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

A. C. Van Raalte

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July 24, 1872

No. 89

A letter of A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps about the quarter centennial celebration of September and using that occasion to raise money for the Ebenezer Fund. ACVR is full of plans how to take the opportunity to raise money from the churches.

Original in the Archives of Hope College.

(to be published
in our book - EJB)
10 June 2010

72-07-24

[GS84]

Holland Mich:
Julij 24/1872

Revd Dr P Phelps.

Dear Brother---

After preliminary meetings with the Clergy of Holland and Grand River Classes¹ the way seems to be paved for the quartel² Centennial feast and for the erection of an Eben Haezar³ thank offering in behalf of the Grammar School⁴ as a permanent memorial fund.—

Ds. V. D. Veen [,]⁵ De Pree⁶ and Uiterwyk⁷ are appointed to prepare memorial pictures or Certificates for the donations.⁸—

Before the days of festivity 17 Sept. the churches will have a meeting in Which meetings Ds C[ornelius] Van der Meulen⁹ and myself will aid the Consistories¹⁰ in collecting the Subscriptions: All will go in the church minutes and care of collections will be in the hands of Consistories. and the Dominees will join to have a central supervision.- This seems to be a weak¹¹ concern: and yet it a may be the beginning of an

¹ The Grand River Classis was formed out of the Holland Classis in 1870. It included the congregations Fremont Centre (First Reformed), Grand Haven, Grand Rapids, Grandville, Kalamazoo, Muskegon, Polkton (Coopersville), and Spring Lake. Edward T. Corwin, *A Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation...* (New York, 1906), 313.

² Van Raalte's coined word for the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Holland Colony.

³ Van Raalte continued to use the Dutch spelling of Ebenezer.

⁴ As the Holland Academy was then known.

⁵ Rev. Christian Van Der Veen, editor of *De Hope*.

⁶ It is likely that this person is Rev. Peter De Pree, pastor of the church in Vriesland, Michigan. He was also a member of the Council of Hope College and on the editorial staff of *De Hope*. Charles E. Corwin, *A Manual of the Reformed Church in America, 1628-1922*, (New York, 1922), 304. This person may also be Rev. James De Pree, presumably a brother of Peter De Pree since both were born in the city of Axel, the Netherlands, the former in 1839 and James in 1845. At this time in 1872, James was pastor of the Reformed Church of Spring Lake, Michigan. *Acts and Proceedings... of the RCA, ... 1927*, 582.

⁷ Rev. Henry Uiterwyk, pastor of the Third Reformed Church, Holland, Michigan, and a close associate with Van Raalte in raising money for the Ebenezer Fund.

⁸ These documents would serve as a 'thank you' gift for a donation to the fund.

⁹ At this time, Rev. Vander Meulen was serving the Second Reformed Church of Grand Rapids. While Van Raalte retired at the age of fifty six, Vander Meulen was still active as a pastor at the age of seventy two. Second Reformed Church was also Vander Meulen's third pastoral charge.

¹⁰ Van Raalte was desirous of involving all immigrant congregations in fund raising for the Ebenezer Fund. It was a battle for Van Raalte at this time and has been ever since in engaging congregations to be actively involved in fund raising for the church's educational institutions.

¹¹ Or minor concern?

inoculating [sic] the care for the Institution into the body of the people and clergy.¹² Our pictures for the young and fullgrown will help us, to bring it more down among the people.

This week they will find the first instructions and directions in De Hope:¹³ the form of festivity is given in the hands of the different localities to avoid the pressing.¹⁴

After the preaching on the Subject by the dominees, we¹⁵ will go around for the thank offerings subscriptions.-

Yesterday however I was in Overysse¹⁶ with Elder Van Driel.¹⁷ I had preached there [the] Sunday before (Ds. V. D. Meulen was sick).¹⁸ We had a moderate¹⁹ meeting: they made up a Subscription for the permanent Eben Haezar thank offering fund of \$838.00—this will be increased somewhat.- A great deal of it came from small subscriptions of a large number of children: This is just what I want.

This is somewhat a singular way to get a permanent fund in the Churches: mostly living in the Church book or the Book of Minutes What is paid in will be invested,²⁰ now is the question: Can this be accounted for the Centennial?²¹ And is this in conflict

¹² Although Van Raalte found the word 'inoculating' the easiest to use, he clearly wanted to involved the congregations to be fully involved in this fund-raising effort for the Holland Academy.

¹³ Apparently the weekly newspaper published by Hope College had a sufficient circulation that it could be counted on to get the fund raising message across to the churches.

¹⁴ In the close friendship that Van Raalte had with Phelps, Phelps would probably understand some of Van Raalte's cryptic statements or words: "to avoid the pressing."

¹⁵ There is no indication by Van Raalte who the "we" are who will be visiting the congregations for their subscriptions to the Ebenezer Fund.

¹⁶ Van Raalte continued to use the Old World spelling for Overisel, a village in the Holland Colony.

¹⁷ Frans Van Drielle was an active Reformed Church layman in Grand Rapids. A humble day laborer when he came to America in 1847, he became a successful business man in the flour and feed business. Franklin Everett, "Francis Van Drielle," *Memorials of the Grand River Valley*, (Chicago, 1878), 73. The Dutch and English translation of his experiences as a immigrant in America in *Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings*, Henry S. Lucas, ed., (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, rev. ed., 1997, vol. 1, 326-340. In the visit to the Overisel congregation, the "we" in this case were Van Raalte and Elder Van Drielle.

¹⁸ Rev. Cornelius Vander Meulen may have had a "classical appointment" in Overisel. Ministers of the Classis would take their turn in pulpit supply when a congregation did not have a resident pastor.

¹⁹ Van Raalte may have meant successful when using the word 'moderate.' The subscription from the Overisel congregation was very generous.

²⁰ The Ebenezer Fund then would be used to build an endowment fund for the Holland Academy.

²¹ This issue of the Centennial and the content of the entire paragraph is related to the "Centennial of Independence of the Reformed Church in America, 1771-1871." By resolution of the General Synod in 1871, the entire church was directed to celebrate the centennial observance of the Union Convention of 1771 in which the warring parties of the Coetus and Conferentie were reconciled under the leadership of Rev. John H. Livingston. The Coetus party favored a close relationship with the mothering Classis of Amsterdam while the Conferentie party favored Americanization and, in particular, the development of an institution in America for the education of ministers. Hence Queens College, later known as Rutgers College was chartered in 1766. A committee of five ministers and five elders was appointed to raise funds. The committee proposed the following objects for which funds could be donated: "...in computing the amount of the Centennial Fund, all monies raised for the liquidation of debt on churches or denominational institutions; ...; all special gifts to Colleges, Schools or Seminaries in connection with our denomination,

with Synod's resolutions or not? concerning that Western contingency fund perhaps the Council could after this feast²² appoint a Committee to bring about influences to raise through all the Western Churches, a fund in harmonie With Synod's resolutions, as a Western fund for Contingencies.-- Was it the intentions of the Synod that this fund had to be invested by Council in the West? How is that? Please let me have your opinion.

Yours truly

A C Van Raalte

PS I learn from Gilmore²³ that He did demand from the local School authorities a Thousand Dollars salaries.-- This is refused: - Therefore He had written to Dr. West²⁴ for a situation. This is under the rose.²⁵-- Dr. West had named Norris Station.-- I think He is disgusted with being left alone by the whole church.

NB. few days ago I met Prof. Scot[t],²⁶ on the street: He did advance the idea to solicit funds in the surrounding places: What is your opinion?--

within the year, intervening between this and the next Synod, be reported to the special Committee having these matters in charge, and by them counted as a proper part of the work to be done." At the General Synod of 1872, it was reported that \$684,251.00 has been raised. Corwin, *Digest of Constitutional and Synodical Legislation*, 112-114.

At the meeting of the Particular Synod of Chicago in Chicago on 1 May 1872, it was "Resolved, (2) That though the prosecution of the ntended plans for the gathering of expected Centennial Funds was greatly interfered with by the calamitous fires of October 8th, 1871, this Synod desires to express the conviction that the contributions so generously made by all portions of the Church, for the sufferers within the bounds of our Classis of Holland, ought to be counted by the General Synod and its Committee as belonging to the Centennial Fund;...." *Minutes of the Particular Synod of Chicago. Convened at Chicago, Illinois, May 1st, 1872*, 139. Philip Phelps Jr. and Henry Uiterwyk were among the delegates representing the Classis of Holland. Hence Van Raalte is seeking Phelps's opinion because he was present at the Particular Synod where the Centennial Fund was discussed.

²² Van Raalte's Dutch word for festival.

²³ Rev. William B. Gilmore, Van Raalte's son-in-law who in 1872 and 1873 was teaching in "the Female Department" of the Holland Academy.

²⁴ Dr. Jacob West was the corresponding secretary of the Board of Domestic Missions of the Reformed Church. Apparently Gilmore was searching for additional sources of funding for the "Female Department." He may not have been successful for after one year Gilmore returned to the pastorate. Dr. West must have suggested Norris Station, Illinois. Instead, Gilmore accepted the charge of Spring Lake, Illinois.

²⁵ Van Raalte's translation for *sub rosa*, or keeping the matter confidential.

²⁶ Professor Charles Scott, Hope College.

James in the surrounding places: What say you
Street: He will advance the idea in local
No. 100. I am very glad to hear of the
Synod

And is this in conflict with Synod's
resolutions, or not? perhaps the council
could after this feast appoint a
committee to bring about influence
to raise through all the Western
Churches, a fund in harmonization
Synod's resolution, of a Western fund
for Fort Snare. — Was it the
intent of the Synod
that this fund had to be invest-
ed by the Council in the West?
How is that? —

Please let me have your opinion.

Yours truly

P. H. H. from Gilmore
that he had demand from the
local School authorities a thousand Dollars salary.
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had named Norris Station. — I think he is
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Ebenezer Throck offering fund -

Holliman Mich:
July 24/1872

Rev. Dr. P. Phelps.

Dear Brother

After preliminary
meetings with the clergy of Holland
and Grand Rapids classes the way
seems to be paved for the
quarter centennial feast and
for the erection of an Ethel M. Mason
Thank offering in behalf of
the Grammar School as a per-
manent memorial fund. —

D. W. Van Dyke and H. H. H. are appointed to prepare Memorial
pictures or certificates for the
donations. —

Before the day of festivity

17 Sept, the churches will have a meeting in which meetings Dr. C. Vandermeulen and myself will aid, the consistory in following the subscriptions: all will go in the church minutes and the care ^{of collections} will be in the hands of consistory, and the Dominies will join to have ^{a central} say, decisions. -

This seems to be a weak concern: and yet ^{it} may be the beginning of inoculating the care for the Institutions into the body of the people and clergy. - Our pictures for the young and fulgorn will help us, to bring it more down among the people.

This week they will find the first instructions and directions: the form of festivity is given to in the hands of the different localities toward the pressing

After the preaching on the Subject by the Dominies, we will go around for the thank offerings subscriptions. -

Yesterday ^{I had preached there Sunday before} I was in Pitts-
ydelly with Elder Van Driel, (Dr. D menen was sick) we had a moderate meeting: they made up a subscription for the permanent "Dankoffering" fund of \$838.11 - this will be increased somewhat. - A great deal of it came from small subscriptions of a large number (children): this is just what I want: -

This is somewhat a singular way to get a permanent fund in the churches: mostly living in the church book or the Book of minutes what is paid in will be invested, now is the question: can this be accounted for the centennial. And

Holland Mich

July 24/1872

Revd Dr. P. Phelps

Dear Brother:

After preliminary meetings with the Clergy of Holland and Grand River Classes the way seems to be paved for the Quartel Centennial feast and for the erection of an Eben Haezar thankoffering in behalf of the Grammer School as a permanent memorial fund.

Ds. V.D. Veen De Free and Uiterwyk are appointed to prepare memorial pictures or Certificate for the donations.

Before the days of festivity 17 Sept. the churches will have a meeting in which meetings Dr. C. Van der Meulen and myself will aid the Consistories in collecting the subscriptions. All will go in the church minutes and the care of collections will be in the hands of Consistories and the Dominees will join to have a central supervision. This seems to be a weak concern. And yet it may be the beginning of an inoculating the care for the Institution into the body of the people and clergy. Our pictures for the young and fulgrown will help us to bring it more down among the people.

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Yesterday however I was in Overisel with Elder Van Driel. I had preached there the Sunday before (Dr. V.D. Meulen was sick). We had a moderate meeting. They made up a subscription for the permanent Eben Haezar thankoffering fund of \$838. 00, this will be increased somewhat. A great deal of it came from small subscriptions of a large number of children. This is just what I want.

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PS I learn from Gilmore that he did demand from the local school authorities a Thousand Dollars salaries. This is refused. Therefore he had written to Dr. West for a situation. This is under the rose. Dr. West had named Norris Station. I think he is disgusted with being left alone by the whole church.

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