

**Sands of Time Bury Dream Villa**  
 MINOR WILLMAN  
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**DORIC CAPITAL**— Once intended to crown one of the marble columns of the Italian villa planned by late Frank A. Vanderbilt, capital lies among weeds.



**VILLA'S ENTRANCE** — Detailed drawing shows huge entrance planned for home, note guest's size. *Times photo by camera here.*

# Sands of Time Bury Dream Villa

BY MINOR WILLMAN

What is the stuff that dreams are made of? For some it may be a new home, a convertible, a trip to Europe, or maybe just a visit from a friend.

But for Frank A. Vanderbilt Sr., pioneer developer of Palms Verdes Peninsula, his dream was made of marble and cypress trees, of rambling villas and an Italian village to be built above Pt. Vicente lighthouse where artisans from the old country work at their trades.

It was a dream world where peacocks strutted and their shrill cries pierced the afternoon calm and the laughter of youngsters on horseback floated on the breeze from the sea.

It was a dream born in a split-shingle cottage—a replica of Vanderbilt's Brook Camp retreat in the Forest Hill area of New York—that still stands near the end of Narcissa Drive.

And how many a dream, it was one that never came true.

**Italian Showplace**

This vision for an Italian showplace—and others like it to be built by close friends—was recalled recently by a visit to Palms Verdes by Vanderbilt's widow, Narcissa, for whom Narcissa Drive was named.

Mrs. Vanderbilt pays a spring visit to the area each year, and this year hopes to return in the fall for the National Charity Horse Show that is always held at the estate's stables, home of the Palms Verdes Riding Club.

Her husband who rose from a machinist's apprenticeship to become president of the National City Bank of New York, assistant Secretary of the Treasury under President McKinley, and a director for more than 40 corporations, died in 1937 at the age of 72.

The plans for the villa and the Italian village were drawn in 1928-29, about three years after Vanderbilt had

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**REMEMBERING WHEN**— John Vanderbilt and his wife, Rose, pose in the garden of The Cottage, between two of columns reported by his father in the 1920s.



**SPANISH STABLES** — In the area of the estate known as the Farmstead, the John Vanderlups pose along the stables where horses are still kept today.

# VANDERLIP

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built The Villetta, a miniature of his dream house.

The Villetta served as a guest home and still stands near the shingle cottage.

The plans are preserved today by Vanderlip's son, John, youngest of the six Vanderlip children, who with his wife and children are the only permanent Vanderlip residents on the Peninsula.

But what has become of the estate and the stuff of Vanderlip's dream?

A drive over the rolling hills reveals a children's day camp where the villa would have stood on 16 lush acres with breathtaking views to the sea and back over the rolling hills.

A few marble columns lay hidden in the tall grass of a wooded area. A duck pond, near where Vanderlip once kept a collection of more than 500 rare birds, has long since dried up.

Others of the marble columns decorate the garden of The Cottage and still more form a colonnade on a hill, near The Villetta, where 268 steps leading to the top are guarded by tall cypress trees planted by Mrs. Vanderlip in 1926.

Mrs. Vanderlip had brought the seedlings from Italy in a suitcase.

Some of the acreage is almost dense now with the trees and flowers planted by the Vanderlips and elsewhere tall grass covers the land.

But if you look closely, you'll see the stuff that dreams are made of, even a dream that hasn't come true.

**Family's Home Born of Dream**  
MARION COLLINS  
*Los Angeles Times (1923-Curren: File); Nov 8, 1959;*  
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pg. D1



ON VANDERLIP ESTATE today, many community activities center in this formal courtyard. Here, from left, are Mrs. Melba Cox Vanderlip,

whose home is the Villaletta, Mrs. Leonid Dryden (left), Mrs. Louise Vanderlip (center), her daughter, Mrs. John Davidson, foreground, Mrs. ...

## Family's Home Born of Dream

BY MARION COLLINS

It's a mile—and 400 years—from Smugglers' Cove to the Vanderlip Villaletta at Portuguese Bend.

Since the first pirate galleon dropped anchor off Smugglers' Cove and made off with contraband cowhides, Rancho Palos Verdes has been a legend. Juan Rodriguez Cabrillo started it in 1542 when he sent a landing party to explore the Bay of Sinciles (San Pedro Harbor).

The late Frank Vanderlip Sr. inspired the 20th-century version.

Mr. Vanderlip, a former assistant secretary of the treasury, in 1912 bought 10,000 acres of the rancho before he saw Southern California the first time.

The rancho area was undeveloped. There was some farming and cattle ranged the western hills. Coyotes howled much as they always had long before the King of Spain in 1542 granted the sons of Dolores Sepulveda 32,000 acres known thereafter as Rancho Palos Verdes.

For Mr. Vanderlip it was love at first sight. The Palos Verdes Peninsula reminded him of a

favorite spot in Italy. He subdivided the area divided into a few choice estates where he and congenial friends might build Italian villas for their retirement.

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RARE DELLA ROBBIA on tower of hayloft at Vanderlip home was imported with other art.



HORSES SET PACE for park life. At farthest, new Portuguese Bend Riding Club, pals of Freese-ley (horse) are, from left, Mimi Whitehouse, Jan Pakewick, in saddle, Rick Larnard, Chris Dryden.

# PALOS VERDES

Continued from First Page

Harry Benedict, long-time friend and associate of Mr. Vanderlip, recalled the first time he visited the original Vanderlip cottage. He took along his bride, the late Mrs. Benedict.

"We'd just arrived from the East," he said. "We rented an old model Ford on San Pedro and bumped over dirt trails for hours. There was no coast road then. And that cottage had neither gas nor electricity. Isolation seemed complete. But Mr. Vanderlip set out to build a new world on the peninsula. Here he would one day build the villa of his dreams."

Because he admired Italian art and architecture, all buildings were to be Italian Renaissance in design. He planned an Italian village for the hill above the lighthouse. Artisans

were to be imported from Italy to live there, so that Old World skills could fashion his New World dream.

Meanwhile, the most immediate need was to house the horses, the key to life on the peninsula in Indian times.

## Villetta Built

(Today there are more horses for pleasure riding on the Palos Verdes Peninsula than in any comparable area in the country.)

By 1926 Mr. Vanderlip had built the handsome Villetta, a miniature of his dream villa. For years he had imported statuary, columns and objets d'art to be used indoors and out.

Priceless Della Robbias were included. These were painstakingly installed high on the exterior walls of the Villetta. Even the farmstead has a Della Robbia, mounted on its feeding tower.

Over the years the Vanderlip plan for landscaping the rolling countryside took shape. Trees by the thousand were planted across the hills — there had been none before.

Mrs. Vanderlip, whose home is now in Scarsborough, N.Y., directed the huge planting projects. One year she brought Italian cypress seedlings from the Mediterranean in a suitcase.

Today they are streamlined stalwarts marking in classic precision 268 steps which lead straight from the Villetta garden to a marble colonnade atop the hill.

Wild peacocks sedately criss-cross the stairway and call companions perched in the trees. The peacocks, everywhere on the peninsula, were once part of a Vanderlip aviary of 500 birds brought from over the world.

When Mr. Vanderlip died in 1937, his legendary villa was still a dream. But a way of life had come per-

manently to the peninsula.

Today everyone roams the picturesque hills — usually on a horse. Preschoolers learn to ride. Social activities center in riding groups and competitions for young and old.

These range from gymkhanas, informal competitions held by the children, to the annual Portuguese Bend National Horse Show, which benefits Childrens Hospital.

There is the riding group, Caballeros del Rancho Palos Verdes, founded a few years

ago by Roland G. Swaffield, "the squire of Rolling Hills." Thanks to the caballeros and the Vanderlips hundreds of miles of trails have been improved for all who love to ride.

Today some 500 acres remain officially in the Vanderlip Estate. But everywhere on the Palos Verdes Peninsula one sees the influence of the "new world" he first envisioned.

The future?

Where peacocks climb a stairway to the sky, there is no limit.

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