, they must go to the Wapapatoma and take up land for it was the prettiest land he ever saw. That is the Indian name for south branch of the Potomac. About the year 1730, four of his sons came over. Their names were Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and John. John and Isaac got permission from Governor Gooch, of Virginia, to put settlers on 40,000 acres of land (Mss Journals of the Governor and Council 1721-1734, pp. 363-4). They soon sold out to Jost Hite. Abraham, my double great grandfather, died in 1780. He married Ruth Hedges, daughter of Joseph Hedges, of Annapolis, Md., and granddaughter of Sir Charles Hedges, of Oxford, England. My two grandfathers, Abraham and Jacob, were his sons. I have the history of my family down to 1880. My grandfather Abraham died December 29, 1838. He married Elizabeth Barns, a Scotch-Irish girl. My grandfather Jacob married Isabel Evans, a daughter of the Isabel Evans who fought the Indians at the Big Spring, a little south of Martinsburg.

"Isaac went to the south branch of the Potomac. He had about the third trial before he could settle, the Indians running him

away and burning his cabin. At last, when he succeeded and started his family, the Indians killed him.

"Jacob settled on the Opequon Creek, about three miles from my great grandfather Abraham. His descendants are here.

"John settled near Shepherdstown. Thomas Shepherd married his daughter Elizabeth."

Garrett Van Meter, of Moorefield, W. Va., believes, with B. F. Van Meter, of Kentucky, that the pioneer John, of Virginia, was a son of Kreijn, of Monmouth County, N. J., and a noted Indian trader. Alludes to his removal to New York and his explorations in Virginia at the head of a band of Indians. Upon his return, he urged his sons to lose no time in possessing the land. "Four of his sons: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and John, came to Virginia, I think, in 1736, although some put it later and others at an earlier date. Abraham and John settled in Berkeley County, Jacob at the lower end of the south branch, Isaac in Hardy County. * * * Other Van Meters emigrated at the same time."

D. S. Van Maitre, of Parkersburg, W. Va., writes in 1878: "The first settlement of the Van Matres, or Van Meters, was in the vicinity of the present town of Martinsburg and was by John Van Meter and family consisting of five sons and six daughters (MSS Journal of the Governor and Council 1721-1734, p. 363). I feel pretty well satisfied that the Isaac associated with him in the 40,000 acres grant was his son, Isaac, as he had a son Isaac. * * * These Van Meters were from Salem, N. J. The Isaac V. M. who a few years later settled on the south branch of the Potomac could not have been this son of John, for I find that the Christian name of the wife of the former was Esther, while the name of the latter was Hannah."

Here a letter from J. P. Wilson, of Romney, to Miss Annie E. Van Meter (now Mrs. Williams) of Moorefield, W. Va., (1876) comes in appropriately. He states that Isaac, the pioneer, was twice married. "The second wife was the widow Sibley, who had one son, Henry Sibley, I think."

Dr. Foote, in his "Sketches of Virginia," states that "Isaac Van Meter, the founder of Fort Pleasant, came to the South Branch of the Potomac in the year 1740, in company with some Cayuga Indians and laid a tomahawk right on what has been

known for the last century as the Old Fields; he went back to his home and, in 1744, he moved there with his family."

Samuel Kercheval in the "History of the Valley of Virginia," published in 1833, when writing of the settlements on or near the Cohongoruton (ancient Indian name of the Potomac, from its junction with the river Shenandoah to the Alleghany mountains), gives the names of many of the first settlers on this water course and its vicinity. Among them, are Jacob Van Meter and brothers. He says the Van Meters were a numerous family and that they came from New York.

Judge Beekman in a private letter (1902) writes: The "fur trade" with Indians was very profitable and an easy way to make money and get confidence of the Indians. * * * Monmouth coast was prolific of shell fish out of which Indian money was made, or wampum. Many of our white people were engaged in making this shell money. * * * With the shell money anything could be bought of the Indians. As the red men were driven back from the coast, they became dependent upon the whites for their "belts of wampum." Thus the Indian traders from Monmouth and Long Island had an unlimited supply of Indian money and we find them slowly following up the Indians as they receded inwards."

A copy of the will of "Isaac Van Meter of the South Branch of Potowmach in the county of Frederick, Virginia," executed February 15, 1754, is recorded at Trenton, N. J. It was presented at court held in Hampshire county, Virginia, by Henry and Garret Van Metre, surviving executors, December 14, 1757. They qualified before the Salem county surrogate November 30, 1758 (where the name is written Van Meter). The will provides for his "dear wife, Hannah," and mentions the following children: Henry, Jacob, Garrett, Sarah (the wife of John Richman), Catharine Van Metre, Rebecca Hite (the wife of Abraham Hite), and Helita Van Metre. The lands in the province of New Jersey are to remain under their respective leases; at their expiration, to be sold at public vendue to the highest bidder; devises lands in Virginia, slaves and money. The children are to have the privilege of selling their land, but, in that case, the other children are to have the first offer, so they may keep it amongst them.

Garret Van Meter, born in New York, in 1732. was married to Ann Markee April 3rd, 1757. He was killed by the Indians near Fort Pleasant, Va., in April 1788. Three of his seven children lived to marry and raise families: Isaac, Jacob and Ann. The two sons married sisters, the Misses Inskeep. The daughter married Abel Seymour. He and Isaac Van Meter represented Hardy county in the Assembly when the constitution of the United States was adopted. Isaac had five sons and four daughters. Jacob, who is said to have been a Colonel in the war of 1812, had three sons who lived to raise families. Twenty-six years ago, some of the descendants from Isaac and Jacob had spread out into Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Kentucky and Texas. The years, as they roll by, find them still increasing and farther and farther west.

A Van Meter (a daughter of Jacob and Louisa Van Meter, of Hardy county, W. Va.,) possesses the original location where the first settlement was made by Jost Hite. She literally lives in the "house that Jack built" (Col. John Hite). Her first marriage was to a Mr. H. R. Hack. After his death in 1887, she married Mr. Arbuckle, but her pride in her maiden name is not lessened.

The writer of this chronicle has no facts to present concerning Sarah Richman, Rebecca Hite, Jacob, Catharine and Helita Van Meter (five of the seven children of Isaac, the pioneer) or their descendants, except that the Hite descendants were among the first settlers of Kentucky.

Henry Van Meter seems to have retained his interest and lands in New Jersey yet he, also, is associated with Virginia. George Washington, while surveying for Lord Fairfax, in 1748, says he went to the South Branch of the Potomac to Henry Van Meter's. At another time, said he stopped at Mr. Van Meter's, near the "Trough." Henry died soon after his father (Isaac) and it is supposed that he was buried in the beautiful valley so dear to the family, because his grave cannot be located in Salem county. His will recorded at Trenton, N. J., is dated May 2, 1752; proved December 8, 1759. The following children are named in it: Joseph, David, John, Ephraim, Fetters, Benjamin, Jacob, Elizabeth and Rebecca. All the land, 2,400 acres, was left to the sons. Joseph was one of the elders chosen by the Pittsgrove Church, Salem Co., N. J., in 1762, to assist in improving the

methods for raising the minister's salary. He is said to have been a Colonel in the war of 1812 and a comrade of James Monroe. When the latter became President of the United States, Col. Van Meter spent two weeks with him in the White House. (This story comes from West Virginia.)

Little is known of Henry Van Meter's children, and their descendants, with the exception of the line of Benjamin, a child of the last wife, Mary Le Fevre, daughter of Erasmus Le Fevre, a French Huguenot. (This name was corrupted to Fetters.) Henry is said to have been married four times.

Benjamin Van Meter was born October 1, 1744, married April 1, 1766, to Bathsheba Dunlap, daughter of Captain James Dunlap, of Pittsgrove. Captain Dunlap died September 19, 1773. Her mother was Anne Hunter, daughter of Robert Hunter. One of the nieces of Mrs. Anne Hunter Dunlap, a Miss Purviance, married William P. Leigh of Virginia. Benjamin and Bathsheba (Dunlap) Van Meter lived on his ancestral estate in what is now Upper Pittsgrove township, Salem county, N. J. The husband was a ruling elder in the Presbyterian Church. He liberated all his slaves before his death, but some of them refused to leave him. He died October 15, 1826. His wife died November 7 1831. Their children were: James, Mary, Ann, Sarah, Erasmus, Fetters, Robert, Hunter and Bathsheba. Sarah and Fetters died in their infancy. James married Ruth Jones; Mary, Matthew Newkirk; Erasmus, Mary Burroughs; Robert Hunter was twice married, first to Rachel Buroughs, second to Sarah Leake Whitaker; Bathsheba married William Mayhew.

James and Robert Hunter Van Meter were physicians. They settled in Salem, N. J., and were identified with the First Presbyterian Church as founders and elders. The line of Dr. James Van Meter is extinct on earth, yet the bequests of that family to the First Presbyterian Church of Salem, N. J., will keep their memory green while time endures. Dr. Robert H. and Sarah L. W. Van Meter were the parents of eight children: Emma, Mary, Robert, James, Edward, Mason, Josiah and Harriet. Robert, James and Josiah died in their infancy. Mary married Enos R. Pease, of Connecticut; Harriet, Rev. R. J. Cone, of New York; Edward, Caroline Whitaker, of Deerfield, N. J. Mason (un-

unmarried) is President of the Fenwick Club. Edward died January 4, 1875. His wife and daughters: Mary Caroline, Harriet F. and Anna Hunter, are all living. Shourds' "History of Fenwick's Colony," and Lewis' "History of the First Congressional District of New Jersey" give fuller genealogies, etc., than space will permit here.

ANNA HUNTER VAN METER.

Salem, New Jersey, March, 1902.