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Van Raalte Papers: 1850-1859

Van Raalte Papers

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Letter from the Firm J. L. Whiting and Adams to A. C. Van Raalte

J. L. Whiting

Adams

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January 1, 1850

A letter from the firm of J. L. Whiting and Adams to ACVR, stating that they had received by Mr. Post a package of deeds and certificates. The firm is to research the titles for ACVR. See Hyma, page 164.

Calvin College Archives: Van Raalte Collection, Box 8, folder 141.

Calvin C. Arch
P.O. Box 141
Box 5, floor 141

Dear Sir,

Detroit, January 18⁵⁰~~49~~

We have received by Mr. Post the large packages of deeds & certificates — and have copied the descriptions of same and the years &c. — We presume that what you wish us to do, is, to find out what we can about the titles, & ascertain if possible who owns the other undivided interests &c. —

This we will endeavor to do as well as we can and as soon as we can get time — and report to you &c.

Yours etc.
Whiting & Adams

Rev. A. Van Rackett

Rev. A. Van Kester

Holland

Ottawa

Per Post

Jan. 1, 1850

Hyoma

Mich.: February 1, 1848, 40 acres; February 1, 1848, 40 acres; February 1, 1848, 40 acres; February 1, 1848, 160 acres; February 1, 1848, 63½ acres; April 5, 1849, 80 acres; April 5, 1849, 45 acres; April 5, 1849, 40 acres; and April 10, 1851, 160 acres.

That Van Raalte took no chances in his purchases of land may be gathered from the following letter from a law firm in Detroit dated January 1, 1850: "Dear Sir, We have received by Mr. Post the large package of deeds and certificates — and have copied the descriptions of same and the years, etc. We presume that what you wish us to do is to find out what we can about the titles, and ascertain if possible who owns the other undivided interests, etc. This we will endeavor to do as well as we can and as soon as we can get time — and report to you." This was the firm of J. L. Whiting and Adams.

In one respect Van Raalte was not so sagacious, namely, in the purchase of land he had not yet fully explored. For that reason we find him writing a pathetic letter one day to the son of Mr. Nathaniel Silsbee. To be exact, it was August 19, 1851, and Van Raalte remarked: "In September 1847 I did get a contract on a part of your land in Ottawa, Michigan, for the Holland Colony bij your father's agent Mr. Ch. Noble of Monroe. . . . I did pay him down \$100. . . . On 1 Sept., 1851, there is to paj \$140.74, and I am glad that I can saj it is at hand. . . . At last on 1 Sept. 1853, I have to paj \$408.74. This is a large amount and I am much in fear that I can not paj it at that time at once unless I maij

be so fortunate that I can dispose of a part of my property. This is a singular country. We have enough to eat and still to get moneij back is next to impossible. . . . Sir, when it is impossible to paj that time I wish you would be so kind to have patience with me."

What worried him the most was that there were several families living on the land he had bought from Mr. Silsbee, and he did not want to see them evicted. Moreover, there was on his tract about one hundred acres of swamp, and every time the river rose a bit all that land was flooded. In short, until that land was drained it was worthless. At the end of the letter Van Raalte wrote: "One thing I assure you, I will not abuse your patience; I will surely pay you just as fast as possible. I hate debts."

We would be most unkind to Van Raalte if we refused to take his word for this remark of conclusion. He had undertaken a tremendous task in the year 1847. His ignorance of geography had caused him some painful losses, and before long he was unable to meet all of his obligations. Those who would feel inclined to entertain thoughts unfavorable to the founder of the "Colony" should bear in mind what he wrote in his well-known letter of January 30, 1847, addressed to Brummelkamp. During the past five or six weeks, so he admitted, he had spent a large sum of money. But he had won the friendship of progressive Americans. If the latter could supply him with about \$3,000, he could go ahead and buy land

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Yours etc.
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Holland

Ottawa

Mr Post

