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

A. C. Van Raalte

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Recommended Citation

Van Raalte, A. C., "A Letter of A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps" (1869). *Van Raalte Papers: 1860-1869*. 537.

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New York, November 23, 1869

No. 64

A letter of A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps, reporting that Suydam would be pleased to have the farm named after him.

Original in the Archives of Hope College.

I said in an informal way; when expressing my thanks, I said we could not help it: but we would naturally end as a matter of course on account of our feeling call it 'The Suydam farm of Hope College'; then he smiled and it seem to be not offensive to him. —

I thought it necessary to mention this: that you may be able to make use of it if you see fit. Do in all this as you like. —

Expressions about the permanency of the farm and the ^{excellent} prospects connected with it are necessary to prevent the unfavorable impression of paying only for a dead horse: too much had his mind been occupied with such thoughts: it is natural that people rather give money for a noble attractive idea for a useful and remunerative object than for a dead horse.

I did try to inspire him for the objects in view: He feels good: He is glad that we both are herein of one mind: — and I would not wonder or he is prepared for a new plan in that line: I have proposed nothing; I felt that first the money must ^{be} in your possession, and he

ought to receive the thankful acknowledgements: But then it is best to propose a plan of improvement to make it lucrative and an ornament: it is I think not too early when he receives the acknowledgements.

But let any proposal be written on a separate paper, and not in the thanksgiving letter: — but let the thanksgiving ^{letter} contain an exposition of the value (without mentioning the amount) of the gift; not only on account of the present joy and thank: but especially on account of future prospects.

That deal ~~these~~ must be kept out of sight; and a living aim must be placed before him. I think he can enjoy it now: But he can not be left alone. Please write to him in a plain letter: Excuse me about the appearance of dictating you: you know it all well, but the great anxiety makes me to say so. — May you give you wisdom and a long long bear ~~and~~ your friend & brother
C. Van Ralte. —

New York Nov: 23/69

Revd Dr P Phelps

Dear Brother.

The letter will come a day later because not being sent the same day I wrote. I went in the evening according promise to Mr. Suydam; about which meeting I have to write the following items: First: He told me. if you did give notice of the gift in the Intelligencer: that you must abstain of naming the amount: because he did not like that his family should know more than they did to wit: the gift of the first sent amount to clear of the real estate.

Then Speaking with him about the necessity of securing it permanent to, the objects named etc: He said smilingly, "and if you are wanting money to carry it out, then you know yet your old friend." _

Speaking about the value of his gifts for the future as a resource of income, as a pleasant place of public resort etc: then I said in an informal way; When expressing my thanks, I said we could not help it but we would naturally and as a matter of course on account our feeling call it "The Suydam farm of Hope College"; then he smiled and it seems to be not offensive to him. -

I thought it necessary to mention this: that you may be able to make use of it as you see fit. Do all this as you like.-

Expressions about the permanency of the farm and the excellent prospects connected with it are necessary to prevent unfavorable impression of paying only for a dead Horse: too much has his mind been occupied with such thoughts: it is natural that people rather give money for a noble attractive idea for a useful and a remunerative object than for a dead horse.

I did try to inspire him for the objects in view: He feels for it: He is glad that we both are herein of one mind: -And I would not wonder or he is prepared for a new plan in that line: I have proposed nothing; I felt that first the money must be in your possession, and he ought to receive the thankful acknowledgement: But then it is best to propose a plan of improvement to make it lucrative and an ornament: it is I think not too early when he receives the acknowledgement: But let any proposal be written on a separate paper, and not in the thanksgiving letter: -but let the thanksgiving letter contain an exposition of the value (without mentioning the amount of money received) of the gift, not only on account of the present joy and thank: but especially on account of future prospect. That dead Horse must be kept out of sight: and a living aim must be placed before him. I think he can enjoy it now: But he can not be left alone.

Please write to him in a plain letter. Excuse me about the appearance of dictating you: You know it all well, but the great anxiety makes me to say so.

May God give you wisdom and an willing heart and favor with the donor.

Your Friend and Brother,

A. C. Van Raalte

New York Nov:23/69

Revd Dr P Phelps

Dear Brother,

The letter will come a day later because not being sent the same day I wrote. I went in the evening according promise to Mr. Suydam; about which meeting I have to write the following items: First: He told me. if you did give notice of the gift in the Intelligencer: that you must abstain of naming the amount: because he did not like that his family should know more than they did to wit: the gift of the first sent amount to clear of the real estate.

Then Speaking with him about the necessity of securing it permanent to, the objects named etc: He said smilingly, "and if you are wanting money to carry ~~it~~ it out, then you know yet your old friend." -

Speaking about the value of his gifts for the future as a resource of income, as a pleasant place of public resort etc: then I said in an informal way; When expressing my thanks, I said we could not help it but we would naturally and as a matter of course on account our feeling call it "The Suydam farm of Hope College"; then he smiled and it seems to be not offensive to him.-

I thought it necessary to mention this: that you may be able to make use of it as you see fit. Do all this as you like. -

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Please write to him in a plain letter. Excuse me about the appearance of dictating you: You know it all well, but the great anxiety makes me to say so.

May God give you wisdom and an willing heart and favor with the donor.

Your Friend and ~~donor~~ Brother,

A.C. Van Raalte.

69-11-23

[GS64]

This is the final letter that Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte addressed to Dr. Philip Phelps, Jr. during the long fund raising effort Van Raalte made after leaving his colony in Amelia, Virginia. Following this letter, there is a long hiatus until Van Raalte writes Phelps on 12 January 1870. It is likely that Van Raalte returned home to Holland although he intended to go to Amelia, Virginia, first. There is no documentary evidence of Van Raalte's whereabouts between the time this letter was written and until the next one he addressed to Phelps on 12 January 1870. Van Raalte was not present at the 19 December 1869 meeting of the consistory of the First Reformed Church when past salary due him was discussed. However, it can be assumed that he was back in Holland at the time of the death of Rev. Pieter J. Oggel, his son-in-law, who died on 13 December 1869.

Newyork Nov: 23/69

Revd Dr P Phelps.

Dear Brother.

The letter wil come a day later because [it is] not being sent the same day I wrote. I went in the evening according [to my] promise to Mr. Suydam; about Which meeting I have to write the following items: First: He told me, if you did give notice of the gift in the *Intelligencer*:¹ that you must abstain of naming the amount: because He did not like, that his famely should know more than they did to wit: the gift of the first sent amount to clear of the [debt of the] real estate.

Then Speaking with Him about the necessity of securing it permanent to the objects named etc: He said smilingly, and if you are wanting money to carry it out, then you know yet your old friend.²

Speaking about the value of his gifts for the future as a resource of income, as a plesent place of public resort³ etc: then I said in an informal way; When expressing my thanks, I said we could not help it but we would naturally and as a matter of course on account [of] our feeling call it "The Suydam farm of "Hope College"; then He smiled an it seems to be not offensive to him.—

I thought it necessary to mention this: that you may be able to make use of it as you see fit. Do in all this as you like.—

¹ There was no mention of Suydam's gifts in the December issues of *The Christian Intelligencer*.

² This comment by Van Raalte seemed to indicate that President Phelps may be able to receive more money from James Suydam for the development of the Suydam Farm undoubtedly would be a major challenge now for the college and President Phelps.

³ Van Raalte also mentioned again the possible resort development that could also take place along the lakeside of the Suydam Farm. He also mentioned the resort possibilities in the letter he wrote the day before.

Expressions about the permanency of the farm and the excellent prospects connected with it are necessary, to prevent the unfavorable impression of paying only for a dead Horse:⁴ too much has his mind been occupied with such thoughts: it is natural that people rather give money for a noble attractive idea for a usefull and a remunerative object than for a dead horse.

I did try to inspire him for the objects in view: He feels for it: He is glad that we both are herein of one mind: - And I would not wonder or He is prepared for a new plan in that line: I have proposed nothing; I felt that first the money must be in your possession, and He ought to receive the thankful acknowledgement: But then it is best to propose a plan of improvement to make it lucrative and an ornament: it is I think not too early When he receives the acknowledgement: But let any proposal be written on a separate paper, and not in the thanksgiving letter: - but let the thanksgiving letter contain an exposition of the value (without mentioning the amount of money received) of the gift, not only on account o the present joy and thank[fulness]: but especially on account of future prospect[s]. That dead Horse must be kept out of sight: and a living aim must be placed before Him. I think he can enjoy it now: But he can not be left alone. Please write to Him in a plain letter. Excuse me about the appearance of dictating [to] you:⁵ You know it all well, but the great anxiety makes me to Say so. May God give you wisdom and an willing heart and favor with the donor.⁶

Your Friend & Brother,

A. C. Van Raalte. --

⁴ This reference to a "a dead horse" may indicate that those who opposed the idea of buying the 830 acres on the north side considered the purchase and investment a bad idea. Valid questions existed in the minds of those who opposed the purchase, questions such as the cost and development of the property. It would also take several years for peach trees to reach maturity and produce fruit.

⁵ By this time in their relationship, Phelps would have gotten used to Van Raalte's assertiveness and endless ideas of what to do and how to do it.

⁶ Hope College historians, Preston J. Stegenga and Wynand Wichers, both present succinct information about the James Suydam Farm. See Preston J. Stegenga, *Anchor of Hope: The History of an American Denominational Institution HOPE COLLEGE* (Grand Rapids, 1954), 91-95 and Wynand Wichers, *A Century of Hope 1866-1966* (Grand Rapids, 1968), 85-87.