

An Historic Study of Local Communities: How social/cultural factors, as illustrated by the Van Cortlandt family, helped shape New York City

A DBQ lesson

The following question is based on the accompanying documents (1-4): Some of these have been edited for the purpose of this task. This question is designed to test your ability to work with historical documents. As you analyze the documents, take into account both the source of the document and the author's point of view.

Discuss the evidence that illustrates the social/cultural customs of pre-revolution New York and how have these customs have changed or stayed the same since that time.

Directions:

- Read the DBQ question. Do you understand it?
- Ask yourself: "What do I already know about the growth of New York during the Colonial Period? How would I answer the question, even if I could not look at the documents?"
- Now look at the documents. Note how each has its own section. Study each one and highlight any information that will help you answer the question. Ask yourself: "How does this help me to answer the question?"
- Each document is followed by a single question. Write a short answer to each of these questions in the blank that follows it.
- When you are finished studying all of the documents, go on to Part B of the question.
- Finally, write an essay that answers the document-based question

Historical Background:

Oloff Van Cortlandt, a Dutchman, arrived in New Amsterdam in the mid seventeenth century and quickly established a trading business, acting as a middleman in the purchase, transport, and resale of goods. As the fur trade declined, many Dutch settlers began to invest in land ownership.

They intermarried with the newly arrived English settlers and continued to prosper after the English renamed the settlement New York.

Oloff's grandson, Frederick Van Cortlandt built the current house, located in what was then known as "Little Yonkers" in 1748/49 in the Georgian style. This type of house was named for King George of England.

Task:

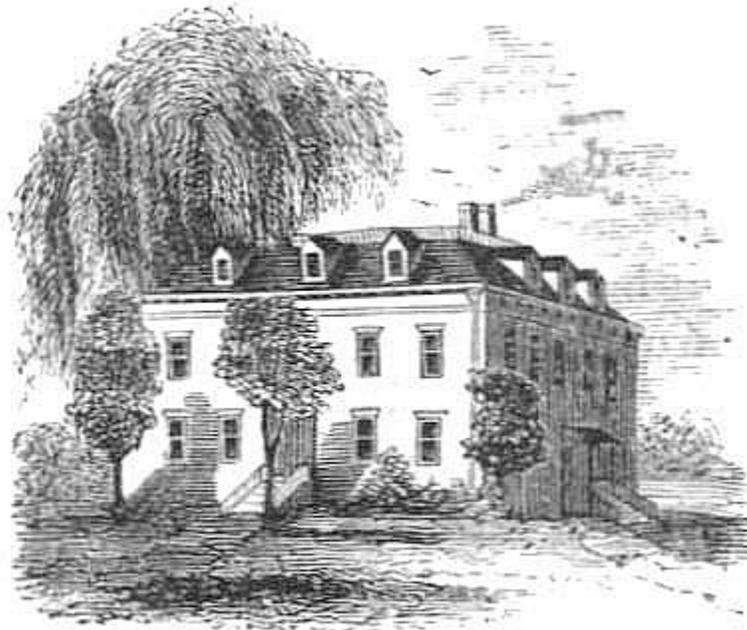
For Part A, read each document carefully and answer the question(s) after each document.

For Part B, use your answers from Part A, information from the documents, and your knowledge of the colonization of New York to identify the key points you wish to make in the essay.

For Part C, write an essay answering the question: What evidence do we have to illustrate the social/cultural customs of pre-revolution New York and how have these customs changed or stayed the same since that time?

Document 1:

The Georgian house, built by Frederick Van Cortlandt in 1748/49 for his wife Frances and their five children. Frederick died before the house was complete and left the house to his son, James. The house is located in a section of the Bronx, formally called “Little Yonkers.”



1. Describe the Georgian style of house and the possible forms of entertainment during the 18th century.

Document 2:

These eagles formally graced the entrance to the Van Cortlandt grounds. Legend suggests that they were taken off a Spanish Privateer and gifted to the Van Cortlandts by the Duke of Clarence, who became King George III.



Carved Eagles from a Spanish Privateer.

1. How did eagles become important in the founding of the United States of America?



2. Describe how the eagle pin, worn by Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, is similar to the former gate posts at Van Cortlandt House.

Document 3:

This is an advertisement which appeared in the New York Gazette for the week of September 17-24, 1733.

Rh-Island, Burrows for Coracoa.
Cleared for Departure, Mitchel to Coracoa, Wolf to Jamaica, &
Howel to Perth-Amboy.

J

Advertisements.

RAN away the 18th of August 1733, from Jacobus van Cortlandt of the City of New-York, a Negro Man Slave, named Andrew Saxton, a tall lusty Fellow, is very black, walks stooping and somewhat lamish with his left Leg; the Thumb of his left Hand is somewhat stiff by a Wound he had in his Hand formerly; the Shirts he had with him and on his Back are mark'd with a Cross on the left Breast; He professeth himself to be a Roman Catholick, speaks very good English, is a Carpenter and Cooper by Trade, and has with him a Broad-Ax, a Two-foot Rule, and a Hollow-Howel. He had on a Pair of Linnen or Oznabrug Breeches, and an old Cloth Coat, but 'tis uncertain what other Cloaths he has with him. Whoever takes up and secures the said Negro Man, and gives Notice thereof to his said Master, so as he may be had again, shall have Forty Shillings if taken within Ten Miles of the City of New-York, and Three Pounds if further, as a Reward, and all reasonable Charges, paid by
Jacobus Van Courtlandt.

THERE is to be sold by Joseph Newton and Robert Cumming, (Executors of the Estate of Daniel Mekay, deceased) of Penalopon in Freehold, a Fulling-Mill with all the Utensils thereunto belonging; a half Part of a very good Grist Mill, with 50 Acres of Upland and a good Meadow; likewise a House and Barn with a Young Orchard. Any Person inclin'd to pur-

“Ran away the 18th of August 1733, from Jacobus van Cortlandt of the City of New York, a Negro Man Slave, named Andrew Saxton, a tall lusty Fellow, is very black, walks slooping and somewhat lamish with his left Leg; the Thumb of his left hand is somewhat still by a Wound he had in his Hand formerly; the shirts he had with him and on his Back are mark’d with a Cross on the left Breast; He professeth himself to be a Roman Catholick, speaks very good English, is a Carpenter and Cooper by Trade, and has with him a Broad-Ax, a Two-foot Rule, and a Hollow-Howel. He had on a Pair of Linnen or Oznabrug Breeches, and an old Cloth coat, but ‘tis uncertain what other Cloughs (clothes) he has with him. Whoever takes up and secures the Said Negro Man, and gives Notice thereof to his Said Master, So as he may be had again, shall have Forty Shillings if taken within Ten Miles of the City of New York, and Three Pounds is further, as a Reward, and all reasonable Charges, paid by Jacobus Van Cortlandt.

1. What information can you gather about slavery in New York from the advertisement?

Document 4:

This letter was written by Frances Van Cortlandt to her son. Frances's husband, Frederick, died shortly before the house was completed. In his will, he left the house to his son James and afterwards, to his son, Augustus.

yonckers agust th 15 - 1752

Dear son
as I have not had the satisfaction of hearing of your
arrivel I take this oportunity by m^r. benson houn was
so good to calle at our house, to lat me know of his going
to London, I have not much to add at presant, I begin to
be very inpatient to hear of your arrivel, but wat shall
I say I'l trust to providens, houn I hope will keep you
in his protaction, as I hope you put your trust in him,
our family are in good helt, I pray god you may be the same,
I flatter my self that after having gratifyed your
Curiosity you will return in the fall, your sisters
desire to assure you of thare affection. I am Dear James
your most affection mother
frances van Cortlandt

yonckers agust th 15 - 1752

Dear Son

As I have not had the satisfaction of hearing of your arrivel, I take this oportunity by Mr. benson houn was so good to calle at our house, to lat me know of his going to London, I have not much to add at present, I begin to be very inpatient to hear of your arrivel, but wat shall I say. I'l trust to providens, houn I hope will keep you in his protaction, as I hope you put your trust in him, our family are in good helt, I pray god

you may be the same, I flatter my self that after having gratified your curiosity you will return in the fall, your sisters desire to assure you of thare affection. I am Dear James

Your most affection mother
Frances van Cortlandt

Yonkers August 15, 1752

Dear Son,

As I have not had the satisfaction of hearing of your arrival, I take this opportunity by Mr. Benson whom was so good to call at our house, to let me know of his going to London. I have not much to add at present. I begin to be very impatient to hear of your arrival, but what shall I say. I'll trust to providence, whom I hope will keep you in his protection, as I hope you put your trust in him. Our family are in good health. I pray God you may be the same. I flatter myself that after having gratified your curiosity you will return in the fall. Your sisters desire to assure you of their affection. I am Dear James,

Your most affection mother
Frances van Cortlandt

1. What does this letter tell you about the interconnection between the Dutch settlers, the English colonists, and England?

Part B:

Using the information from the documents, make a list of some of the social/cultural factors that influenced the growth of New York during the colonial period.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Part C:

Write an essay using the information from the document and your knowledge of social studies, the colonial period, and New York history to answer the question: What evidence do we have to illustrate the social/cultural customs of pre-revolution New York and how have these customs changed or stayed the same since that time?

- **Be sure to include your notes from Part B.**
- **Be sure to refer to the documents**
- **Be sure to use correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling**
