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10-27-1869

A Letter of A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps

A. C. Van Raalte

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Jersey City, N. J., October 27, 1869

10,53

A letter of A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps, reporting on his discussions
Suydam and Schieffelin. A key letter which reveals Schieffelin's thinking
about investments and his interest in "Classical Schools."

Original in the Archives of Hope College.

When because you will win in debtage,
He will ask your opinion on that point.
This caused me to hope that He thinks
of clearing away our debts. - The Lord
can move his heart. -

If He clear our debt, it will not leave, and
insofar not please the Board: But Mr.
Suydam did give already to the En-
dowment. And besides this I place every where the
emphatically in any light of getting a growing insti-
tute this struggle. Therefore I press you for financial support.

At the present I must wait for develop-
ment of matters before I can judge
about ~~the~~ the line of duty or ~~how~~
to work. I find the churches occupied & bear making my labor will do them more good than that of my own hands.
I desire send me a map,
a common Town map of our Town
Hollama, comprising the whole lake, to
enable me to show the relative position
and importance of Point Superior. I have
only a mutilated one... Overburg or Schaddel
may have one to copy! -

I find much ignorance and evil ideas
I am glad to find them, which enables me to
correct them: being dependent from the East
we ought to have here an advocate. -

Please drop in your writing to Mr. Suydam the
fact: that the immigrant churches did collect
last year quite a sum to keep matters going; besides
nearly 3 m. for the boys: let it be understood that
the educational funds are classical, but that our
debts are separate. - Some people are mixing those things
and that we are picking up boys to an extent. I see there is
some here very bad seed. your friend & brother
M. Van Raalte.

Rev. Dr. Phelps Jersey City N.J. 1849

Dear Brother,

I spent my
time in writing to different ones, and
Mr. Schieffelin and Suydam: The
first named, is given to a new scheme
F.W. Classical Schools: a part of that
scheme which we did defend last winter
in connection with colleges under Particular
Synods and Semener under the General Synod.

My plan and practice of colonizing
and planting educational centers
is meeting his ideas: He wishes to proceed
with such enterprises lands for education.
He likes to secure land in America for that
purpose: being warmly interested, I did place
our Hope college lands in that same light.
He is now very kind, invited me to stay
with him: He spoke with Mr. Suydam:
and did teach me how to deal with Suydam.

When I had conversation with Mr. Suydam
 and Mr. Suydam did like to know all about
 Amelia; and Mr. Schaeffelin's proposals about
 it. I did prove to him, that He had delivered
 me ~~me~~ from destruction by aiding, when
 under a pressing debt, and that He thereby
 had saved me, and the whole enterprise;
 but that ^{also} His help had enabled me to give
 60 acres ^{city lands} valuable for permanent investment,
 as much as was possible: ~~but~~ that the
 present in debt ^{however} would destroy that
 object, because we had to cut it up etc.

Then He did ask me: What I thought to
 be the most important claim: I told Him,
 that it was to keep us alive and deliver us
 from debt, and to save our property.
 that to lose this property was bitter for the
 donors and ruinous for the institution.
 (I thought it was my duty to go outside the
 Endowment fund: self preservation is mine;
 for one.) In the mean time He was an-
 xious to know: the origin of our debts:
 I explained our contingent fund: then that
 the opportunity of an antagonistic village

Had ^{for a future broad basis} pressed also the importance of investment in such lands,
 at Superior point, did make it ^{it prudent} to
 secure it to the institution. He objected,
 and giving no income: I pointed out the
 purchase price, ^{which He could not believe because I had told} that Howard sold
 already for over the hundred: that my
 donation if it was wisely sold, ^{it would}
 bring 60 M. also that the Superior
 point with a little of one or two M. by
 peach trees could be made profitable
 and a good source of income. Then He read
 your letter ^{and your question} and

Then He objected, because when helped
 we could run again in debt: I could
 only answer that my endowments labor,
 and the labor for an ^{contingent fund} and
 rise of property etc did better our ^{position}.
 I write you this ^{being} some of the main points,
 that you, in answering a letter which you
 will receive, may be able to give your at-
 tention to those points, which I like to have
 them verified, that you will not forget to
 mention them ^{or not to come in implicitly with them}. I will not raise my hopes
 too much: but He said often: I am going
 to do not much for you: thus He is going
 to do something: and then He objected

Conversation with Schieffelin & Suydam
Superior lands & debts etc

53.

Reverend Mr Phelps Jersey City Oct 24/69

copy taken
bx 9/16

Dear Brother,

I spent my
time in writing to different ones, and with
Mr Schieffelin and Suydam: The
first named, is given to a new scheme
F.W. Classical Schools: a part of that
scheme which we did defend last winter
in connection with colleges under Particular
Synods and Seminars under the General Synod.

My plan and practice of colonizing
and planting educational centers ^{which}
is meeting his ideas: He wishes to connect
with such enterprises lands for education.

He likes to secure lands in America for that
purpose: being warmly in ^{this} I did plan
our Hope College lands in that same light.

He is now very kind, invited me to stay
with him: He spoke with Mr Suydam: -
and did teach me how to deal with Suydam.

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in I had conversations with Mr. Suydam
and Mr. Suydam did like to know all about
Amelia; and Mr. Schieffelin's proposal about
it. I did prove to him, that He had delivered
me ~~once~~ from destruction by aiding, when
under a pressing debt, and that He thereby
not only had saved me, and the whole enterprise;
but that ^{also} this help had enabled me to give
to ^{city lands} ~~acres~~ valuable for permanent investment,
^{to wit} as much as was possible: ~~but~~ that the
present indebtedness ^{however} would destroy that
object, because we had to cut it up etc.

Then He did ask me: What I thought to
be the most important claim: I told Him,
that it was to keep us alive and deliver us
from debt, and to save our property.

that to lose this property was bitter for the
donors and ruinous for the institution.

(I thought it was my duty to go outside the
Endowment fund: self preservation is mine,
for one.) In the mean time He was an-
xious to know: the origin of our debts:
I explained our contingent fund: then that
the opportunity of an antagonistic village

(I had ^{also} ~~previously~~ ^{previously} ~~also~~ the importance of investment in such lands,
for a future broad basis.)
at Superior point, did make it prudent to
acquire it to the institutions. ^{and} He objected,
ad giving no income: I pointed out the
purchase price; ^{which He could not believe because I had told} that Howard sold
^{the acre} already for over the hundred: that my
donation if it was wisely sold, it would
bring 60 M. also that the Superior
point with a little of one or two M. by
peach trees could be made profitable
and a good source of income. Then He read
my letter, and ^{asked questions} ~~asked questions~~.
Then He objected, because when helped
we could run again in debt: I could
only answer that my endowments, labor,
and ^{the labor} ~~the labor~~ for an ^{contingent fund} ~~contingent fund~~, and
rise of property etc did better our ^{being} ~~position~~.
I write you this some of the main points:
that you, in answering a letter which you
will receive, may be able to give your at-
tention to those points, which I like to have
them verified: that you will not forget to
mention them. ^{or not to come in conflict with them} I will not raise my hopes
too much: but He said often: I am going
to do not much for you: thus He is going
to do something: and then He objected

When because you will win in debt paying
He will ask your opinion on that point.
This caused me to hope that He thinks
of clearing away our debts. — The Lord
can move his heart. —

If He clears our debt it will not release, and
insofar not release the Board. But Mr.
Suydam will give all ready to the in-
document.

At the present I must wait for develop-
ment of matters before I can judge
about ~~the~~ the line of duty or how
to work. — I please send me a map,
a common Town map of our Town
Hollana, comprising the whole lake, to
enable me to show the relative position
and importance of Point Superior. I have
only a mutilated one. — Dorsburg or Schaddeler
may have one to copy. —

I find much ignorance and evil ideas.
I am glad to find them, which enables me to
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we ought to have here an advocate. —

Please drop in your writing to Mr. Suydam the
fact; that the immigrants churches did collect
last year quite a sum to keep matters going; collect
nearly 3 m. for the boys: let it be understood that
the educational funds are (radical, but that our
debts are separate. — Some people are mixing those things
and that we are picking up boys to an excess. I see there is
some here very bad seed. your friend & Brother
H. Van Kaath.

And besides this I place every where the
cruelly in any light of letting a growing with-
out this struggle. Therefore I press our sentiment
I find the churches occupying I fear that my labors will do them more good than that I write here in my own hand.

Hope Collection
of the
Joint Archives of Holland

Jersey City Oct 27 / 69

Revd Dr P Phelps

Dear Brother,

I spent my time in writing to different ones, and with Mr. Shieffelin, and Mr. Suydam; The First named is given to a new Scheme t.w. (to wit) Classical Schools: a part of that Scheme which he did defend last Winter in connection with colleges under Particular Synods and Seminaries under the General Synod.

My pain and practice of colonising and planting educational centurms with it is meeting his ideas: He wishes to connect with such enterprises lands for education. He likes to secure lands in Amelia for that purposes: being warmly in this I did place our Hope College lands in that same light. He is now very kind, invited me to stay with him: He spoke with Mr. Suydam: -and did teach me how to deal with Suydam. Then I had conversation with Mr Suydam. and Mr Suydam did like to know all about Amelia; and Mr Shieffelin's proposals about it. I did prove to him, that He had delivered me once from destruction by aiding, When under a pressing debt, and that he thereby not only had saved me, and the Whole enterprise: but that also his help had enabled me to give 60 acres city lands valuable for permanent investment to wit as much as was possible: that the present indebtedness however would destroy that object, because we had to eat it up etc: Then he did ask me: What I thought to be the most important claim: I told him that it was to keep us alive and deliver us from debt and to save our property. that to loose this property was bitter for the donors and ruinous for the institution. I thought it was my duty to go outside the endowment fund: Selfpreservation is Number one: In the meantime He was anxious to know: the origin of our debts: I explained our contingent fund: -then that the opportunity of antagonistic village at Superior point did make it prudent to secure it to the institution. I did press alsoo the importance of investment in such lands for a future broad basis and that Mr Moore had given three thousand for it He objected as giving no income: I pointed out the purchase price: Which he could not believe because I had told that Howard had sold already the acre for over the Hundred: that my donation if it was wisely sold would bring 60 M. - also that the Superior point with a little of one or two M: By peach trees could be made profitable and a good resource of income. Then he read your letter and did question me. -Then he objected because when helped we could run again in debt: I could only answer that my endowments labors, and the labors for an contingent fund and rise of property etc did better our position. I write you this being some of the main points: that you, in answering a letter which you will receive, may be able to give your attention to those points, Which I like to have them verified; that you will not forget to mention them or not to come in conflict with them. -I will not raise my hopes too much: but he said often: I amgoing to do something: and then he objected because you will run in debt again. (He will ask your opinion on that point:) this causes me to hope that he thinks of clearing away our debts. -The Lord can move his heart.

If he clears the debt it will not releave, and in so far not please the Board: But Mr. Suydam did give already to the Endowment. And besides this I place everywhere the cruelty in daylight of letting a growing institution thus struggle: therefore I press our contingent expenses.

At the present I must wait for development of matters before I can judge about the line of duty or How to work: -I find the churches occupied: I fear that my labors will do them more good than that it will bring money to us - Please send me a map, a common town map of our Town Holland comprising the Whole lake, to enable me to show the relative position and importance of point Superior. - I have only a mutilated one. Doesburg or Schadelee may have one to copy.

I find much ignorance and evil ideas, I am glad to find them, Which enables me to correct them: being dependent from the East, we ought to have an advocate.

Please drop in your writing to Mr. Suydam the fact: that the immigrant churches did collect last year quite a sum to keep matters going; besides nearly 3 M. for the boys: let it be understood that the educational funds are Classical, but that our debts are separate. -some people are mixing those things. and that we are picking up boys to an excess: I see there is sown here very bad seed.

Your friend and Brother

A: C: Van Raalte

Jersey City Oct 27 / 69

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Dear Brother,

I spent my time in writing to different ones, and with Mr. Shieffelin, and Mr Suydam; The First named is given to a new Scheme t.w. (to wit) Classical Schools; a part of that Scheme which he did defend last Winter in connection with colleges under Particular Synods and Seminaries under the General Synod.

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Your friend and Brother

A: C: Van Raalte

Jersey City Oct 27 / 69

14

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Dear Brother,

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If he clears the debt it will not releave, and in so far not please the Board: But Mr. Suydam did give already to the Endowment. And besides this I place everywhere the cruelty in daylight of letting a growing institution thus struggle: therefore I press our contingent expenses.

At the present I must wait for development of matters before I can judge about the line of duty or How to work: -I find the churches occupied: I fear that my labors will do them more good than that it will bring money to us - Please send me a map, a common town map of our Town Holland comprising the Whole lake, to enable me to show the relative position and importance of point Superior. - I have only a mutilated one. Doesburg or Schadelee may have one to copy.

I find much ignorance and evil ideas, I am glad to find them, Which enables me to correct them: being dependent from the East, we ought to have an advocate.

Please drop in your writing to Mr. Suydam the fact: that the immigrant churches did collect last year quite a sum to keep matters going; besides nearly 3 M. for the boys: let it be understood that the educational funds are Classical, but that our debts are separate. -some people are mixing those things. and that we are picking up boys to an excess: I see there is sown here very bad seed.

Your friend and Brother

A: C: Van Raalte

69-10-27

[GS53]

The stay of the Van Raaltes was only for a few months. Upon returning home, Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte's efforts were involved with fund-raising for Hope College and keeping the institution solvent. Presently, he is in Jersey City, New Jersey. This letter is a long report on his on fund-raising with two major donors: Samuel B. Schieffelin and James Suydam, both of whom have already been very generous in their donations to Hope College.

Jersey City Oct 27/69

Revd Dr P Phelps

Dear Brother,

I spent my time in writing to different ones, and with Mr. Schieffelin,¹ and Suydam; The First named is given to a new Scheme t. w. Classical Schools:² a part of that Scheme which he did defend last winter in connection with colleges under Particular Synods and Seminaries under the General Synod.

My plan and practice of colonising and planting educational centurms with it is meeting his ideas: He wishes to connect with such enterprises lands for education. He likes to secure lands in Amelia for that purposes: being warmly in this I did place our Hope College lands in that same light. He is now very kind, invited me to stay with Him:³ He spoke with Suydam: -and did teach me how to deal with Suydam. Then I had [a] conversation with Mr. Suydam. and Mr Suydam did like to know all about Amelia; and Mr Shieffelin's proposals about it. I did prove to Him, that He had delivered me once from destruction by aiding, When under a pressing debt,⁴ and that He thereby not only had saved me, and the Whole enterprise: but that alsoo his help had enabled me to give 60 acres city lands valuable for permanent investment:⁵ to wit as much as was possible: that the present indebtedness however would destroy that object, because we had to eat it up etc:

¹ Samuel B. Schieffelin who became a good and generous friend of Van Raalte has been referred to before several times in the Van Raalte/Phelps correspondence. See index for references. See also the references to Schieffelin in the minutes of the General Synod as given by Edward Tanjore Corwin, *A Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation...*, (1906), 672.

² Schieffelin had a great interest in developing a parochial school system in the Dutch Reformed Church. This may be one reason why Van Raalte caught his attention. The Holland Academy and consequently Hope College received considerable support from Schieffelin's largesse.

³ It is now obvious that Van Raalte established a warm friendship in which Schieffelin confided about James Suydam and how to deal with him.

⁴ The final sentence in this long sentence is difficult to decipher. The pressing debt referred to is likely the debt incurred by Van Raalte when he purchased about 3,000 acres from Courtland and Mary Palmer at the time the Holland Colony was begun in 1847. Schieffelin and Suydam took over the mortgage owed the Palmers as indicated in the letter of Van Raalte to John Garretson, secretary of the Board of Education dated 18 April 1854. (Original in the archives of the RCA, New Brunswick, New Jersey.)

⁵ Did Van Raalte at a later date deed sixty acres of land he owned as an endowment for Hope College? What Van Raalte seems to indicate that this property would have to be sold by the college in order to take care of the current indebtedness of the college.

Then he did ask me: What I thought to be the most important claim: I told Him, that it was to keep us alive and deliver us from debt and to save our property.⁶ that to loose this property was bitter for the donors and ruinous for the institution. (I thought it was my duty to go outside the Endowment fund: Self preservation is Number one:) In the meantime He was anxious to know: the origin of our debts: I explained our contingent fund: - then that the opportunity of antagonistic⁷ village at Superior point did make it prudent to secure it to the institution. I did press alsoo the importance of investment in such lands for a future broad basis and that Mr Moore⁸ had given three thousand for it. He objected as giving no income: I pointed out the purchase price: Which he could not believe because I had told that Howard⁹ had sold already the acre for over the Hundred: that my donation if it was wisely sold would bring 60 M.¹⁰ - also that the Superior point with a little of one or two M: by peach trees¹¹ could be made profitable and a good resource of income. Then He read your letter¹² and did question me.

-Then he objected because when helped we could run again in debt:¹³ I could onlij answer that my endowments labors, and the labors for an contingent fund and rise of property [values] etc did better our position. I write you this being some of the main points: that you, in answering a letter which you will receive, may be able to give your attention to those points, Which I like to have them verified; that you wil not forget to mention them or not to come in conflict with them. -I will not raise my hopes too much: but he said often: I am going to do not much for you: thus He is going to do something: and then he objected because you will run in debt again. (He will ask your opinion on that point: this causes me to hope that he thinks of clearing away our debts. --The Lord can move his heart.

If he clears our debt it will not releave, and in so far not please the Board: But Mr. Suydam did give already to the Endowment. And besides this I place everywhere the cruelty in daylight of letting a growing institute thus struggle: therefore I press our contingent expenses.

⁶ When Van Raalte indicated here that the college was deeply in debt, it is hard to understand why the college, under Phelps' leadership insisted on making the college into a university.

⁷ It is hard to understand why Van Raalte would use the word antagonistic to describe the so-called village at Point Superior as this area was called on the north side of then Black Lake, now Lake Macatawa. This piece of land amounted to 830 acres of land, property on which Hope Haven University would be situated and where acreage was available to raise fruit for the support of the college.

⁸ Person unknown.

⁹ An early Holland, Michigan, area resident. This may be the same person after whom Howard Avenue is named. This street run parallel along the north side of Lake Macatawa. (called Lori, Feb 3,04)

¹⁰ Van Raalte uses the initial "M." to designate one thousand.

¹¹ Van Raalte was always hopeful that peach fruit culture would be a profitable venture.

¹² Here is another clue that Phelps wrote Van Raalte at various times, correspondence that later was presumably destroyed.

¹³ Suydam who would have any number of persons seeking money from him knew how to ask probing questions. In this case he was right. His large forthcoming \$10,000 gift to Hope College for this land did not solve the college's financial problem, financial problems that got to be so large that Phelps was forced to resign as president in 1878.

At the present I must wait for development of matters before I can judge about the line of duty or How to work: -I find the church¹⁴ occupied: I fear that my labors will do them more good than that it will bring money to us – Please send me a map, a common town map of our Town Holland, comprising the Whole lake, to enable me to show the relative position and importance of Point Superior. – I have only a mutilated one. Doesburg¹⁵ or Schadelee¹⁶ may have one to copy.

I find much ignorance and evil ideas¹⁷, I am glad to find them, Which enables me to correct them: being dependent from the East, we ought to have here an advocate.

Please drop in your writing to Mr. Suydam the fact: that the immigrant churches¹⁸ did collect last year quite a sum to keep matters going; besides nearly 3 M. for the boys:¹⁹ let it be understood that the educational funds are Classical,²⁰ but that our debts are separate. –some people are mixing those things. and that we are picking up boys to an excess: I see there is sown here very bad seed.

Your friend and Brother

A: C: Van Raalte

¹⁴ Namely, Dutch Reformed congregations Van Raalte was visiting asking for donations.

¹⁵ There were several Doesburgs in the village. This person may be Cornelius Doesburg who, according to Van Raalte's letter to Phelps in 19 January 1861 was the district school teacher. In 1866, he was engaged by Hope College to teach Netherlands Language and Literature and held this chair until 1899. P. T. Moerdyk collection, archives of the Holland Museum.

¹⁶ Very likely this person is Kommer Schadelee, a person of some prominence in the Holland. He lost his office on Eighth Street in the Holland fire, 8 and 9 October 1871. "A Contemporary Account of the Holland Fire," that appeared simultaneously in *De Grondwet*, *De Wachter*, and *De Hollander*, 12 October 1871. Published in *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs*, Henry S. Lucas, ed., (1997), ii, 494. He was a member and elder at the Third Reformed Church. See Bruins, *The Americanization of a Congregation*, (second ed., 1995, for several references to Schadelee who was strongly anti-Masonic in views. After the Pillar Church left the denomination over the Masonic issue, the Schadelee left Third Church and returned to Pillar Church

¹⁷ Among Eastern Dutch Reformed Churches? This sentence is unclear in its meaning.

¹⁸ Van Raalte wants to make it clear that the Dutch immigrant churches are supporting the educational endeavors focused on Hope College and theological education there.

¹⁹ Namely the students in the Holland Academy and Hope College. Education for young women had not yet become a reality at these schools.

²⁰ Classical as related the local classes or judicatories of the RCA in the Middle West.