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### Letter from Cornelia Maaïke van Malsen Vander Luister to Her Parents, Brothers, and Sister

Cornelia Maaïke van Malsen Vander Luister

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December 16, 1847

Holland, Ottawa County, Michigan

A letter of Cornelia Maaïke Van Malsen Vande Luister [she had been married to Jannis Vande Luister on September 11 by Albertus C. Van Raalte] to her parents, brothers, and sister, about many family matters because she had heard from her parents on November 12. She then gave a report on life in the Van Raalte family: I am still in the household of Rev. Van Raalte but am going to my own house this week. The pastor and his wife are my dear friends; we have very much in common. The Lord grant that I may find grace in the in the eyes of the people. All three of us (the minister, his wife, and I) are writing to the Netherlands. It is nine o'clock in the evening. The dear little ones are in bed. The two smallest—Christina, a dear little girl of about two and Dirk, a lad of four, call me "aunt"; they are all fond of me. I will have the youngest for fourteen days as soon as he is weaned. Benjamin is seven; then comes Mina, nine; and Albertus, who is eleven years old. Arie, you should see how neatly those boys can chop wood. They all have little axes, even little Dirk... We have already been with this good family for three months... During the winter months our English teacher comes to instruct both the children and the adults, especially in English. The minister and his wife pray constantly for a God-fearing teacher... (Van Raalte) has so much to do that I often feel sorry for him.

She is also urging her parents to come to America and gives them advice about the trip and what they need to take.

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# MICHIGAN HISTORY

Lewis Beeson, *Editor*

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# MICHIGAN HISTORY

VOLUME 32

MARCH 1948

NUMBER 1

## David Ward: Pioneer Timber King

*Rolland H. Maybee*

WITHIN FOUR MONTHS of his seventy-eighth birthday, David Ward, Michigan's undisputed pine king, died at his Orchard Lake home near Detroit on May 29, 1900. He died a multimillionaire and perhaps Detroit's wealthiest citizen. From 1836 to 1900—sixty-four years—he lived in Michigan, selected choice pineries for Detroit and eastern clients, became Michigan's most extensive pine-land holder, and lumbered extensively in many parts of Michigan and Wisconsin, conducting personally his wide business activities, vigorously, quietly, but always profitably. His life was the personification of the era of rugged individualism. For him business success became an obsession. He started in almost abject poverty, a victim of ill health, scorned and scoffed at by rich relatives, later earning small wages as a surveyor, a schoolteacher, pine explorer, and commercial fisherman, young David Ward in 1851 at the age of twenty-nine finally abandoned all other pursuits and entered the scramble for ownership of Michigan pine lands. He became the most eminent figure in the rise and development of Michigan pine lumber, spurred on by personal pride, a bitter family feud, by ambition, a keen mind, and by an indomitable energy.<sup>1</sup> At maturity, David Ward was still a small man in stature, but with an unusually large head. He stood only five feet five and a half, weighed less than 150 pounds, was well built, not always healthy, but looked to the woods as naturally as an aboriginal." While spending

<sup>1</sup>In compiling this paper I have made use of *The Autobiography of David Ward* (New York, 1912); *The American Lumberman*, June 2, 1900; the *Detroit Evening News*, May 29, 1900; the *Detroit Journal*, May 29, 1900; the *Detroit Sunday News-Tribune*, May 26, 1895, February 26, 1899; Thomas Donaldson, *The Public Domain* (47 Congress, 2 session, *House Miscellaneous Documents*, part 4, volume 19) (Washington, D.C., 1884); John Ise, *United States Forest Policy* (New Haven, 1920).

people. It has been less than five months since we arrived and now there are good log houses and even handsome houses made of boards with good cellars. The church there is already half built. Father walked with us a half hour before we arrived home. There is a great need for carpenters here, and the daily wage is a dollar, so that B— can safely come over. V. St. and V. H. would prosper in the cities here, especially if they would learn some English. All of you should learn the English language soon; often I am sorry that we did not begin with it sooner at home. I am getting along quite well with it now, and the Americans gladly speak with us. Many English speaking men and women come to see the minister, and then I talk as best I can. ✓ Van Raalte and I have progressed about equally well. We are often asked to go to Allegan and other places. Van de Luijster is getting along well with English. When Rev. Van Raalte is out of town, which happens often and sometimes for long periods, Van de Luijster preaches and is blessed by it. When the Lord shows the way, he will gladly complete his studies. A big house of boards and a store is being constructed for — and Company and we will work for them for — dollars monthly. We have all the household necessities required. A sister of Van de Luijster is coming to live with us and that will be a big help. We are all well and so are keeping up with things. I enjoy much peace of mind. Many have been ill this summer and some have died but no more than might be expected; more illness and deaths are to be expected among immigrants because of the changes in soil, atmosphere, and mode of living. Worthy parents, we hope to answer the questions in your letters soon—when we will have more time to write and will have received some news from Cornelis. My husband is not aware that I am writing this; he asked me to seal and post his letters and the thought occurred to me that I might slip in a little letter. The letters you sent along with Ruitenbergen have not yet arrived. The minister, while returning from Detroit recently, stopped to see Rev. Hoit but there was no letter. Our chest remained intact, but it would have been better if it had been only half as large because its unusual weight might have proved a temptation to some people. A second sawmill is being built. We have had a communion service for the first time—under the open sky—a large crowd was present. The Lord is doing great things for us; everything needed for administering the sacraments of communion and baptism were given as a gift by

American Christians in Buffalo. Dear parents and relatives: may the Lord bless you all; may He give you the wisdom to know and to do what is needed for His Honor and our salvation. We hope to write you jointly within a few days. W. could earn a living here with a needle, and no one needs to be ashamed of his occupation. I hope that the Lord will hear our prayer and, in His time, cause us to live together in this free land. The Van Raalte and Van de Luijster families greet you heartily. Greet our family at Zwijndrecht, at Hedel, Driel, Zwaluwe, and all friends and neighbors. If Oggel must pay extra postage on these letters, return half of it to him; I added that to his letter for when I had his letter, the desire came over me to write. Remember us in your prayers, even as we remember you. I am embracing you all in my thoughts.

Your dear daughter and sister,

C. M. VAN MALSEN

It is possible that you may receive these letters about New Year's Day.<sup>21</sup>

HOLLAND, OTTAWA COUNTY, MICHIGAN

16 December, 1847

DEARLY BELOVED PARENTS, BROTHERS AND SISTERS:

With joy and with a prayer to God I have again seated myself to write a letter which I hope will cheer you. I pray that the Lord will lead me and light my way with His Holy Spirit. I hope that you have received the last letter I sent, enclosed with others for Oggel. I could only mention a few things at that time. I hope, too, that you have received our letters of September 22. Your letter, which I received on November 12, is before me and I hope to answer the questions you have raised in some sort of regular order. It is really unnecessary for me to mention that I was very happy to hear from you; you can well imagine that. I am deeply grateful that the Lord has spared your lives in spite of severe illnesses. I pray God that the illness may have affected our dear Aaltje and Arie—that they may pray much for regeneration. Our dear Lord Jesus says, "Let the children come unto me." Then they need not fear death. I hope that Betje will seek the Lord too, since He has again shown that He has no pleasure in her death. Often

<sup>21</sup>Through God's goodness, the day when we should humble ourselves was the day when these letters were received.

the Lord binds the condition of your souls upon my heart and I cannot leave you when I am at the throne of Grace. We are all living for an endless eternity and our life is as a cloud which is seen for but a short time and then disappears.<sup>22</sup>

I have heard nothing of the R.'s and I often ask Netherlanders, who are coming here consistently, if they have met them on board ship.<sup>23</sup> You have written, dear father, that I was never to forget the mercies God showed us on our journey. No, dear father, God did show them, and now it seems but a wild dream whenever I think how we crossed such a wide ocean. I did not think of J. v. B. when I was in Albany but I did after I was already here; if I had thought of him in Albany I would have asked Rev. Wijkhoff about him. Yes, we could have crossed overland in a much shorter time but we did not know that until too late.<sup>24</sup> I am very happy that mother is reconciled to our departure; I was often concerned that she might grieve too much; this caused me to pray for her often. I am glad to know that father and mother are both well. Also, that Weiltje and my dear Maaïke continue to be well. It is good that you keep the relatives informed concerning us; I am sure you gather that we want you to do so. Greet them all heartily for me. Last night I dreamed that grandmother had passed away; may the Lord look down upon her in mercy if she is still in the land of the living. I earnestly hope that those of our family who were so ill have been restored to health. There is a man here from Eeil, in Thielerswaard, a nephew of Aunt W., and he mentioned that he too had received a letter stating that Aunt van Enspik had died. So Uncle Jan of Hedel is no more! This troubles me, especially because there appears to be no indication that he is in a better land, unless he learned to lead a better life before his death. Have you been to Gelderland, father? Oh, my dear family! I continually feel so happy and thankful that the Lord, through His wonderful providence, has brought me

<sup>22</sup>The Lord gave the writer and ourselves much happiness, but she soon had to endure the hate and the persecution of the world and much unkind treatment from some who claim they are children of God.

<sup>23</sup>We received word, also on the first of January, that these friends had arrived in good health at Chicago on November 22 and hoped to go to Holland, Michigan, in the spring. Their sea journey to New York took twenty-six days.

<sup>24</sup>Last year brother Plugger left Nievaart. He had a prosperous voyage but wandered in America for seven months before he arrived in the colony at Holland. The trip should only have occupied as many days. It is so important to be informed beforehand concerning the route, and one must be constantly on the alert and praying to Him whose promises are also for needy strangers.

here and I pray daily that He will bring you in order that our family may be planted here and that we may serve the Lord together. I am still in the household of Rev. Van Raalte but am going to my own house this week. The pastor and his wife are my dear friends; we have very much in common. The Lord grant that I may find grace in the eyes of the people. All three of us (the minister, his wife, and I) are writing to the Netherlands. It is nine o'clock in the evening. The dear little ones are in bed. The two smallest—Christina, a dear little girl of about two and Dirk, a lad of four, call me "Aunt"; they are all food of me. I will have the youngest for fourteen days as soon as he is weaned. Benjamin is seven; then comes Mina, nine; and Albertus, who is eleven years old. Arie, you should see how neatly those boys can chop wood. They all have little axes, even little Dirk. They would be good playmates for Arie, Aaltje, and Maaïke. We have already been with this good family for three months. We . . . One can get a nice American clock here for four dollars; Van de Luijster bought one home from Chicago for us. Before I forget—if you come next spring, bring a — for Mrs. Van Raalte; one of —; they are unobtainable here. Dear parents, the more I think about it the more strongly I want to say, "All come, and P. should also come over." I have consulted father Van de Luijster and asked his opinion. He said, "Write that your father and brother should come; they can be very helpful here. Next year, many more will be coming from the Netherlands." Rev. and Mrs. Van Raalte advise the same. During the winter months our English teacher comes to instruct both the children and the adults, especially in English. The minister and his wife pray constantly for a God-fearing teacher. And you, father, you could be so helpful to the minister. He has so much to do that I often feel sorry for him. I would also advise that P. first marry, for there certainly is bread for him if he is careful. We could be of great help to you since we are now somewhat acquainted here. We would also see to it that a house would be ready for you which you could occupy immediately. However, we would not be able to buy land for you because we do not know just where you will want to live; you can attend to that when you arrive. I would suggest that you arrange your affairs so that you can leave together, in April or May. I would also advise that the three little ones come along so that they will be in this land when the Lord calls them, for in the Netherlands, even for one who is industrious

and thrifty, it is hard to get along; here there is an abundance of work and good wages. Besides, there is liberty. Father Van de Luijster is so pleased to be here! He was here to see Rev. Van Raalte earlier in the week. Tomorrow Rev. Van Raalte is going to Zeeland to take an option on 3840 acres of land for the people expected to come in the spring. Father shows his love for me by his deeds. The families of Rev. Van der Meulen and Stekete are contented and well. The former teacher, Mr. Van Baarland, a man eighty-four years old, has landed with his wife, who is a dear Christian, and they are enroute here; they continue to come here in spite of the evil reports circulating about our colony. There are now few, if any, sick here at present. Our city has 120 houses in addition to those in Zeeland, Vriesland, and Drenthe. The doctor who came with us is still here; I visit with his wife frequently and correspond with her sister, who remained in New York.

The widow Wildeboer is here with her five children and is getting along well. There is positively no poverty here. We often ask things of the people. This week we hope to take up a collection in order to buy a stove for a widow. Stoves are commonly used here, with wood for fuel. They are much different from those in the Netherlands; we can use four cooking vessels at once. We will see to it that a good one is obtained for you. A man arrived last week from the Netherlands and he said that the ocean voyage occupied only twenty-one days; he is sixty-eight years old. Thus the Lord, who holds everything in His hand, shows His care and goodness. We have not heard of a single immigrant ship being lost. At first we thought we would send our letters to Cornelis in Buffalo, but Van de Luijster thought there would be a better chance of your receiving them if we mailed them directly. So we are sending them to you separately. We understand from settlers who had stopped at Buffalo that Cornelis is well, that all is going satisfactorily, and that he leads the Hollanders in their Sunday services. We are daily expecting a letter from him. The teacher who comes here for the three or four winter months receives \$30 monthly. This sum was promised Cornelis, but he didn't care too much about the way of life here, being more accustomed to a different way. It is so good if one adjusts himself to a task; we still must learn this—as must our brother.

Van de Luijster will answer your questions concerning the land here for he is enclosing a letter. He is of much value to the colony and

for the last fourteen days has been near the Kalamazoo River; I expect him home tomorrow. He still desires, if it be the Lord's will, to be a minister. Our pastor has so much to do that it is impossible for him to do any tutoring. If Rev. B— should come here next year, there might be an opportunity. May the Lord cause us to believe and trust in Him. Most of the women and girls here go bareheaded; I wear a loose hat, as do many others. The toothache, that thorn in my flesh, troubles me often, and so I think it best not to go uncovered.

The above was written fifteen days ago at Rev. Van Raalte's house; we have since moved to our own house, and that has hindered me from posting this. We hope to send this to Allegan tomorrow with the mail which leaves here for that place each Thursday. The postman is a certain Bos from Ommen. Van de Luijster formerly stayed at his house here. There are many people here from Ommen. We are now living by ourselves and one of my husband's sisters is here with us. There are three sisters still at home, but father is not planning to farm, but rather, desires to spend the remaining years in rest. She is about eighteen years old and very helpful and is good company, especially when my husband is gone. Often I say to my husband, "I certainly wish all our relatives could see how pleasantly we all live together; I am sure they would be pleased." When you write again we hope that you will have determined the time of your departure. Do not go by way of Antwerp or in the company of others; go by yourselves. You will have more peace and freedom. Provide yourselves with those things which are so good and so necessary aboard a ship: prunes, raisins, lemons, sugar, vinegar, wine, tea, coffee, dried apples and pears, eggs, etc., in addition to staples such as flour, rice, barley, etc., etc. So far as household furnishings are concerned, you need bring only such small items as can be readily packed, such as dinner dishes, small boxes, salt cellars, etc. . . . but no clock, chiffonieres, tables, mangling machines, chests, and similar items. Whatever you need in that line, such as a stove (no. 4), chairs, and table can be purchased in Buffalo. There is no extra charge for transporting them here. It is good to bring along new bed tickings because feather beds are expensive here. Merinos are unobtainable here and Orleans stuff is very expensive. Shoes cost no more here than in the Netherlands, but yard goods are not to be seen. Cottons are about the same price as you find here. Do not forget cologne. Bring the large Bibles along and at least

two Dutch Bibles for each, for the only ones obtainable here are in English. Also bring two Dutch-English dictionaries. Writing materials can be obtained in Buffalo. It would be advisable to bring along garden seeds; I hope to plant mine in the spring, for when the land had been cleared this year, it was already too late. (A list of items of wearing apparel and household furnishings follows.)

Now, my dear ones, I must close; it is midnight. I pray that the Lord will be your guide and He will unite us in joy and thankfulness at His appointed time. Remember us in your prayers. May He keep and guide you. The Van Raalte and Van de Luijster families greet you. Greet every family, friend, and neighbor. Having embraced you all in my thoughts, I remain,

Your dear daughter and sister,

C. M. v. d. Luijster, nee van Malsen

Do not make the boxes too large and close them well. Last week the minister received the news that the Br. family is larger. Mr. Veerk is in Albany.

My husband's uncle has been here for the last three months and is doing well. Old Visser and his son live in our neighborhood. Mrs. Van Raalte was over yesterday afternoon. More hearty greetings!

HOLLAND, OTTAWA COUNTY, MICHIGAN  
15 December 1847

DEARLY BELOVED PARENTS, ETC.:

My prayer is that He who governs all will cause these letters to find you enjoying health, peace, and blessings; that they will be as cold water to a tired man. That is my prayer to Him who has brought us here under His guiding hand. Amen!

I trust that you have received Cornelia's letter of September 22 in which she mentioned that the Lord has led us in such a manner that we were married on the twelfth of September. We lived with Rev. Van Raalte's household for a while and were treated with a paternal kindness right up to the last moment of our stay. We are now living by ourselves. There are three in our household, for my sister Elizabeth is living with us, although I do not know for how long. We are living in the greatest peace and, thanks to God, we have sufficient supplies for this winter, whereas some others are not so fortunate. We have

more than enough cause to say with the Psalmist: "Praise the Lord, O my soul, and forget none of His kindnesses."

Two weeks ago we visited my parents, who live a good two hours' journey from here, and found them in good health; they also enjoy a calm and quiet assurance so that they can rejoice in God. In them we see the truth expressed in: "Joy and light is to the upright of heart, etc."

I am one of the three members of the colony who are charged with handling the common funds for the welfare of the colony. I receive 150 daily but do not work every day. In addition I am to prepare houses for newcomers. I plan to do this until this coming spring, or possibly, a bit later. Then Rev. Van Raalte, with an alert young Englishman, plans to erect a factory for the production of potash and soap. A large store will be attached which, so the Lord wills, I shall manage at \$16 per month.

You can see that, according to a human point of view, my earlier studies are not doing me much good, although I do preach now and then and, I hear, with approbation. You will perhaps wonder how I reconcile myself to this. The Lord be praised! He has given me a submissive heart, even a quiet, contented, and thankful heart so that I do not hesitate to attempt whatever may come. For example, sometimes I preach twice on Sundays and come to be considered and greeted as a minister; yet on the next day I am an ordinary laborer with torn clothing. That cannot be avoided. Sometimes I serve in the capacity of merchant and, then again, as a judge, but all those changes are made, so far as I am aware, in the same frame of mind, or rather, outward demeanour, for the heart is full of evil. Enough of that! Now I hope to briefly answer your questions regarding the colony. I first wish to mention that we have received your letters of September 25 and November 12. You can well imagine how happy we were to read your letters. We praised and thanked God for the favorable news they contained. You pay fifty-four cents to send a letter to us and we must pay, in addition, seventy-seven American cents. The population here numbers fifteen or sixteen hundred. Because many left Holland so late, about seven hundred who wanted to come to this colony were required to remain in Buffalo. Six hundred are at Milwaukee, including various Zeelanders who notified us of their arrival about two weeks ago and expressed an interest in our colony. It is said that there are