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Rev. Seine Bolks, President, and E. B. E. Janssen, Clerk, of the Classis of Wisconsin, Reported to the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church

S. Bolks

E.B. E. Janssen

Nella Kennedy

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Recommended Citation

Bolks, S.; Janssen, E.B. E.; and Kennedy, Nella, "Rev. Seine Bolks, President, and E. B. E. Janssen, Clerk, of the Classis of Wisconsin, Reported to the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church" (1855). *Van Raalte Papers: 1850-1859*. 286.

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[post] 25 April 1855

Milwaukee, [Wisconsin]

Rev. Seine Bolks, president, and E. B. E. Janssen, clerk, of the Classis of Wisconsin, reported to the General Synod of the Reformed Protestant Dutch Church that the Reformed churches in the state have "banded together to form a Classis." The classis now seeks recognition from the synod. Rev. Martin A. Ypma and Elder G. Brand were elected as delegates to the meeting of the General Synod.

[Among those mentioned in the letter was Rev. Jerome A. Davenport, missionary of the RCA in Wisconsin and whose letters I have on file at the Van Raalte Institute.]

Original in the papers of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America at the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, New Jersey, and in microfilm at the Joint Archives of Holland, W88-250a.

revised
framer. & transl.

To the Venerable General Synod
of the Ref. Dutch Church.

Milwaukee, -----
[prob. April 25, 1855]

Esteemed Brothers!

Grace and peace be granted you in full measure by God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We, congregations of Wisconsin and Illinois, belonging until now to the Classis of Holland in Michigan, as part of the Reformed Church, have banded together to form a Classis -- Classis Wis[consin] -- to which also belongs northern Illinois. This had the complete approval of the Classis of Holland. We met as such last April 25, and present were the congregations of Milwaukee, Bethlehem, Oostburg and Franklin (Wisconsin), and Chicago, High Prairie and Low Prairie (Illinois). Pastors present were Reverends [Martin A.] Ypma, [Koenraad] Vander Schuur, [Seine] Bolks and Jeroen [Jerome] A. Davenport and the elders of the afore mentioned congregations. They united themselves as a Classis. Appointed as delegates to the Synod were Brothers M. Ypma, pastor, and G. Brand, elder. [We] desire that the Brothers of the Venerable Synod will include and recognize us as Classis, and to seat as well the brothers whom we have appointed as delegates. [We have the] hope that the Triune God will bless all of us, and will shine His countenance upon you and us in favor and grace. May he fill us with the true spirit of Pentecost. Amen

Signed on behalf of Classis S. Bolks President
E.B.E. Janssen, Scribe

[revised transl.:
Nella Kennedy
Jan 2004]

De WEW General Synod
of the Ref. Dutch Church. –

Milwaukee den

Waarde Broeders!

Genade en vrede worde u in ruime mate geschonken van God den Vader en onzen Heere Jezus Christus door den H. Geest Amen. –

Daar wij als gemeenten van Wisconsin en Illinois tot hiertoe behoort tot de Classis van Holland in Mich. in alles vereening met de Geref. Kerk, hebben ons vereening, ook met volkomen goed keuring der Classis van Holland, om eene Classis te vormen, als Classis van Wis- waar mede in begrepen is het noorden van Ill. – en zijn als zodaning vergaderd op den 25 April ll: waar tegen woordig waren, de gemeeten Milwaukee, Bethlehem, Oostburg en Franklyn uit Wis. en Chicago, Hooge Praery en Lage Praery uit Ill: en als leeraars waren er aan wezig Ypma, van Schuur, Bolks en Jeroem A. Davenport, met de ouderlingen van voornoemde gemeenten, en hebben zich als Classis vereening, en als afgevaardigen voor de Synode benoemd de Broeders M. Ypma Leeraar en G. Brand ouderling, En begeeren dat de Broeders der Ewd Synode ons als Classis opneme en erkenne; als mede de Broeders die wij als afgevaardigen benoemd hebben Zitting verlene, en op de vergaadering toelate, in hoop dat God drieening ons te zamen zegene, en Zijn aangezicht in gunst en genade over u en ons doe lichten. Hij vervulle ons met dien waaren Pingstergeest. Amen

Geteekend in naam der Classis S. Bolks Praeses
E.B.E. Janssen, Scribe

[Transcription: Nella Kennedy
January 2004

Numerous misspellings and lack of proper punctuation – no anglicisms]

De W^{de} General Synod
of the Ref. Dutch Church.

Milwaukee den

e 1855

Waarde Broeders.

Genade en vrede worde u in ruime mate geschon-
ken van God den Vader en onzen lieve Jhesus Christus
door den H. Geest Amen.

Jaar wij als gemeenten van Wisconsin en Illinois
tot hiertoe behoord tot de Classis van Holland in Mich.
in alles vereening met de Geref. Kerk, hebben ons ver-
eenig, ook met volkomen goed Keuring der Classis van
Holland, om eene Classis te vormen, als Classis van Wis-
consin mede in begrepen is het noorden van Ill. — en zijn als
Godaning vergaderd op den 25 April l^{de}. waar tegen woordig
waren, de gemeenten Milwaukee, Bethlehem, Oostburg en
Frankflyn uit Wis. en Chicago, Slooge Praery en Sage Praery
uit Ill. en als Leeraars waren er van wettig Ypma, van Schuut
Bolk en Jeroem A Davensport, met de Ouderlingen van
voornoemde gemeenten, en hebben zich als Classis ver-
eenig, en als afgevaardigen voor de Synode benoemd de
Broeders M. Ypma Leeraar en G. Brand Ouderling, En begeeren
dat de Broeders der Erw. Synode ons als Classis opneme
en erkenne, als mede de Broeders die wij als afgevaardigen
benoemd hebben Litting verlene, en op de vergadering toe
late, in hoop dat God drieëning ons te Damer zegene, en
Zijn aangedicht in gunst en genade over u en ons doe lichten
Hij vervulle ons met dien waaren Pijetergeest Amen

Geteekend als in naam der Classis J. Bolk's Praes

E. B. E. Janssen, Schrijver

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New Brunswick, New Jersey**

**Reformed Church in America Archives
General Synod Papers**

“1849 Particular Synod Organizational Changes”

W88-250a

Microfilm Roll, 3P-1

At the Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, Holland, Michigan

[General Synod Papers, 1849-1859]

ARTICLE 7 - The receipts for the monthly prayer services taken on behalf of domestic missions are as follows:

Franklin	\$2.30
Bethlehem	5.75
Milwaukee	16.07
Total	\$24.12

The travel expenses for the delegates to classis for the previous meeting were \$15.14, divided as follows:

Milwaukee	\$ 6.00
Franklin	2.70
Oostburg	3.22
Holland	3.22
Total	\$15.14

The meeting was closed with the singing of Psalm 119: 47 and with prayer and thanksgiving led by Brother J. Kotvis.

(Signed by the president and both clerks)

THE CLASSICAL MEETING OF THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH OF WISCONSIN
HELD AT MILWAUKEE ON THE 25TH DAY OF APRIL, 1855

ARTICLE 1 - The meeting of classis began at 10:00 A.M. with the preaching of a sermon by the Rev. M. A. Ypma, based on John 17: 20, 21. The Rev. van der Schuur led in prayer and made a few comments.

ARTICLE 2 - The following brothers, upon presenting credentials from classis Michigan, were received with joy in our midst. The following is a list of names:

Ds. S. Bolks, Ds. M. A. Ypma, ministers; Elder R. van Vuren, Elder H. van Zwoll

Ds. S. Bolks was chosen as president.

ARTICLE 3 - The following congregations were represented:

Milwaukee - S. Bolks, minister; L. Rademaker and E. Janssen, elders
Franklin - J. Kotvis, elder
Bethlehem - G. Brand, elder; G. Wilkins, deacon
Oostburg - K. van der Schuur, minister; H. Harms, elder
Holland - (absent)
Chicago, IL - H. van Zwoll, elder
High and Low Prairie - M. A. Ypma, minister; R. van Vuren, elder;
and Jerome A. Davenport, missionary to the
group in the West

[undated]

Milwaukee, on [blank]
[1854 or 1855]

To the Venerable Synod of the Ref. Dutch Church

[post 25 April 1855]

Esteemed Brothers!

Grace and peace be granted you in full measure by God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit. Amen.

We, congregations of Wisconsin and Illinois, belonging until now to the Classis of Holland in Michigan, as part of the Reformed church, have banded together to form a Classis, [This action has] the complete approval of the Classis of Holland. Present at the meeting of April 25 last were the Reverends [Martin A.] Ypma, [Koenraad] Vander Schuur, [Seine] Bolks and Jeroen [Jerome] A. Davenport and the elders of the congregations of Milwaukee, Bethlehem, Oostburg and Franklin, [all] in Wisconsin, and Chicago, High Prairie and Low Prairie, in Illinois. They united themselves as a Classis. Nominated to be delegates to Synod were the Rev. M[artin A.] Ypma and elder G. Brand. [This new] Classis desires to be included and recognized by the brethren of the venerable Synod, and, furthermore, that these elected brothers be admitted to the meeting and be seated. We have hope that the Triune God will bless all of us and will shine His countenance upon you and us in favor and grace and that He fill us with the true spirit of Pentecost. Amen.

Signed on behalf of Classis S. Bolks, President

E.B.E. Janssen, Scribe

CLASSIS HOLLAND

MINUTES 1848-1858

Translated by a Joint Committee of the
CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH
and the
REFORMED CHURCH IN AMERICA

WM. B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRAND RAPIDS 1950 MICHIGAN

MEETING OF THE CLASSIS OF HOLLAND, HELD
SEPTEMBER 13th, 1854, IN THE CHURCH
BUILDING OF ZEELAND

There were present, from
Holland: Rev. Van Raalte and elders Wilterdink and
Hekhuis.

Overisel: Elder Wolterink.

Drenthe: Elders Op'tholt and Wiggers.

Vriesland: Elder De Vree.

Zeeland: Rev. Van der Meulen and elders Van de
Luister and Huyser.

North Holland: Deacon Van Tongeren.

Kalamazoo: No one.

Grand Haven: Elders Mieras and Slaghuis.

Grand Rapids: Rev. Klein and elder Haan.

Art. 1. After Rev. A. C. Van Raalte had delivered
the opening sermon, on Isaiah 60:12, the meeting was
opened with prayer by Rev. Klein, to whom, in order of
succession, the office of presiding was committed.

Art. 2. Upon the reading of the minutes, which were
approved, there arose a discussion, by occasion of Article
3 of the set of rules for transportation of Netherlanders
needing assistance, in which it is said that they must be
irreproachable and indigent people, on the point whether,
under this term, also Roman Catholic people must be
included. After much debate, it was the almost unani-
mous judgment, that it would be contrary to the idea of
the contributing churches, if the collections should be used
for Roman Catholics; that we certainly must do good to
all men, but first to those of the household of faith. Also,
that, in the exercise of benevolence, our own security must
not be lost sight of, since Roman Catholics, under the

guidance of their leaders, are constantly dangerous for
religious and civil liberty, since they are by their faith
and religion* bound to intrigue so as to transfer all
authority into the hands of the Pope of Rome.

Art. 3. After suspending the session for an hour to
take dinner, the meeting is resumed with prayer by Rev.
Klein, and the singing of a psalm, to wit, Ps. 90:9.

Art. 4. Rev. Schultz** being present, as representa-
tive of the Classis of Michigan, he is given the floor, upon
which he communicated the interest felt by the body that
he represented, in the welfare and prosperity of the
Classis of Holland, and particularly of the Netherlands
settlement; (and) gave expression especially to the desire
for fraternal fellowship—Christian fellowship being,
without doubt, the sweetest and most fruitful. (He said)
that (the importance of) the education of the young had
caused them cheerfully to co-operate in promoting and
supporting the interests of the English Academy at Hol-
land, and (he) hopes that the training of the children will
constantly have the first place; in order that the (rising)
generation may become useful instruments for the king-
dom of God; since experience teaches that it is just in this
way that God builds up His kingdom; and that, in addi-
tion to this, we may look upon the development of our
rational abilities as a duty in the sight of God, which
without this (development) would be a talent buried in
the earth. Further, he wished that the rich blessings with
which God had favored these Holland immigrants, in
granting them, in addition to the gift of the truth, also
a land of room and freedom, might arouse in them double
zeal to be a blessing to the kingdom of God, but (he

*—The original has here: "Hun geloof hun godsdienst," which is con-
sidered by the Committee to be an error for "Hun geloof en gods-
dienst."

**—John Newton Schultz, born 1819, graduate of Rutgers and New
Brunswick Sem., the pastor at Centreville, Mich.

acknowledgment of our bounden duty to labor with more consecration for the kingdom of God, and particularly in "The West." In accordance with this, a number of resolutions had been adopted; for instance, the sending of ministers to the various points of importance, the payment of traveling expenses for western delegates to the Synod, recommendation of the new "New Brunswick Review," and the appointment of a committee for the publication of works with ecclesiastical approval.*

The Synod also approved, by a unanimous vote, the request of the Classis to send to the Village of Holland a preacher for the Americans, to whom at the same time could be committed the care for the English Academy.

CLASSIS OF WISCONSIN

Art. 7. The clerk informs the assembly, in accordance with tidings from Rev. Van der Schuur, that several congregations had united themselves into a Classis in Wisconsin, among which is also the church of Milwaukee and vicinity; at the same time declaring themselves to be very desirous of the exercise of fellowship. The entire assembly expresses itself as glad of this spirit of union, and concludes with cheerfully granting release to the churches connected with this Classis, praying for the Lord's blessing upon this newly formed classical union.

It was, however, judged necessary to give the brethren the information that, according to the fundamental principles of the Reformed Church, the formation of new churches takes place under the supervision of Classis, and of Classes under that of Synod; that to that end application is to be made to the Particular Synod of Albany. Further, that classical jurisdiction requires three congre-

*—For these actions see Minutes of General Synod for 1853 and Corwin's Digest, pages 418 and 563. The "New Brunswick Review" issued only four numbers, viz., in May, August and November of 1854, and February, 1855. The action concerning publications led, in the following year, to the establishment of the Board of Publication.

gations and three ministers, because the work of a Classis is of such a nature that it cannot well be entrusted to a smaller number.

Art. 8. The congregational collections for the transportation of Netherlanders who need help, were as follows:

Holland, (repaid) ..	\$42.65	Individual at	
Grand Rapids and		Holland	\$ 6.00
Grandville	18.00	Grand Haven.....	20.00
Graafschap	18.00	Vriesland	6.00
Drenthe	6.00	Overisel	6.00
Zeeland	77.00		

Taking occasion from the fact that Holland took back its collection, with the purpose of bestowing the same, in connection with other funds, for the benefit of a definite object, it is resolved that although the churches in the Classis are at liberty to devote such collections to definite ends, henceforth the disposal of such collections thereafter, i.e. after being repaid by the beneficiaries, shall rest with the classical commission.

After calling upon the name of the Lord, by lot the right to bestow the funds for the benefit of the object of his choice fell to the congregation of Zeeland, and, in particular, to Mr. Kruif.

ACADEMY

Art. 9. A report of the school is presented; that Mr. Taylor leaves*, and Rev. Crispell has been appointed, and that there is hope of his acceptance of this call. Remarks are made (expressing the hope) that the ministers may act faithfully in distributing the funds to suitable persons. It is decided that the deficit in the school treasury, amounting to \$70, caused by the great rise in prices, shall be covered by a classical assessment on the churches,

*—See Minutes of April 12, 1854, Art. 2.

MEETING OF THE CLASSIS OF HOLLAND, HELD
APRIL 11th, 1855, IN THE CHURCH BUILDING
OF THE ZEELAND CONGREGATION

Present were the preachers, Rev. Gardenier, of Kalamazoo, and the elder from that place, brother Lankheet.

From Zeeland: Rev. Van der Meulen, elders A. Van Bree and A. Borgers.

From Grand Rapids: Rev. Klein and elder F. Van Driele.

From Grand Haven: Rev. Bolks and elder A. Slaghuis.

From Holland: Rev. A. C. Van Raalte and elders Broek and Jonker.

From Drenthe: Elders J. Wiggers and K. Boer.

From Vriesland: Elders H. Yntema and E. Zylstra.

Overisel: Elders N. Kok and Nykerk.

Graafschap: Elders H. Strabbing and P. Boven.

Polkton and North Holland: absent.

Art. 1. In the forenoon was heard a sermon by Rev. Gardenier, exhorting to love, on Psalm 133; after which the meeting was opened with prayer by the previous presiding officer, Rev. H. G. Klein, and with the singing of Psalm 25:4. Upon request, Rev. Gardenier is excused from presiding; which is assigned to Rev. Van der Meulen, and accepted by him; and after having opened with prayer, he proposes to proceed to the disposal by lot of the funds for the transportation of Netherlanders needing assistance. The moneys paid in to that end were as follows:

From the Church of Grand Haven, (withdrawn) ..\$	20.00
From the Church of Zeeland.....	24.00
From the Church of Grand Rapids.....	11.00
From the Church of Kalamazoo, (previous time)	29.00

From the Church of Drenthe.....	6.35
From Sprick, (Vriesland).....	3.00
From an Individual, (Holland)*.....	3.00
From the Church of Holland.....	28.25
From the Church of Overisel.....	15.00
From the Church of Graafschap.....	6.24
From the Church of Kalamazoo.....	19.00
From the Church of Vriesland.....	7.73
From E. Zylstra.....	3.00
Balance from the previous time.....	10.00

Total,**\$165.57

Grand Haven withdrew its funds, for a particular use, with the promise to pay them in to the Classical treasury when received back.

The church of Kalamazoo pays \$20 into the fund for the transportation of ministers who are needy and have been called by the churches, being in part a repayment of the moneys advanced to cover the travelling expenses to America of Rev. Gardenier. Rev. Gardenier also paid in \$20 towards the discharge of the same sum.

After having called upon Him in whose hand rests the outcome of the lot, the assignment thereof fell to Cornelius Nijssen, of Kalamazoo.

Art. 2. After the meeting had been suspended on account of dinner, business was resumed with prayer by brother Van Bree.

Art. 3. The minutes were read and approved.

DEPARTURE OF BOLKS AND YPMA

Art. 4. The reverend brethren, Bolks and Ypma, having accepted calls to Milwaukee and the Prairies,*** in

*—Dutch, "Persoon." Was this possibly a proper name?

**—The above figures add up to \$185.57, but the \$20 of Grand Haven had been withdrawn, making the total available, as stated, \$165.57.

***—Namely, the churches of High Prairie and Low Prairie, now the churches of Roseland and South Holland.

Illinois, desire dissolution of their classical membership, so that they can be received into the Classis of Wisconsin. Likewise, this is desired by the churches in Illinois, to wit, Chicago, and the High and Low Prairies. The clerk is unanimously instructed to issue letters of dismissal. Meanwhile, it is judged that when ministers leave, more attention should be paid to Art. 10 of the church order, and that the consistories, in the case of vacancies, must make more use of the help of the moderators.

LETTER FROM THE SYNOD ABOUT CHURCH BUILDING

Art. 5. A letter is read from the committee appointed by the General Synod, held June 11th, to carry out the general church building plan; in which it is asked what is the judgment of the Classis with regard to the importance and possibility of said plan, and what is the number of congregational collections. With regard to this, the following resolutions are adopted unanimously:

(1) The Classis of Holland rejoices that the Dutch Reformed Church is undertaking systematically to promote the building of churches in the domestic missionary fields, as being a necessary and efficient means to plant everywhere the banner of the truth dear to us.

(2) The Classis has not the least doubt either of the practicability or of the success of the plan, and the less so because God (calls us) loudly (to this work), (and) in His providence, through the history of the day, opens to us that opportunity for service and lays upon us that burden; and we neither can nor may entertain any doubt of either the ability or the good will of the churches.

(3) The Classis realizes that on account of the newness of the country and the pressure of (our) own congregational needs, the contributions of this Classis are insignificant; yet it is willing to help along, and decides herewith to take up an annual collection in the churches upon the appointed day, for this fund, (although up to

the present only the Holland church has responded to this duty).

Finally, that a copy hereof shall be sent to the committee named above.

Art. 6. The congregational statistics and reports of Zeeland, Grand Haven, Holland, Graafschap, and Kalamazoo are read; the rest being lacking, through misunderstanding.

Art. 7. As representatives to the General Synod in New Brunswick are appointed Revs. C. Van der Meulen and H. G. Klein, of Grand Rapids, and elder Js. Van de Luister, of Zeeland; and as Secundi Revs. A. C. Van Raalte and C. Gardenier, of Kalamazoo, and elder Van Hees, of Zeeland.

PROPOSAL FOR UNION WITH SECEDED CHURCHES

Art. 8. The Rev. H. G. Klein raises the question whether it would not be possible to use means to bring about a reunion with the brethren who were torn away under the leadership of Smit, formerly known among us as a minister, and under the leadership of a certain brother Schepers. He points out that, in his opinion, (this) separation is caused neither by difference of doctrine nor by immoral conduct, and that therefore much may be done from our side to make an approach, in order that separation may be caused to cease; even though this should be with recognition of both persons named as ministers of the churches.

Many speakers let themselves be heard with regard to this, especially among the ministers (in favor of) doing all that was possible towards union, it being, in their estimation, advisable rather to bear with many follies than to permit so numerous a portion of the church to be torn away, and a chasm of bitterness and estrangement to be made permanent. It was, however, difficult to consider it a possibility, and to find suitable means to the

that he should to that end take into consideration the glorious and blessed nature of the work, together with the especially strong and urgent call to this work, both from the congregation and from the classical assembly.

Art. 19. The church of Kalamazoo, being of opinion that the constant holding of the meetings of Classis in Zeeland imposes too great a burden upon her, by reason of the great and difficult journey, desires that the meeting be held, in turn, in Kalamazoo. It is pointed out to the brethren in Kalamazoo how unfair it would be to oblige the multitude all to make that great journey for the sake of a couple of delegates.

After lengthy discussion of this matter, and in consideration of the advantage it is for a congregation to have the meeting held in her midst, together with the advisability of avoiding even the suspicion of unfairness, it is resolved to meet with each church in turn, the succession of which was indicated by lot as follows: No. 1, Vriesland; No. 2, Grand Haven; No. 3, Grand Rapids; No. 4, Holland; No. 5, Overisel; No. 6, Zeeland; No. 7, Graafschap; No. 8, Kalamazoo; No. 9, Drenthe.

Art. 20. After the classical sermon for the following meeting had been assigned to Rev. Kleijn, and (since) none of the brethren had any business to bring forward, the meeting was closed with singing, and with prayer and thanksgiving by brother A. Borgers.

C. VAN DER MEULEN, *Pres.*
A. C. VAN RAALTE, *Clerk*

MEETING OF CLASSIS HELD SEPTEMBER 5th, 1855, AT VRIESLAND

Present were, from

Vriesland: Elders K. De Vree, M. Den Herder.

Holland: Elders J. Labots, Appeldoorn.

Zeeland: Rev. C. Van der Meulen; H. Krans and J. G. Van Hees, elders.

Drenthe: Elders Op'tholt and D. De Kleine.

Grand Haven: Elders K. Mieras and A. Slaghuis.

Overisel: Not represented.

Graafschap: Elders P. Boven and A. J. Neerken.

Grand Rapids: Elders G. Haan and P. Esvelt.

Kalamazoo, Polkton, and South Holland — not represented.

From Milwaukee, Rev. Bolks, as delegate from the Classis of Wisconsin and Illinois, having been sent for mutual conference and fraternal fellowship.

Art. 1. For the reason that Rev. Klein, who was to have preached the Classical sermon, was not present, being hindered by a slight indisposition and the bad road, Rev. Bolks, having been requested to do so, preached on Hebrews 13:1.

The previous president, Rev. Van der Meulen, opens the meeting with prayer, and is requested by a unanimous vote to preside at this meeting also, since most of the ministers were not present; which he accepted. Since the clerk of the meeting, Rev. A. C. Van Raalte, was not present (being also prevented by illness) J. G. Van Hees was elected to serve as clerk for this time.

Art. 2. The assembling of funds collected for the transportation of needy people from the Netherlands was then begun. The collection was as follows: