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Portland, Oregon.

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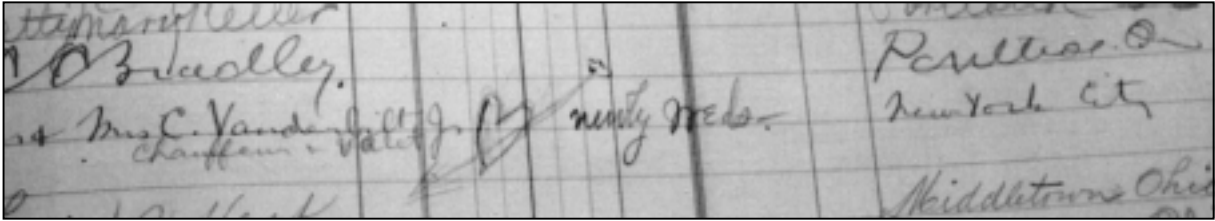
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# CORNELIUS VANDERBILT Jr.

H20-371

Signed Guestbook: August 22 or 23, 1920



## Names evident above:

C. C. Bradley.....Portland, Oregon

**Mr. and Mrs. C. Vanderbilt Jr**.....newly weds - New York City  
chauffeur and valet

(A sketch of a heart pierced by an arrow, followed by "newly weds", follows the signature.)

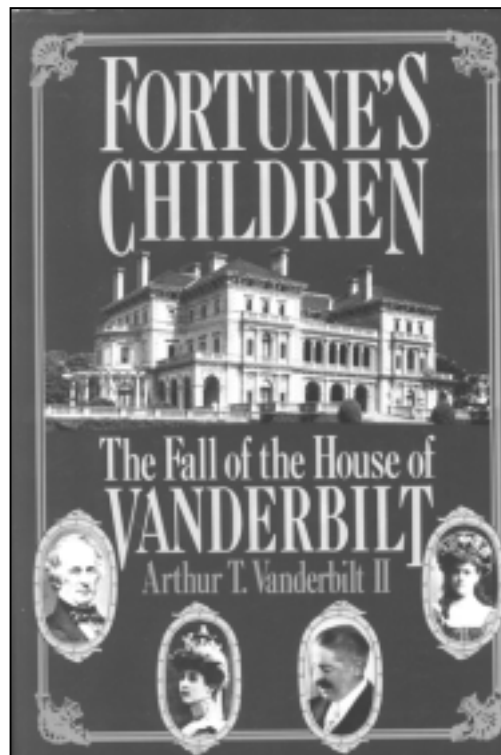
## Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. Vitae:

Profession: Great-great grandson of Cornelius Vanderbilt (The Commodore)  
Newspaper publishing, management

Born 1898 / New York City

Died 1974 / New York City (Age 76)

Age at Chalet: 22 years



**DETAILED STUDY OF VANDERBILT Jr. ENTRY----->>  
FOLLOWING PAGES**

### **Commodore Vanderbilt**

The legendary Cornelius Vanderbilt, commonly referred to as the Commodore, was born on Staten Island, New York, in 1794. He was destined to become one of the richest men in the United States as a result of his genius for transporting goods and people from place to place. At age 16 he borrowed \$100 from his mother and purchased a flat-bottomed boat that enabled him to transport paying passengers between Staten Island and New York City. He later added steamboats to his fleet when he found they were faster and bought into railroads when he saw their value as a link between his boats and inland markets. The fierceness of his competitive drive was so awesome that his opponents were known to pay him handsomely for staying out of their way. He was not hesitant to admit that all he cared about was making money and he could never have enough of it.

When the Commodore died in 1877, he left his favorite son, William H. Vanderbilt (Billy), 95 million dollars. Billy was not all that his father wanted in a son, but the Commodore detected in Billy some of his own avarice, and so Billy received most of his inheritance. Apparently the Commodore's evaluation of his son was on the mark: In 1883 Billy, confided to a friend that he was now worth \$194 million. An issue of London's *Whitehall Review* noted that William H. Vanderbilt's wealth was greater than that of any member of the English nobility, and that he could "buy up all the Rothschilds and still remain richer than any duke." Upon Billy's death in 1885, his will distributed a total of \$200 million, at that time the equivalent of 500 tons of gold. That gold on the market today, August 22, 1997, with a value of \$323.00/troy ounce would be worth 3 billion, 876 million dollars. Thus is the dimension of the fortune that would trickle away as it migrated through the hands of the Vanderbilt family.

In attempting to locate Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr. among the Vanderbilt descendents, the discovery of a book by one of the living Vanderbilts, Arthur T. Vanderbilt II, made it possible. In this fascinating book, *Fortune's Children - The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt*, the principal members of the family are followed through five generations, finally bringing us to Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr.. If we should label the Commodore as Cornelius Vanderbilt I, we see that "Jr." was actually Cornelius Vanderbilt V, making him the great-great grandson of the commodore. Everyone in his family referred to him as Neil.

### **The Honeymooners**

The bride that Neil brought to the Chalet was Rachael Littleton, the daughter of a distinguished lawyer, and a mate proven acceptable to Neil's parents. The marriage ceremony was held in New York City and was considered a typical Vanderbilt wedding. Neil's mother, Grace, planned the event and invited 3000 "close" friends to St. Thomas Episcopal Church. Wedding presents included a bandeau of diamonds worth \$300,000, a diamond necklace, vases of antique silver, gold coffee spoons, diamond bracelets and watches. Neil's father presented him with a check for \$10,000, considered a somewhat disappointing amount, and the services of a footman to accompany them on the wedding trip. The mode of travel chosen by the honeymooners was not mentioned in the book, but there is little doubt that a private Pullman attached to a train would be provided for them. It would not be a surprise to find that an automobile, a necessity for any footman/chauffeur, was somehow shipped with them.

## Failure

Upon return to New York City, it was imperative that Neil make his own way and eventually he found work as a reporter for the *New York Times*, a profession that was considered undignified by some of the Vanderbilt family. At age 26, Neal borrowed upon his expected inheritance of \$3,000,000, which had been promised him when he reached age 26. He then returned to the west where he founded the *Vanderbilt Newspapers Inc.*, which then provided management for the *Los Angeles Illustrated Daily News*, the *San Francisco Illustrated Daily Herald*, the *Miami Tab*, the *Vanderbilt Weekly*, and the *Vanderbilt Farmer* in Florida. Within a short time his newspaper venture was in trouble and he asked his parents for financial assistance, reminding them of the inheritance that had been promised him. A deal was made that Neil quit the business and his position be assigned to a manager chosen by his father. The inheritance promised Neil never materialized. Forced to scramble, Neil rented a two-room apartment over a Fifth Avenue toy shop across from his grandmother, Alice Vanderbilt's 137 room mansion. He testified in 1931, in answer to a lawsuit, that he was worth exactly \$120. Alice Vanderbilt died in 1934 at the age of 84, leaving an estate valued at \$10,184,587. Her list of beneficiaries included her servants, to whom she left \$1,000 for each five years of service. To her grandson, Neil, she left a photograph of herself. She had never approved of his newspapers. What he did with the photograph would be interesting.

## Six more hearts to come

After one learns more about the life of Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr., a revisit to the "newly weds" entry in the Guestbook now holds more meaning. The frail little heart, pierced by an arrow is pitiable. When Neil died at age 76, he was married to wife number seven.

## The demise of the house of Venderbilt

The theme of *Fortune's Children - The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt* is obvious from the book's title. The following paragraph from the introduction in the book is most relevant to our analysis of Cornelius Vanderbilt Jr.:

*"This fabled golden era, this special world of luxury and privilege that the Vanderbilts created, lasted but a brief moment. Within thirty years after the death of Commodore Vanderbilt in 1877, no member of his family was among the richest people in the United States, having been supplanted by such new titans as Rockefeller, Carnegie, Frick and Ford. Forty-eight years after his death, one of his direct descendants died penniless. Within seventy years of his death, the last of the great Vanderbilt mansions of Fifth Avenue had made way for modern office buildings. (There were ten of them.) When 120 of the Commodore's descendants gathered at Vanderbilt University in 1973 for the first family reunion, there was not a millionaire among them."*

## Other

- Neil's diminutive handwriting might intrigue a handwriting expert, although the theory that handwriting is a clue to personality has it's critics. (2) His entry is certainly one of the smallest examples observed in the Guestbook where the signatures of those rich and/or famous tend to be outgoing.

Neil was to write of his childhood with his sister:

*"There was no such thing as self-expression in our young lives. We were taught never to exhibit strong emotion, never to laugh or cry too loud; always to rise when a lady entered or left a room and never to sit down in a carriage until all the ladies were seated. We never broke into adult conversations, nor did we speak unless first spoken to. I bowed and sister curtsied to our elders."*

- Alice Roosevelt Longworth, a family friend, found the Vanderbilt children "*terribly repressed.*"
- By all accounts, Neil's family showed him little love and affection.

**Sources:**

(1) *Fortune's Children - The Fall of the House of Vanderbilt* by Arthur T. Vanderbilt II. Quill-William Morrow, New York, NY. (1989)

(2) *Forensic Signature Examination* by Steven A. Slyter. Charles C. Thomas - Publisher, Springfield, Illinois. (1995)