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Letter from Ben Van Raalte to A. C. Van Raalte

Ben Van Raalte

Nella Kennedy

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4 March 1859

Holland, Michigan

Ben Van Raalte, a son of Albertus and Christina Van Raalte, wrote his father saying that he had not yet received a letter from him although his mother had. Ben reported that the hired hand had run off so he had not been able to do anything about the fence. After he finishes his work in the morning, he strips wood until 4.30 p.m. and then attends evening school. Derk brings his father up-to-date on farm matters.

In Dutch; translated by Nella Kennedy, 2001.

Original owned by a Van Raalte descendant, Cindy Merwin, Weaverville, California.

Holland, Ottawa, Mich. March 4[?], 1859

Dear father,

I have not received a letter from you. Mother has received a letter today. Our hired hand has ran off angry {met een booze kop=with an angry head] so I am alone so that I have not been able to do anything on the fence. But I think, since we don't have a hired hand, we wouldn't have to pay him either, so now I do all the work myself. I finish about ten o'clock in the morning, or earlier. Then I strip bark [?] [hout=wood; meaning of rijzen in this context not clear; hout rijzen – possibly work with brother Albertus in the lumberyard] until four-thirty. Then I go home to do my work there in order to be on time to get to evening school. We brought the pigs to the sawmill pond. The reason is that it is unthinkable to obtain corn and they can have it pretty good there; they have already made a hole in it. The little ones stayed here. Now I don't need to feed the horses so much [?=hard] and they don't suffer in[?] those short days. We couldn't feed them anyhow so that I could continue to work hard.

Frank became crippled again but even so seems to be getting better. But he stood loose last night and then he probably acted mischievously [literally: went to tease] so that they beat him and now he has become crippled in the front too. Witback calved; her milk comes in reasonably well [literally: she gives reasonably well]. Her calf is a female. It is growing well; it is eight days old now. The other animal of Albertus will calf in less than a month. Well, father, I hope that your trip will make you healthy. I long for your return. Write me your thoughts about whether there will be a drop in grain yet.

B. Van Raalte

[translator's note: the letter shows several mistakes in Dutch, and B. also anglicized words]

Nella Kennedy, Translator, 200,

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Weaverville, CA

Holland, Ottawa, Mich Maart 2 1859.

Lieve Vader.

Ik heb nog geen brief van uw gehad Moeder ~~heeft~~ van
dag een brief onvangen onse knecht is met een boor kop
tot gelopen en nu ben ik alleen zoo dat ik nog niets aan de
fenzen heb kunnen doe - maar ik denk zoo als wy geen knecht
hebben dan hebben wij hem ook niet te betaalen en nu doe
Ik al het werk selve en dan ben ik smorgens om 10 uur klaar of
vroeger en dan ga ik hout rijen te 4 of half 5 - en dan ga ik
na huis om mijn werk te kunnen doen op mijn tijd in de
avond school te kunnen komen Wij hebben de vorkens naar de
laagsmook pond gedaan om rede er is geen denken an kaoren
en zij kunnen het reedelijk goed hebben daar zij hadden er
al een goed gat in geslaagen de klijnen zij hier gebleven
en nu hoer ik de paarden niet zoo hard te voeren. en
nu lijfen zij niet Van die korte daagen wij konnen er
toe niet voeren zoo dat ik hard door kon werken

Frank is weer koppel gemaden maar schijnt tog better
te worden maar hij is gesteren nacht los geweest en toen
is hij seker aan het plaagen gegaan zoo dat zij hem geslaagd
hebben zoo dat hy van vreden ok nog k^opel gevonden is
Witback heeft gekalft zij geeft redelyk goed haar kalf is
een kuis het groeit ^{oe}g^oet het is nu acht dagen oud het
andere beest van Albertus zal nog in geen maand kalven
nu Vader hoop dat uw ^{ei}rij^ger gezond mag maaken
Ik ver lang naar u te rug komst schrijf mij uw gedaaten
of er nog dding zal komen in grain.

B. Van Raalte.