

# **Frederick Philipse**

Frederick Philipse was born in 1625 in a town in northern Netherlands called Bolsward. He arrived in the New Netherlands (modern day New York) about 1650. He became Lord of Philipsborough Manor in 1693, and eventually owned the land that extended from Spuyten Duyvil Creek, to the Croton River. He was regarded by many as the richest man in the Colony.

**Commemorative Essay by Virginia Ruhland-Mauhs, Tarrytown**

## Frederick Philipse

The first European settlers to claim New York as their own came from the Netherlands in the early 1600s. They called it the New Netherlands and, to attract more people to the new land, they created the “Dutch West India Company” which established a patroon system to encourage settlement. The patroon system promised Dutch families land and resources to start their own large estates in the New Netherlands. Settlers prospered from farming, trapping, fishing and trade with native villages. Among these first Dutch settlers was Frederick Philipse.

Frederick Philipse was born in 1625 in a town in the northern Netherlands called Bolsward. He lived there until his early twenties, when he set sail for New Amsterdam (now New York City). Philipse arrived there about 1650, during the period of time in which New Amsterdam was experiencing tremendous growth, the ideal time for the ambitious Philipse to begin to amass great wealth.

Philipse initially became a carpenter for the Governor of New Amsterdam, but soon he rose to be the official carpenter of the whole Dutch West India Company. Different sources report that he was also a shop owner and a tavern owner his first years in the New Netherlands. In 1662 he married his first wife, a wealthy widow named Margaret Hardenbrook De Vries. Margaret brought a daughter into their marriage, and together with Frederick she had four more children. De Vries had taken part in her late husband’s lucrative fur trade, and she owned and sailed many of her own ships. Together, the couple combined their wealth and industry and amassed a great fortune.

In 1664, the British took over the New Netherlands, changed the government, and renamed it New York in a bloodless and mostly uneventful encounter. Philipse swiftly swore allegiance to the British crown, and Anglicized his name (he was born Frederick Flypsen and he changed it to Philipse). As a result of this he gained favor among the British. Governors in New York appointed Frederick to positions such as the official city surveyor, an alderman, and later a member of the Council of the Duke of York. When the British took New York, the colony’s commercial life hardly changed, however Frederick and Margaret Philipse continued to dominate trade. Thanks to Margaret’s previous trade enterprises and connections, they easily imported cottons and spices from the East, and textiles and other manufactured goods from Europe.

In 1672 Philipse made the first of a series of great purchases of land, a portion of the estate of Adrian Van Der Donck in modern day Yonkers, known as the Lower Mills. In 1681, he began buying land in Tarrytown. By 1682 he had bought 90,000 acres from native tribes and Dutch landowners, stretching from the Harlem River to the Croton River, between the Hudson and Bronx rivers. In 1693 King William of Great Britain granted a Royal Charter naming Frederick Philipse Lord of Philipsborough Manor.

Philipse had two gristmills built: the Lower Mills in Yonkers, and the Upper Mills in Tarrytown which was also a sort of warehouse. He grew grain on his vast farmlands along the Hudson River, ground it into flour in his mills, then sold it using his vast trade connections. Margaret died in 1692, but Frederick married Catherine Van Cortlandt who helped him establish connections in the colony. Frederick Philipse found revenue wherever he could. At the southern

end of his land he built a bridge across the Spuyten Duyvil Creek and he collected a toll from anyone passing over his property to or from Manhattan. Frederick Philipse may be considered a mastermind when it came to making money.

Philipse died in 1702 and was buried with his second wife in the crypt underneath the Old Dutch Church of Sleepy Hollow, which he had built. Upon his death, Philipse was one of, if not the greatest landholder in New York. He owned more land than any other individual at the time and was regarded by many as the richest man in the Colony.

After Philipse's death, Philipsborough Manor was split between Philipse's sons, Adolph, who got the upper portion of the manor and Philip, who got the lower. Philip died before his father did, and Adolph died without children, so in 1716, Philip's son, Frederick II became the second Lord of the Manor.

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