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Manuscripts and Archives Division

Guide to the

**Abstracts relating to lands from 65th to 72nd Streets owned by William H. Vanderbilt and the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company**

circa 1878-1908

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## Summary

**Title:** Abstracts relating to lands from 65th to 72nd Streets owned by William H. Vanderbilt and the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company

**Date:** circa 1878-1908

**Size:** .1 linear feet

**Source:** Purchased from High Ridge Books, Inc., 2018.

**Abstract:** William H. Vanderbilt (1821-1885) was a wealthy American businessman who expanded the railroad system created by his father Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1887). The New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company was formed in 1869 with the merger of two Vanderbilt-controlled companies, the New York Central Railroad Company and the Hudson River Railroad Company. The manuscript (1 volume, 360 pages, partially blank, with tipped-in index and maps) is a comprehensive abstract of title of properties acquired by William H. Vanderbilt and the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company during the years 1878 to 1880, on the upper west side of Manhattan. The area encompassed 65th to 72nd Streets, between Eleventh (West End) Avenue and the westerly line of the City of New York in the Hudson River. The abstract addresses the City's title to soil under the Hudson River, associated with titles to adjacent upland properties originating in the Somarindyke, Harsen, and Boggs estates. Supporting records include abstracted colonial charters, deeds and other conveyances, wills, and court proceedings, as well as cadastral survey maps and street diagrams. The manuscript, written in a clerical hand, was probably prepared by a New York City law firm.

**Access:** Advance notice required.

**Preferred citation:** Abstracts relating to lands from 65th to 72nd Streets owned by William H. Vanderbilt and the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company, Manuscripts and Archives Division, The New York Public Library

**Language of the Material:** English

**Processing note:** Processed by Susan P. Waide, 2018.

## Creator History

William H. Vanderbilt (1821-1885) was a wealthy American businessman who expanded the railroad system created by his father Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1887). The New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company was formed in 1869 with the merger of two Vanderbilt-controlled companies, the New York Central Railroad Company and the Hudson River Railroad Company. The West Side Line, created earlier by the Hudson River Railroad Company, carried freight and passengers along the west side of Manhattan. By the late 19th century, the land between 65th and 72nd Streets, west of Eleventh (West End) Avenue to the Hudson River, was also home to the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company's rail yards. The Company name was changed to the New York Central Railroad Company in 1914 following the amalgamation of other rail companies.

## Scope and Content Note

The manuscript (1 volume, 360 pages, partially blank, with tipped-in index and maps) is a comprehensive abstract of title of properties acquired by William H. Vanderbilt and the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company during the years 1878 to 1880, on the upper west side of Manhattan. The area encompassed 65th to 72nd Streets, between Eleventh (West End) Avenue and the westerly line of the City of New York in the Hudson River. The abstract addresses the City's title to soil under the Hudson River, associated with titles to adjacent upland properties originating in the Somarindyke, Harsen, and Boggs estates. The abstract begins with a synopsis (page 1) of its purpose and arrangement, dividing the analysis of titles into four sections: First (at page 2), the title of the City of New York to the soil under the Hudson River from 65th to 72nd Streets. Titles to premises located in the three estates follow: Second (at page 12), the Somarindyke Estate (65th to 70th Streets), comprising four tracts: I. Gas Company; II. Lombard & Ayres; III. Maclay; and IV. Coddington; Third (at page 135), the Harsen Estate (70th to 72nd Streets); and Fourth (at page 159), the Boggs Estate (a small gore on the south side of 72nd Street). A section entitled Searches (at page 189), not identified in the synopsis, pertains to searches requested of City agencies and federal and local courts for possible encumbrances, including tax liens. The requests were made by the New York City law firm of Burrill, Davison & Burrill from 1878 to early 1880 as copied, with updates in 1880. Searches dated March 26, 1868 [sic, i.e. 1878] appear to be a copying error. The abstract is preceded by a tipped-in index to property owners (1 page); page numbers underlined in red signify conveyances to William H. Vanderbilt. Page numbers are also given for maps relating to street openings. The volume is paginated 1-360; pages 176-188, 276-360, and others are blank. The City's title is investigated from the Dongan charter of 1686 to 1868. Of the other titles studied (the four tracts in the Somarindyke estate, the Harsen estate and the Boggs estate), only the Gas Company tract was acquired by the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company; the rest were acquired by William H. Vanderbilt. Conveyances date from the mid-18th century to 1880. With the exception of the Maclay tract, each title traces in one rough chronological order the conveyance of property to the point of acquisition by Vanderbilt or the Company during the years 1878-1880. The Maclay tract has several sequences, noting separate purchases by Vanderbilt from 1879 to 1880. Supporting records include abstracted colonial charters, deeds and other conveyances, wills, and court proceedings, as well as thirty-five maps (cadastral survey maps and street diagrams). The maps consist of twelve tipped-in maps (in pen-and-ink and watercolor on tracing cloth); the remainder are drawn directly in the text. The twelve maps are 51 x 65 cm. or smaller, glued along one edge at appropriate locations. Large maps are either folded, or cut and attached as two sheets. The volume measures 35 x 22 cm. The first and largest map (attached at page 1), undated, is entitled "Map of Land & Land Under Water property of William H. Vanderbilt situated between 65th & 72nd Streets and the N.Y. Central & H.R.R.R. and the exterior westerly line of the City" by Lyth & Co., 120 Broadway, N.Y., scale 100 feet to an inch. Sources for the map are noted on page 11. Most of the remaining items are copies of maps or portions of maps in New York City records, made by City surveyors during the 19th century. Several maps delineate the River's original high water mark on land, the movement of bulkhead and pier lines over time, and the intended location of Thirteenth Avenue. The Searches section contains a number of street diagrams supporting queries on properties. Maps pertaining to street openings (indexed) identify transactions dating to 1887.

Although ownership names are noted, the area was largely undeveloped. The abstract of title was possibly prepared by Burrill, Davis & Burrill during the years 1878 to 1880, their work being recorded in the Searches section. The manuscript, in a clerical hand, was probably compiled at one time, perhaps in 1880, as seen in entries and updates in that section, but the index and some of the maps appear to be later additions. Annotations regarding omitted documentation signed "G.Z." may refer to George Zabriskie, a member and later a partner of the firm. Annotations by A. Haviland are dated 1907-1908.

## **Key Terms**

### **Subjects**

Abstracts of title -- New York (State) -- New York  
Land titles -- New York (State) -- New York  
Railroads -- New York (State) -- New York  
Real property -- New York (State) -- New York  
Riparian rights -- New York (State) -- New York

### **Occupations**

Businessmen.  
Railroad executives.

### **Genre/Physical Characteristic**

Cadastral maps  
Manuscript maps  
Property records

### **Names**

Vanderbilt, William H. (William Henry), 1821-1885  
New York Central and Hudson River Railroad Company