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### H88-0174. Van Raalte, Albertus Christiaan (1811-1876). Papers, 1842-2011. 2.00 linear ft.

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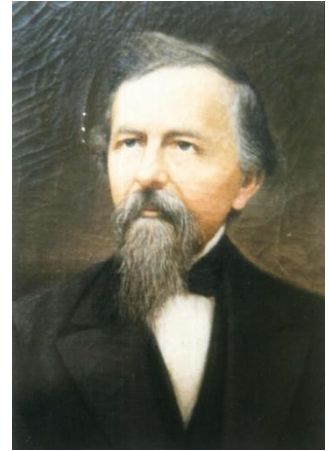
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**H88-0174.** Van Raalte, Albertus Christiaan (1811-1876).  
Papers, 1842-2011. 2.00 linear ft.



### Abstract

Founder and leader of the Dutch colony in Holland, Michigan; minister of the Reformed Church in America. Deeds, ministerial papers; correspondence with Lewis Cass, Charles Stitt, Philip Phelps, his son Benjamin Van Raalte and Alexander Hartgerink; clippings, bibliography, photos, obituaries, land purchases from local Ottawa Indians, biographical data including genealogies and a DVD of the 2011 play by Max Bush in honor of the bicentennial of his birth, *Vision of a New Life* and production photographs.

Accession No: H88-0174  
Provenance: Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte  
Donor: Van Raalte Family  
Processed by: Craig Wright, January 1991  
Leon Witteveen, November 1993  
Geoffrey D. Reynolds, February 1997

### Biography

Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte was born in Wanneperveen, Overisel, the Netherlands, on October 17, 1811. His father was Albertus Van Raalte, a minister in the state church of the Netherlands.

He went to the University of Leyden to study medicine, but in 1833 decided to study for the ministry. In 1836, he became a minister in the Church of the Seceders when he was refused entry into the ministry of the state church. In that same year, he married Christina De Moen, who was born January 30, 1815, in Leiden. He served various churches in the Netherlands, including those in Ommen and Arnhem, until 1846.

Because of the persecution he and his followers were experiencing, Van Raalte decided to emigrate to America. In September 1846, Van Raalte, his wife, and five children set sail on the *Southerner* for New York with 53 members of his congregation. After much deliberation and prayer, he decided to settle in the area at the head of Black Lake, the present site of Holland, Michigan. He served as the spiritual and political leader of the colony, which grew rapidly. He was also instrumental in the founding of Hope College.

His primary role was that of pastor to the community. One of the first buildings to be erected in 1847 was the log church. However, the economic life of the community soon became Van Raalte's major concern. In the name of the association, he purchased several thousand acres. As colonists arrived, they purchased their land for farms or lots for homes. He was very active in the development of Holland Harbor. He lobbied extensively in Lansing and Washington for harbor appropriations.

Van Raalte was also concerned with the educational needs of the community. He not only developed the public school system with a strong set of local controls, but also laid the foundations for the Pioneer School, which became the Holland Academy and later developed

into Hope College.

His goal of developing a Christian community governed by Christian principles was visionary but was shattered in 1850. Holland Township became the basic unit of government. Van Raalte's ideal of Christian control was lost, but his influence was felt because he became active in politics and he continued to own large tracts of land. Although many of the means to achieve a Christian community broke down, Van Raalte was still the pastor of the only church, member of the district school board, guiding light of the Academy, principal landowner, and a businessman with major property holdings.

Dissension, strife, and division among his followers ultimately killed the colony as it was originally envisioned. Some of the stress was undoubtedly caused by Van Raalte's personality. He knew what he wanted for his colony and he thought he knew what was good for the community and acted accordingly. However, much of the criticism was clearly unfair. The narrow-mindedness and small spirit of some of the Dutch settlers were unbelievable. As early as 1856, Van Raalte entertained the possibility of leaving the colony. He received a call from the church in Pella, Iowa, in that year, but declined as a result of a new show of support by the congregation.

Poor health forced his resignation as minister in 1867, and in 1871, his wife died and the city of Holland was destroyed by fire. He encouraged the settlers to rebuild the city, and lived until 1876, when he died after a lingering illness.

### Scope and Content

The collection consists of articles, biographical materials, clippings, correspondence, genealogies, a handwritten sermon, and a Sunday School roll book dated 1851-1855. The correspondence includes 80 letters written to Dr. Philip Phelps between the years 1857 and 1875.

The collection is arranged alphabetically by type of material, except that the correspondence is all in Box 2 because of the large amount it contains. The correspondence with Dr. Phelps is arranged chronologically. Two letters written to Dr. Phelps (51 and 82) are the gift of Gerrit Elzinga.

### Container List

Address, A. C. Van Raalte to Dutch Synod, 1842 (copy)

Articles, 1944-1978

Bruins, Elton, "Albertus Christiaan Van Raalte and His Colony," an address presented at the commemoration of the life and work of Rev. Albertus Van Raalte, 1811-1876, at the Pillar Church, Holland, Michigan, November 7, 1976 (also published in the *Reformed Review*, Winter, 1977, Vol. 30, No. 2, pp. 83-94)

"Centennial Studies," 1977 (various authors)

De Klerk, Peter. "A Bibliography of A. C. Van Raalte," 1977

Mulder, Arnold. "Grootmoeder's Hundred Years," 1944

Pieters, Albertus. "Remembering the Ways of the Lord," 1947

Shadler, C. C. "The Modern Moses: The Story of the Rev. Albertus Van Raalte," 1965

Schroeder, Dr. J. A. "Secession and Emigration, 1834-1847," 1947

Biographical Materials

- Albertus C. Van Raalte, n.d., 1852-1997
- Christina J. (De Moen) Van Raalte funeral address, 1871
- Clippings and Event Programs, 2011
- Photographs of *Vision of a New Life*, 2011 (DVD)
- Play, *Vision of a New Life*, 2011 (DVD)
- Clippings, 1876-1976
  - Death of Van Raalte, 1876, 1976 (D/E)
  - General, 1876, 1895-1896, 1901, 1963, 1966 (D/E)
  - Pillar Church, n.d., 1956
- Daybook (Dagboek) (photocopy and translation), 1847-1851 (2 folders)
- Genealogies, 1949, 1954, 1966, 1999 (original 1949 item is located in Hope College Oversized Cabinet; 1999 version is in Box 2)
- Historical markers and portrait, 1903, 1926, 1957, 1963
- Marriage Manual and Certificate for James F. Van der Sluis and Wilhelmina Van Anrooy Van der Sluis, 1862 (photocopy)
- Memorial Service at Pillar Church, 1976
- Purchase Receipts, 1865-1866
- Sermons, Genesis III (Handwritten in Dutch)
  - January 23, 1856
  - February 20, 1856
  - February 27, 1856
  - March 12, 1856
  - August 12, 1863 (English translation of a summary in *De Grondwet*)
- Sunday School Roll Book, 1851-1855 (Copy)
- Van Raalte Homestead, n.d., 1947-1948, 1951-1954, 1987
- Correspondence, 1846-1875
  - Lewis Cass to A. C. Van Raalte, 1850
  - Alexander Hartgerink to A. C. Van Raalte and Antonie Brummelkamp, 1846 (copy)
  - Rev. Philip Phelps from A. C. Van Raalte, 1857-1875
  - Phelps from Van Raalte, 1857-1875 (transcripts)
  - Phelps from Van Raalte, 1857-1875 (copies)
  - Theodore Romeyn to A. C. Van Raalte, 1847 (copy)
  - Charles H. Stitt to A. C. Van Raalte, 1869
  - Ben Van Raalte from A. C. Van Raalte, 1866 (copy)
  - John Kellogg to Rev. J. C. Brigham (American Bible Society), 1847 (re: Bibles for Van Raalte)
- Land Purchases, 1848
  - Peter Wakazoo to A. C. Van Raalte, May 13, 1848
  - Doninic Wendagawish, Margaret Okitcheguma, Mesquabar Okitcheguma, Peter Wakazoo, Waonozua Mutchesepee, and Mosaqua to Albertus C. Van Raalte, June 23, 1848
- Land Sales (compiled in 2006), 1847-1876

Genealogy, 1999