

A. C. VAN RAALTE INSTITUTE

Annual Report

January–December 2025

HOPE COLLEGE
HOLLAND, MICHIGAN



A. C. Van Raalte Institute
Annual Report
January–December 2025

Hope College
Holland, Michigan

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Editor-in-Chief and Publisher

Donald A. Luidens
Previous Director
Editor of Missionary Memoirs Series

JoHannah M. Smith
Project Editor and Office Manager (retired)

Katherine Stark
Project Coordinator and Office Manager

Jacob E. Nyenhuis
Director Emeritus
Editor-in-Chief and Publisher Emeritus



Annual Report

2025

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Mission Statement of the A. C. Van Raalte Institute at Hope College

The Van Raalte Institute of Hope College honors the memory and vision of the Rev. Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte, the founder of Holland, Michigan, by engaging in and promoting the study of his life and legacy, exploring the history of the West Michigan community, and publishing, through the Van Raalte Press, scholarly work on Dutch-American relations and Dutch immigration and heritage in North America and around the globe.

The Van Raalte Institute is a department of Hope College. Hence, its mission relates directly to and supports the mission of Hope College, an undergraduate liberal arts institution offering academic programs in the context of the historic Christian faith.

The institute derives its vision from a letter dated November 27, 1846, by A. C. Van Raalte, written shortly after his party landed in New York. Heading west, he declared, “I hope that a large colony can be established here in America which will focus its work on the Kingdom of God.” His vision also extended far beyond the boundaries of Holland, Michigan, to other colonies and to immigrants throughout the United States. The bold Christian vision that he had for the church, for education, and for the community continues to have an impact on the “colony” that he founded on February 9, 1847, and on the college that he helped to establish fifteen years later.

The institute carries out its educational mission not only through research and publication but also through the sponsorship of lectures and presentations by its members and visiting research fellows. Through liaison with scholars and educational and cultural institutions in the Netherlands and other countries, the institute seeks to promote an understanding of the history of this community. From time to time, the institute will host visiting scholars from these countries to enable them to engage in research in our local archives and to provide a broader perspective to our own endeavors.



Don Luidens' tenure as director was celebrated in October. Left to right: Paul Heusinkveld, Henk Aay, Dennis Voskuil, Bob Swierenga, Phil Tamis, Don Luidens, Jack Nyenhuis, JoHannah Smith, Nella Kennedy, Bill Kennedy.

A Message from the Director

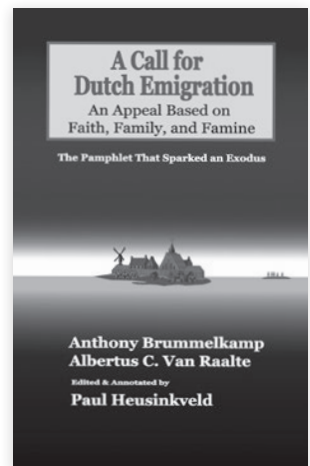
While this has been a year of transition at the Van Raalte Institute (VRI), it certainly didn't slow our output. As you'll see in the pages that follow, the VRI's senior research fellows, along with visiting and honorary fellows, continued to produce an extraordinary number of books.

Ten books, five of which were published by Van Raalte Press, covered a range of topics, such as the impressions of a field surgeon in Europe during World War II, the environmental impact of Dutch settlers in America, the importance of midwives in the first century of Dutch settlement in the Midwest, historical perspectives on the Synod of Dordt, and an appeal for Dutch emigration in the mid-1800s.

This year is starting strongly, too, with one book already published—*A Clear Vision: The Motivation for Gordon D. and Evon Laman to Serve as Missionaries to Japan, 1959-2002*—another ready for copy editing, and a third well on its way.

And, as Katherine Stark, our new project coordinator, quickly discovered, all of the fellows are thick into research on a variety of subjects. Katherine completes one of the transitions from this past year. On the next page you'll see a fond farewell from JoHannah Smith, our now-retired project editor. She has served the VRI and Van Raalte Press so very well for more than a decade and a half. We wish her much joy in retirement, especially with her grandchildren, but trust she'll pay us regular visits.

We're pleased to welcome Katherine to the VRI as our new project coordinator and are confident she'll keep work ticking over, as well as bring some youthful energy and insights. We are also pleased to welcome Lynn Japinga as the



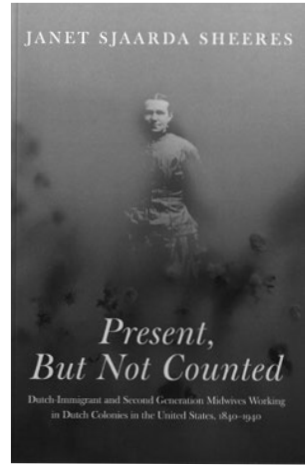
newest senior research fellow. Retiring from Hope last May after 33 years teaching, she joined us immediately thereafter.

I'm the third "newbie" within the walls of the Theil-Nyenhius Research Center and am thrilled to be here. This is the first position I've taken for which I can directly apply my history major from Hope College, but my love of Hope, Holland, and history is decades old.

My father, Elliot, taught in Hope's Mathematics Department for over 40 years, so I grew up in and around campus. I obtained my undergraduate degree from Hope, while at the same time serving on the Holland City Council. Upon graduation, I postponed grad school and ran for mayor, winning, and serving a two-year term, during which the downtown was redeveloped and snowmelt installed.

Since retiring from politics at the ripe old age of 25, I have enjoyed living in Chapel Hill, North Carolina (studying for my master's degree in communication); Santa Fe, New Mexico (completing my master's thesis); Sofia, Bulgaria (promoting democratic development); Holland, Michigan (working for the Reformed Church in America for 16 years); London, England (supporting my wife's PhD studies); Hannover, Germany (working for the World Communion of Reformed Churches for a decade); and back again to Holland, where my wife, Gretchen Schoon Tanis, is a senior pastor at Hope Church; our son, Jon, is a sophomore at Hope; and our daughter, M.E., is a sophomore at Holland High. That's a condensed 35 years of life.

As the new director of the VRI I'll be combining my undergraduate and graduate degrees to deepen and broaden what we do. By deepening, I mean to continue supporting the researchers in their work while also resurrecting out-of-print or "lost" books and presentations. Broadening will be



an effort to reach larger audiences, through marketing, partnerships, and the development of books and materials that might be new for us. Stay tuned on that one.

To both ends, the VRI website has already been given an update, which includes expanded information on all the books we've published and the addition of all the presentations visiting researchers have made for us. Take a look at it through this address: hope.edu/vri. And we're also now on Facebook. Search for "Van Raalte Institute" and you should find us. Our Facebook page shares information not only about what we're doing but also about what our partners are up to.

Thank you for your continued interest in and support of the Van Raalte Institute! If you have any questions or comments, please do not hesitate to reach out. And you're also welcome to stop by for a cup of coffee and to peruse our collection of books in the Elton Bruins Memorial Library.

Philip A. Tanis
Director

A Message from Outgoing Project Editor and Office Manager

“Striving for excellence; cushioned by grace” exemplifies the heart and soul of our work at the Van Raalte Institute. It explains our motivation to cultivate and publish an ever-expanding body of scholarship.

Over the years, Jack Nyenhuis and I have often reminded each other that perfection belongs to Christ alone. But in our work together, we still strove for it, knowing that we would settle for “excellent,” with grace serving as a faithful cushion, our safety net. Grace makes doing hard things possible—and joyful. Indeed, excellence without grace is empty, and grace without excellence is unproductive; they need each other. It is in that context that the Van Raalte Institute has flourished and will continue to do so.

I began my tenure at the VRI the day after Resurrection Sunday 2010, and now, almost sixteen years later, I am closing this chapter of my life, one whose learning curve has stayed ahead of me and whose opportunities have cultivated latent skills within me, percolating, waiting for their chance to appear.

Blame it on the grandbabies—eight of them in five years. They have come to compose the next chapter of my life. My heart is full, and I cannot put it all into words. I love my colleagues as dear friends—each one uniquely gifted, all working together as a cohesive group, accomplishing a common mission. I have been richly blessed, and I will be forever grateful.



JoHannah and her husband, Kraig, at JoHannah's retirement party

JoHannah Smith

Reports

Senior Research Fellows



Robert P. Swierenga

The highlights of the year were connected to my 90th birthday on June 10. On that day, my daughters organized a family gathering that brought fifty members from Chicago, Ohio, California, and Michigan to help me celebrate at Central Avenue Christian Reformed Church.

A month earlier, on Monday evening, May 19, Holland Museum and Zeeland Historical Society cosponsored a reception in my honor at Holland Museum. The ceremony was instigated by Howard Veneklasen, local entrepreneur and philanthropist and scion of the famed Veneklasen Brick Works of early Zeeland. Some fifty persons from the Holland-Zeeland area attended the invitation-only event. Veneklasen had purchased and had inscribed a large wooden bowl as a way to acknowledge the research and writing I have done over the past thirty years at the Van Raalte Institute to preserve local history. The bowl inscription is: “Dr. Robert Swierenga, In appreciation for preserving the histories of our community.”

Another unique experience was watching a six-part documentary that focused on Dutch immigrants to Argentina, Canada, and the United States. It had been filmed by Femke Veltman and her camera crew six months previously, including during a visit to West Michigan. The documentary was screened on Netherlands Public Television in May 2025. My role involved providing the context of Dutch immigration in

Holland, Michigan, particularly focusing on the early years of Hendrik Meijer, founder of Meijer stores. Friends and family members in the Netherlands were shocked to see me on their TVs or electronic devices and were quick to call and email me with best wishes.

On the home front, I continue to research and write a comprehensive history of Zeeland, Michigan, and I am in my fourth year serving on the Zeeland Historical Society board and the sixth year of serving on the board of the Civil War Muster at Van Raalte Farm Park in Holland, Michigan.

I published three articles in 2025. Two were continuations of my interest in the Dutch of Chicago first expressed in the book, *Dutch Chicago: A History of Hollanders in the Windy City*, published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company in 2002. The third article was a review of a historical novel on the revolt in the Netherlands State Church in the 1830s that led to the immigration to the United States of thousands in the 1840s and following decades.

I gave two lectures. The first, titled “Dutch Chicago Revisited: Upward Mobility and White Flight,” was presented at the Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS) at Hope College, June 27, 2025.

The second was presented for the annual meeting of the august Holland Society of New York, Midwest Branch, which for the first time met in Holland, Michigan. Membership in the Holland Society requires proof that an ancestor arrived in Colonial New York before 1675. The title of the lecture was “Helping Hands: Old Dutch Help Young Dutch,” Holland Society of New York, Midwest Branch, Annual Meeting, Hope College, November 1, 2025.

I gave two interviews. The first was an interview by phone on October 20, 2025, on the topic, “The Other Reformation,” for a podcast by the Laymen’s League. The subject involved reformations in Dutch Reformed churches in the Netherlands and United States from the 1830s to the present day. The second was on Zeeland history by the Zeeland Historical Society on September 17, 2025, for the society’s new webpage.

During Tulip Time in May 2025, I assisted Ben Beversluis in the screening at the Knickerbocker Theater on the Hope College campus

of the award-winning film, “From Wilderness to World Class City: An Exploration of Identity Within the City of Holland,” produced by the Holland Film Group in 2017. Beversluis wrote the script and I was the historical advisor.



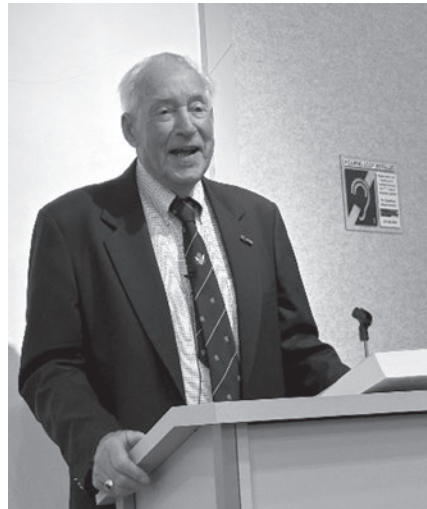
Bob speaking at his 90th birthday party



Howard Veneklasen speaking before presenting the commemorative bowl



The commemorative bowl



Bob thanking the hosts and guests



Nella Kennedy

The majority of my professional time this past year was spent on proofreading my manuscript on Dimnent Chapel. This necessitated some rewriting and eliminating of passages, correcting or elaborating footnotes, polishing headings, and so forth. Trips to the Hope College Archives and Special Collections were necessary to verify incomplete entries. A Hope College student assistant to the Van Raalte Institute, Mackenzie Niswonger, has plowed through the student newspaper *The Acorn* from 1929 on to make notes on Dimnent Chapel speakers. She is working presently on compiling a bibliography of references to Dimnent and the chapel. A colleague is reading through the manuscript, so it should not be very long before I release the manuscript to the professional editor(s).

There was a short hiatus, however, for I had to turn my attention to another project. The theme for the biennial AADAS conference was Dutch emigration. I had been an immigrant twice, and thus had a unique story to tell. Reflecting this experience, my lecture was entitled, “Two Immigrations: Travels and Travails.” I had emigrated to Canada to check whether a relationship begun in the Netherlands with a Dutch Canadian was indeed worth continuing. It was not, but I stayed on in Vancouver to earn enough money to pay for a return transatlantic voyage, which I did.

On the *Maasdam IV* from New York, I met an American—Earl

William (Bill) Kennedy—who was on his way to study in Germany. A romance ensued, and we were engaged several months later. My intent to get married in the US, coming in with a visitor's visa, was a problem, but I was granted a six-month stay during which time I became a legal immigrant. Thus I was able to stay in the US and get married. Our union gave us two sons, one living in the Netherlands and one in Japan, with their families. This past summer it was possible for all of us to meet in the Netherlands. The photo is of our Japanese-American granddaughter with her oma.

We continue to enjoy the warm collegiality of our colleagues at the Van Raalte Institute, but will have to get used to missing the presence of JoHannah Smith, our copy editor and office manager, and our friend, for sixteen years.



Nella and Bill Kennedy



Johanna Kennedy and her oma in the Netherlands



Maasdam IV of the Holland America Line



Donald J. Bruggink

My last annual report ended with the hope that we would find someone who would turn the uncompleted manuscript of the late Norman J. Kansfield into a form ready for publication. Unfortunately no one has been found to assume that task. Because so many of Norm's insights have been so cogently addressed that the content of his manuscript deserves publication, I continue to reflect as to whether I could manage the job. In my more insightful moments I recognize that I could not. Norm—having a doctorate in library science, and having served as head librarian at two seminaries, followed by a career change to president of New Brunswick Theological Seminary—was, by desire and preparation, an Old Testament scholar. Unfortunately that is the part of the manuscript that is farthest from publication, and about which I know the least. Having hit a substitute-author wall, I continue to reflect on all of the manuscript's fine content that the church needs to hear; hopefully this will be accomplished by someone competent to take on the task. Should such a person not be found, I might give it another try after the following is finished.

That in which I am presently taking delight is working in the Joint Archives of Holland, now called the Hope College Archives and Special Collections. My task is to do a history of the Cook Center for Theological Research, which from 1981 to 2017 stood on the eastern end of Western

Theological Seminary's campus. That task is now all the more necessary since I am the only person still alive who served on the committee that analyzed the then-needs of the seminary and organized the service for dedication of the completed building. The center was commonly known as "Cook," the surname of the principal contributors.

Among my other joys, of which I have been blessed with many, is that of travel. The year of 2025 afforded me a cruise aboard the Holland America Line's *Volendam* that traveled from Boston along the coast of New England, the three Canadian maritime provinces of Newfoundland, Labrador, and Nova Scotia, and then after three days at sea, circumnavigated Iceland, with tour stops at Ísafjörður, Akureyri, Húsavík, Djúpvogur, Reykjavík, and Grundarfjörður.

After another day at sea, we sailed Greenland's Prince Christian Sound, followed by time ashore on Greenland on subsequent days at Nanortalik and Qaqortoq, on the latter of which we were unwittingly, tangentially, involved in an international incident.

The exterior of the church in Qaqortoq looked interesting, and so we set out to see if we could gain access to the interior. Since the church was on one of the hills of the city, we stopped a local woman to ask if we were going the right way. We were, but then her face darkened as she demanded "Did you vote for him?!" When we assured her with a very forceful "NO!" she brightened, shared her name, which phonetically was Uhannah, and explained the cause of her hostility.

It turns out that, at the airport, people whose interest was in buying or annexing Greenland were, in a not-so-subtle gesture, handing out hundred-dollar bills to schoolchildren. The parents did not take kindly to this transactionalism, and neither did Uhannah. Imagine our surprise when, after returning home, we learned that the acting US ambassador to Denmark had been called to Copenhagen before the Danish foreign minister, Lars Løkke Rasmussen, who protested the interference in Danish sovereign affairs in Greenland by seeking various pieces of intelligence, including identifying people in Greenland who support US objectives.

And yes, we did get to enter the Lutheran Church, designed by the notable female architect Gertrud Rasch, built in 1957. Upon a

close approach to the church, it is very visibly built on a rock (the head of which is apparent in the picture below). At the head of the central aisle is the communion table, behind which is a tapestry, with the cross surrounded by many kinds of local flora, noting the varieties of life in Greenland, and flanked by the baptismal font on the left and pulpit on the right. Behind those are simple candle supports; those on the wall to the left are twelve in number, referring to the many biblical usages of that number, while to the right are seven similar holders. In all, an unforgettable architectural and liturgical achievement.



Exterior of Lutheran Church in Qaqortoq



Uhannah and Don in Greenland



Interior of the church





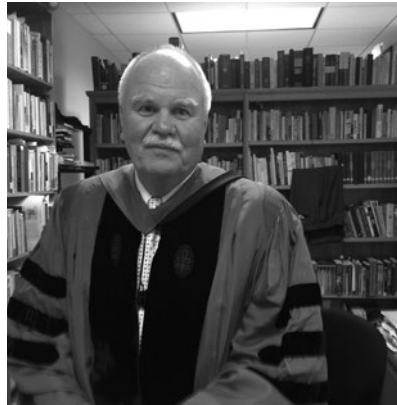
Dennis N. Voskuil

Several years ago I began to study various aspects of the history of Western Theological Seminary, where I earned a bachelor of divinity degree (1966–69) and later served as president (1994–2008). Three papers drawn from this study were published as chapters of two books that honored Elton Bruins (“The Vexed Question: Hope College and Theological Education in the West,” in *A Goodly Heritage: Essays in Honor of the Reverend Dr. Elton J. Bruins at Eighty*, ed. Jacob E. Nyenhuis [Eerdmans, 2007], 341–70) and Donald Bruggink (“When East Meets West: Theological Education and the Unity of the Reformed Church in America,” in *Tools for Understanding: Essays in Honor of Donald J. Bruggink*, ed. James Hart Brumm [Eerdmans, 2008], 201–28), and one that focused on the history of Hope College (“Continuity and Change: Hope College and the Reformed Church in America,” in *Hope College at 150*, ed. Jacob Nyenhuis [Van Raalte Press, 2019], 137–91).

During the past two years I have been working on a comprehensive history of Western Theological Seminary, a history that began in 1866 when seven of the first eight graduates of Hope College received permission from the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America to take classes in theological studies from what was then known as the Theological Department of Hope College. In 1884 the Reformed

Church recognized Western Theological Seminary as an independent institution for theological training of pastors for the denomination together with long-standing New Brunswick Theological Seminary.

I am grateful to the other senior fellows of the Van Raalte Institute for their encouragement and support as I pursue this long-term project. Our community of scholars has provided a positive and fruitful environment for research and writing.



Dennis in his office



Henk Aay

AADAS Conference at Hope College (June 26–28, 2025)

The organization of the 2025 AADAS conference, entitled “Post-WWII Dutch Immigration to North America,” was my principal task for the first six months of 2025. In terms of time spent, complexity, and work with other organizations, departments, and personnel, it was a significant undertaking. This was all normal and expected work that comes with bringing seventy-five to eighty people together in one place for two and half days of presentations, discussions, and special exhibits. The VRI hosted the conference and, in that capacity, AADAS was able to use Hope College facilities (meeting rooms and theater) at no cost. As AADAS president and senior research fellow at the VRI at Hope, I had the advantage of working at the conference location and representing both institutions.

I had regular questions and concerns from among the thirty or so individuals preparing their immigration memoirs and research papers for presentation at the conference. Some of those writing memoirs who were unaccustomed to public presentations needed special guidance. Rosemary Sloom’s *Immigrant* art exhibit at the Kruizenga Art Museum brought with it some cross-border issues for all parties working to facilitate this exhibit. Together with the other stakeholders, I worked hard to publicize the film, *Old Heart*, beyond the conferencegoers; that effort had limited success.

Hope's Events and Conferences Department did first-rate work to carry out our plans and wishes for facilities and catering. A week before the conference I was breathing easier.

The conference went well. I noticed rather quickly that the meeting room (Hope's Bultman Center Great Room) was an effective conference setting; the round tables and the natural light helped create an attractive informal atmosphere with a lot of casual conversations. Because nearly all our activities (listening, questioning, discussing, snacking, eating, book browsing, registering) took place in this space, it quickly became home and promoted interaction.

We had lots of food for thought, and the immigration memoirs touched our heartstrings. All our computer and PowerPoint presentation issues and anxieties were very capably resolved by Mackenzie Niswonger, the VRI's student assistant. The mix of research papers, memoirs, art, and film maintained our interest levels. It was very gratifying to hear from a good number of people that they enjoyed the conference.

Conference Proceedings

As with past AADAS conferences, Van Raalte Press will publish the papers presented; I am serving as the principal editor. Manuscripts were due the middle of November, and I am busy with the first round of edits, which, I am discovering again, is a lot of necessary work. The manuscripts will then be returned to the authors for revisions. Another editing round by the two other editors will follow before the manuscripts are handed on to the press.

Atlas of Dutch North America

I continue to work on an atlas of the Dutch as they spread across the North American continent. Support for this decade-long project remains strong from both the VRI and Calvin's GEO department (my former academic home). For the current academic year, GEO's Vermeer Fund awarded the project \$6,000 for cartographic (GIS) services. Unfortunately, a portion of that funding must be used to update maps that were made with an earlier version of ESRI's GIS software that is no longer licensed for use. Several other setbacks have slowed things down.

Nellie Anderson, the lead cartographer, left Calvin for a new position, one that gives her much less time to work on the atlas. And a March 2024 agreement with the Dutch national statistical agency (CBS) to provide me, for a fee, with annual Dutch immigration numbers to the US and Canada by municipality from 1973 to 2025 has mysteriously remained unfulfilled; despite my best efforts, I have not been able reach those responsible.

One of our principal tasks has been to select the maps and graphs we want to include in the atlas and bring them into a common design language (colors, line widths, fonts, legends, etc.). Another is bringing the six Dutch Reformed seminaries into the atlas on the grounds that the Reformed tradition of Protestant Christianity is one of the principal, enduring legacies of the Dutch in North America, and that these institutions carry this tradition forward.

I gave two related presentations in 2025: In June, I presented my paper “(Carto)graphic Survey of Post-WWII Dutch Immigration to North America” at the AADAS conference, and in November, I gave a guest lecture at Calvin University titled “Making an Atlas, Hits and Misses.”

Eastern Avenue Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan

I serve on the Archives/Church History Team and on the Creation Care Committee of Eastern Avenue Church. We are inventorying and organizing our archive to prepare for EAC’s sesquicentennial in 2029. With displays, photos, and brief articles (in 2025, I published “The Many Pastors at Eastern Ave. Church, A Poster Gallery”), we acquaint our members, especially the new ones, with their church’s history.

As a congregation we are in limbo, having left the Christian Reformed Church (CRC), and are awaiting an affiliation recommendation/vote to join another kindred denomination. I must get used to the abbreviation EAC rather than EACRC, our acronym for all these years! Will it become EAUCC, EARCA, or EAPCA?

Plans to install rooftop solar panels had to be abandoned by our Creation Care Committee when consulting engineers concluded the roof could not bear the weight. We are now seriously considering putting solar panels on a post structure in the parking lot.

Last, I am co-leading a group of EAC seniors on a two-week educational trip to the Netherlands in April, focused on new towns, sustainability, and environmental history. Planning for these excursions began already in the summer of 2025.



Post-WWII Dutch immigrants to North America in attendance at the AADAS conference



Artist Rosemary Sloom in conversation with AADAS conferees in front of one of her paintings at the Kruizenga Art Museum, Hope College



Donald A. Luidens

With apologies to Emily Dickinson (“My life closed twice before its close”), I’ve retired twice before I really retire. This past year marked my second retirement—from the roles of director of the VRI and the editor-in-chief of the Van Raalte Press to resume my role as senior fellow and editor of the Missionary Memoirs Series (MMS). I look forward to more years before I take my final retirement. It was a real pleasure for me to welcome my successor, Phil Tanis, who brings years of experience as a publisher and media specialist. He has just the skills that the institute and press need to move into the future. He’ll introduce himself elsewhere in this annual report.

Retiring from those dual roles has afforded me the luxury of returning to my favorite role at the VRI, which has been to review and edit manuscripts. Five have taken a great deal of my time, four of which are now available and a fifth is forthcoming in 2026, I trust. It has been my pleasure to work closely with the author/editors (or their heirs) in the production of these volumes.



Luidens holding the maquette of A. C. Van Raalte, a gift from his colleagues on his retirement as director and editor-in-chief

Dr. James N. Boelkins, former provost of Hope College, inherited a couple hundred letters that his father, Dr. Richard C. Boelkins, MD, wrote to his mother during the Second World War. These rich and personal missives tell the tale of a frontline surgeon, one who was in the first tent to which Allied troops (and occasional German prisoners of war) were delivered, as he struggled with the horrors of war and found depths of faith that sustained him through these difficult times. *Faith and Family in a Time of War: Letters of WWII Field Surgeon Dr. Richard C Boelkins* (Van Raalte Press, 2025), edited by Jim Boelkins, is a hopeful volume despite its grim times.

The Missionary Memoirs Series, now six years old, produced two volumes on mission work in Japan. Dr. Richard E. Sytsma, “mish” kid and missionary to Japan, has recorded the unique history of the relationship between the Christian Reformed Church (CRC) in North America and the Reformed Church of Japan. The latter was a small denomination that was led by intrepid Japanese pastors, followers of J. Gresham Machen who refused to bow to the demands of the Japanese emperor and were duly punished during World War II. Coming out of their harrowing experiences, they built a church that was separate from the mainline churches associated with the ecumenical Kyodan.

Their existence came to the notice of CRC members of General Douglas MacArthur’s staff, who promoted an alliance with the CRC that lasted more than sixty years. Sytsma’s account of that

history (the seventh in the MMS), *We Served Side by Side: The Cooperation of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of Japan, 1951-2017* (Van Raalte Press, 2025), provides an encyclopedic record of all those who have served (both Americans and Japanese) and of all the congregations that have been part of the “cooperation.” It is a volume that will be widely consulted on both sides of the Pacific Ocean.

Rev. Dr. Gordon D. Laman served, along with his wife Evon, as a Reformed Church in America missionary to Japan for more than forty



years. His memoir (the eighth in the MMS), *A Clear Vision: The Motivation for Gordon D. and Evon Laman to Serve as Missionaries to Japan, 1959-2002* (Van Raalte Press, 2026) is a vivid and detailed account of missionary life in postwar Japan. From the struggles of learning Japanese to the lasting impact on the life of Japanese pastors and congregations, Laman shares a highly personal vision into the workings of mission life.

The fourth volume with which I had a hand was Paul Heusinkveld's annotation and republication of Albertus C. Van Raalte and Anthony Brummelkamp's appeal to nineteenth-century Dutch folks to make the trek from the Netherlands to the United States. Published as *A Call for Dutch Emigration: An Appeal Based on Faith, Family, and Famine* (Van Raalte Press, 2025), this book provides valuable insights into the motivations that drove so many people to abandon the comfort of the known in order to strike out into the wilderness of uncertainties.

A major focus of my own editorial and annotating work has been the autobiographical accounts of Christine and Bernard Voss, sister and brother who served during the 1950s as Reformed Church of America (RCA) missionaries in the Middle East. They both served in medical units of the United States Army during World War II, Christine in a triage unit in England and Bernard with troops in China. From those early years in Asia, they gravitated to mission work in Iraq and the Arabian Gulf. Christine left a series of edited letters for her nieces and nephew, and Bernard provided a more comprehensive autobiography for his children. Happily, the latter generation has shared these personal and insightful documents with us. It is my expectation that they will form volume nine in the MMS under the title *Siblings in Service to Asia: The Stories of Christine and Bernard Voss*.

Interspersed with these delightful ventures, I have continued to travel with my wife, Peg, to see our children and grandchildren. The latter are full scale into sports, and Grandpa and Grandma love to cheer them on. Can there be greater pride than that of a grandparent for the successes of a grandchild?

Peg and I also had the pleasure of another transatlantic crossing (we have found the Queen Mary 2 to be a wonderful way to get through the time zones from west to east—as well as a rollicking, seven-day lecture circuit, and food-a-rama). Upon arrival in Europe we visited Paris and

the beautifully restored Notre Dame Cathedral. It hasn't looked this good since Victor Hugo embarrassed Parisians into restoring their treasure in the late nineteenth century. The soot and grime have given way to spotlight paintings and glowing interior spaces. The windows have been restored to their original glory. Unforgettable.

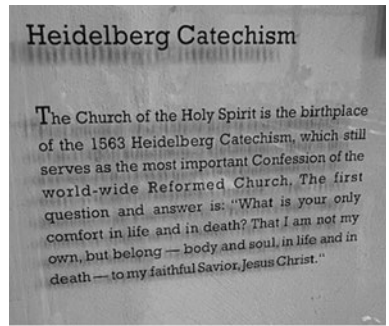
Following our brief stay in Paris, we boarded a riverboat cruise from Basel, Switzerland, to Amsterdam. Traveling on the Rhine as it bordered France and Germany made even more vivid the trauma that must have accompanied the wars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. A guide in Strasbourg pointed out that if one had been born in Strasbourg in 1870 and lived to 1946, s/he would have been French, German, French, German, and French again. The narrow ribbon of the Rhine was the conduit for all those crossings and retreats.

A highlight of the river cruise was a visit to Heidelberg and her noteworthy Holy Spirit Cathedral, birthplace of the Heidelberg Catechism. To walk the streets of Heidelberg is to thrust oneself into history, living in marketplaces and revered in the many sanctuaries.

In all, it has been a grand year with much for which to be thankful.



The Notre Dame Cathedral



The Holy Spirit Cathedral in Heidelberg



Jack and Anna "serving"



Tyler and Max showing fishing "trophies"



Paul Heusinkveld

During 2025 I focused on documenting stories of missionaries, primarily those from the RCA's Arabian Mission, and secondarily of a broader range of RCA and CRC missionaries. My primary motives are to ensure that these stories are preserved, and that they are readily available to inspire others to dedicate their lives to similar service as a means of reconciliation for peace and goodwill between the East and West, thus building a more peaceful world.

While researching material on my family history, I realized a critical component was the motives that drove my ancestors to emigrate to America. This led to studying the mass emigration movement to North America from the Netherlands during the nineteenth century, and in doing so I discovered a seminal pamphlet written in 1846 by Revs. Anthony Brummelkamp and Albertus C. Van Raalte that encouraged emigration to North America and explained the rationale for doing so.

This pamphlet probably played a role in my ancestors' decision to emigrate, and it probably was also a prominent factor in the decision of thousands of Netherlanders to emigrate. The research consequently shed light on the broader topic of why the Dutch emigrated and led to the book, *A Call for Dutch Emigration*, that explains the history, motivation, and consequences of Dutch immigration to North America. The book

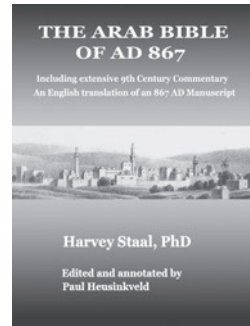
includes a copy of the original Dutch language version of the pamphlet, an English translation, background material, footnotes, pictures, maps, a bibliography, and an index to make the document easier to read and to be a source for future researchers. J. C. Huizenga graciously arranged for 200 copies of *A Call for Dutch Emigration* to be distributed at the annual Dutch-American Heritage dinner on November 13, 2025.

I continue working on my family history, focusing on a biography of my father, Dr. Maurice Heusinkveld, MD, who was a missionary in the RCA's Arabian Mission. The book covers the history of the early Heusinkvelds, beginning in 1710 in the Netherlands, emphasizing the events and circumstances that would inspire Maurice to become a missionary. Much of the book comes from my memories as a missionary child and the stories my father told me. The majority of the book's content is based on research at Hope College's Archives and Special Collections; my parents' professional and personal correspondence; documents held at the RCA archives in New Brunswick Theological Seminary in New Jersey; books written about the Arabian Mission; and interviews with members of the Arabian Mission. The timeline of the book continues until 1961, at which time I left the mission field to attend boarding school in India. Subsequent to 1961 and continuing to 1968, my family story is covered in my book *Elephant Baseball* (Eerdmans, 2017).

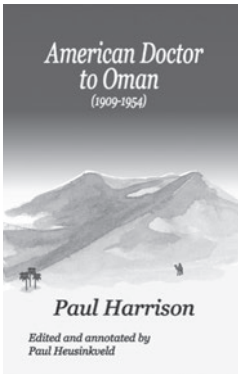
In preparation for the biennial AADAS conference, held at Hope College in June, I published a summary of the 1985 AADAS conference proceedings as *Dutch American Studies, 1985*. Since 2007 the Van Raalte Institute has published books summarizing the proceedings of AADAS's biennial conferences. However, proceedings of previous conferences are only in mimeographed form and the few remaining copies of these old, fragile documents are unavailable to most people. After digitizing this document into an editable format, I added introductory material, reformatted the text into a more reader-friendly form, and published the book so that it is readily available on Amazon for all interested parties.



I prepared Harvey Staal's translation of selections of the Arabic Bible for publication. The book, now titled *The Arabic Bible of AD 867*, is complete and ready for publication. I added a foreword, pictures, footnotes, maps, appendices, and an index to make the book more readable and provide background of its historical and cultural context. This rare collection of biblical books (a single copy exists at St. Catherine's Monastery in the Sinai), was transcribed in AD 867 and provides unique insights into Christianity of that period. In the course of preparing this manuscript, I met with Staal's children to inform them of the project. They heartily support republishing their father's book, fulfilling his wish to make it readily available to all interested parties, documenting the early history of Arab Christianity.



In early December, I attended the board meeting of the Al Amana Centre in Muscat, Oman. The center is located on the RCA's original Arabian Mission hospital compound where my parents served



as missionaries and where I spent much of my childhood. In anticipation of the board meeting, I presented a final draft of Paul Wilberforce Harrison's book *Doctor in Arabia* (Day Publishers, 1940), now titled *American Doctor to Oman: 1909-1954*, which documents his experience as a doctor in the Oman hospital. This project is of particular interest to me since my parents modeled their lives after Paul Harrison and named me after him. I added a foreword, maps, many photos, appendices, an index, and a bibliography, to make the book more readable

and useful for research. The book will be of particular interest to Omani citizens, and it is likely, with coordination from the Al Amana Centre, that the Oman government will have it translated into Arabic.

On December 29, I visited the Library of Congress Copyright Office in Washington, D.C., to make a final determination on whether

Harrison's book is still covered by copyright. Working with the Copyright Office staff, it was determined that the copyright is no longer in effect.

I continue to be interested in republishing rare documents associated with the RCA (particularly of the RCA's Arabian Mission) and CRC. These rare, hard-to-find documents are only available in a few library and archive collections and are virtually inaccessible to the vast majority of people, especially for anyone living outside the United States. Also, many of these rare documents are too fragile for public access; thus, my intent is to make them readily available for study by academics, as well the general public, in a reader-friendly and enjoyable format.

I am working with Bob Swierenga to republish the book *For Food and Faith, Dutch Immigration to Western Michigan, 1846-1960*, originally published 25 years ago, of which there are very few copies in circulation. The new layout is more reader friendly, with updated pictures and a revised bibliography, and will be valuable source material for research into Dutch-American history and culture.

In addition to these publications, during 2025 I made three presentations: On February 3, I gave a lecture on "Looking into the Oceans" to the Hope Academy of Senior Professionals (HASP), based on my experience in the U.S. Navy. I presented another lecture titled "What Lies Beneath the Waves" on May 1 to the Holland Professional Club, and on June 20 to the Farmstead by Resthaven.



Philip A. Tanis

I began as a senior research fellow in March 2025, having returned the previous summer from a decade in Hannover, Germany, serving the World Communion of Reformed Churches as its communications and operations executive.

But my first contribution to the foundational work of the as-yet-nonexistent-VRI was back when I was a history major at Hope in the mid-eighties. One summer, Elton Bruins hired me to conduct an oral history project with former mayors of Holland, Michigan, interviewing seven of them. I researched their times in office (this was before Robert Swierenga’s history of Holland!), interviewed them on cassette tape, and then transcribed the interviews. The results remain in the Hope College Archives and Special Collections.

An update on that project was what I brought to the VRI when joining. While there have been several oral histories conducted since then (most notably during Holland’s sesquicentennial celebrations), former Holland mayors haven’t fully been included (I know, as I am one!), and we’ve already lost two mayors before they could be interviewed. My first months here were thus spent starting the necessary research (especially as Swierenga’s history of Holland doesn’t cover the last decade). Interviews are planned for the coming year—and not just with former mayors but

with other prominent members of the Holland community.

I've also agreed to write a history of the Tulip Time Festival for its upcoming centennial in 2029. The scope of that project has been outlined and agreed to with the Tulip Time folks, and I'll shortly be receiving the contents of their archives to begin the research. I'm looking forward to building on the work of Randy Vande Water, who wrote a brief history for Tulip Time's 75th anniversary, and William and Dirk Bloemendal, who captured the Tulip Festival in print in the early 1960s.

Besides settling in at the VRI this past year, I was pleased to not only return to Hannover, Germany, with my daughter M.E. last summer but also pay a brief visit to the Netherlands. Our weekend in the motherland included a day at the Efteling amusement park (which I highly recommend for children of all ages) and a tour of the De Zwaan windmill in Vinkel. Yes, Vinkel, the Dutch town from which Holland's own De Zwaan came, has rebuilt the windmill, recreating a focal point for the community that includes a café, which uses flour made in the mill to bake delicious goodies.



Friend Annie and daughter M.E. listening to miller Hans discuss the workings of the windmill



Dutch miller Hans Kappen and Tanis on the original site of Holland's De Zwaan windmill, with a garage built on the former windmill's foundation in the background



Daughter M.E. enjoying Dutch treats at the Efteling fairytale amusement park



Lynn Japinga

After 33 years of teaching religion and women's studies at Hope College, I retired in May. I miss my students and colleagues, but I do not miss grading what appeared to be AI-generated papers!

When my predecessor, Dr. Elton Bruins, retired in 1992, he started the Van Raalte Institute. I'm grateful to him for providing me an opportunity to continue doing research on RCA history and theology in this congenial setting.

My first project is to explore the experience of the RCA during World War II. I have been reading the 1936–1945 volumes of the *Intelligencer-Leader* and its successor the *Church Herald*. These periodicals were published weekly and averaged 24 pages per week of dense type. They possess neither table of contents nor index, so I read page by page in search of interesting anecdotes and relevant discussions of current events.

I have also been reading secondary literature about the war years and historical fiction about women during the war.

I received the Albert Smith Fellowship from the Reformed Church Studies Center at New Brunswick Theological Seminary and spent two weeks there doing research in the archives. I will present some of my findings at an online seminar in late April.

During my last semester of teaching, I wrote an essay for a *festschrift* in honor of Dr. Carol Bechtel. The article, “Fierce, Feisty, Faithful, Furious, Fatigued: Reflections on the Vocation of Clergy Women,” appeared in *Like A Watered Garden: Essays in Honor of Carol Bechtel*, ed. James Hart Brumm (Historical Series of the RCA, no. 111, Grand Rapids: Reformed Church Press, 2025). The *festschrift* was presented to Carol upon her retirement from Western Theological Seminary, where she taught Old Testament and served in the fourth office as a general synod professor. Carol and I were religion majors together at Hope College and then were ordained and became professors. While we were not the first women to be ordained in the RCA, we were early enough to experience the challenges that so many of our peers faced. In my essay I explore some of the reasons for the persistent sexism so many women have experienced in the church, along with the joys of teaching about women in the Bible and church history.

During the summer I faced the enormous task of cleaning out my office at Hope, and then cleaning out my office at home to make room for the books and papers I was bringing home. For better or worse, I have saved the notes from my dissertation and my *Loyalty and Loss* book. Who knows what might come in handy in the future?



Jacob E. Nyenhuis

Emeritus

Although I officially retired from the Van Raalte Institute in 2023, I have continued to be active at the VRI in a variety of ways. Many of those activities continued during much of 2025, as will be evident from this report.

I was pleased to see the publication of the last book that I had edited prior to my retirement from my position as editor-in-chief of the Van Raalte Press. *Present, But Not Counted: Dutch-Immigrant and Second Generation Midwives Working in Dutch Colonies in the United States, 1840-1940*, by Janet Sheeres, was among the multiple publications by the Van Raalte Press. Of special interest to me was the biography of my great-grandmother, Maria Bosscher Timmer, who served as a midwife in South Dakota and in Bogus Brook Township and Pease, Minnesota, my own birthplace.

Because my successor had insisted that I retain my office at the VRI (which I welcomed with deep gratitude), I was able to continue working on cataloguing my files, as well as performing various editorial tasks for the Van Raalte Press. The former is a seemingly endless task, but I was able to send two dozen banker's boxes of catalogued files to Hope College's Archives and Special Collections. During the year, I reviewed various manuscripts at one stage or another, but usually just prior to

publication, looking for any error that may have missed the eye of our outstanding project editor, JoHannah Smith.

In June, I happily attended sessions of the AADAS conference held on our campus. Hope College and the VRI had last hosted the conference in 2007, but we fellows at the VRI take pride in the fact that our founding director, the late Elton J. Bruins, was one of the organizers of the very first AADAS conference several decades ago.

In July, I was asked by the director of the Holland Museum to deliver an “impact statement” at the Holland Museum’s Annual Fundraiser, “The History Mystery Trivia Night,” held in the former Holland Armory, which is owned by the Holland Museum. When we moved to Holland some fifty years ago, we lived directly across Centennial Park (Albertus C. Van Raalte’s gift to the City of Holland in 1876) from the old Holland Post Office. When it was acquired by the City of Holland and converted into the Holland Museum, Leona and I were among the charter members, and we have ever since happily continued to support this repository of much of local history. Our home on Twelfth Street was also half a block from the former Netherlands Museum and diagonally across Centennial Park from the home of the late Willard C. Wichers, who was a driving force in preserving and promoting our city’s history.

A major change in our life came in September, when Leona suffered another fall, after which it was determined that she could no longer live independently, so she was moved to the assisted living facility that is part of Resthaven’s senior living complex, the Farmstead, which has been our home since August 2024. As a result, my attendance at and participation in daily coffee times was reduced, but I look forward to every opportunity to join in this daily ritual at the VRI. I am deeply grateful for the companionship and support from my wonderful colleagues.



Eight boxes of files ready to be processed for the archives



Earl William (“Bill”) Kennedy

Emeritus

During my retirement, I have continued to occupy a desk in the office of my very much unretired wife, Nella. I have also had the privilege of enjoying the almost infinitely varied “table talk” occurring daily during our 11 o’clock coffee hour. We have been blessed at these gatherings by visitors nearly once a week.

In June I attended the biennial AADAS conference; it was held on the Hope College campus and had as its theme the stories of recent Dutch immigrants (including my wife, whose account had a small reference to her future husband).

I continue as a member of the board of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society. I have also occasionally translated Dutch materials into English for colleagues, done some editorial work on my wife’s Dimnent Chapel book, and engaged in a bit of Dutch genealogical research at the request of a colleague or two.

Finally, much of my office time has been taken up with the rounding-off, distilling, and preservation of my “lifelong” (begun at age 10) family history project. When not in the US, my wife and I spent a couple of months this past year in her homeland, where I continued soaking up Dutch culture, my other “lifelong” (begun at age 27) pursuit.



Bill at his desk in our Airbnb quarters in Hoogland, near Amersfoort

Honorary **Research Fellows**



Jan Peter Verhave

In April I spent a few days in Holland, visiting friends including colleagues at the Van Raalte Institute. I was on my way to Sauk Centre, Minnesota, the place where the Sinclair Lewis Society celebrated the centenary of Lewis's novel *Arrowsmith*. As I had already published two articles on this book, and as the matter of that book by Lewis and Paul de Kruif is extensively described in my book *A Constant State of Emergency: Paul de Kruif, Microbe Hunter and Health Activist* (Van Raalte Press, 2020), I was invited as an expert to talk to the society.

In part, I said:

In 1923, the author Sinclair Lewis and the bacteriologist Paul de Kruif agreed to write a book together, to mock the self-satisfying and greedy attitude of many physicians. *Arrowsmith* was published in 1925 and tells at length the steps in the medical career of a young medical doctor, Martin Arrowsmith, who rebels against his superiors and colleagues. Their pretensions, hidden ignorance, neglect of sanitation, hygiene, and public health irritate him. He ends up as a researcher, with science as his religion. Novels with a doctor as the main character were a novelty and *Arrowsmith* became an immediate success, despite a rather sudden end.

2026 is the centennial year for another biomedical book, *Microbe Hunters*, by Paul de Kruif. In popular language he told the stories of twelve doctors/researchers who discovered the origins or transmission of major human diseases. Like *Arrowsmith*, the other classic *Microbe Hunters* became a best seller.

¹Jan Peter Verhave, "Arrowsmith: The People Behind the Characters," *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* 19 (2011), 2; and Jan Peter Verhave, "Arrowsmith, a Synergy of Talents," *Sinclair Lewis Society Newsletter* 24 (2016), 2.



George Harinck

In 2025, the book *Vision, Conflict, and Controversy: H. P. Scholte, Founder of Pella, Iowa* (Van Raalte Press, 2025) finally saw the light of day. This collection of essays is the outcome of the Scholte Conference held in Pella in 2018. The book was produced with the help of Donald J. Bruggink and Lori Witt as editors, and the incomparable and witty JoHannah Smith, editor at Van Raalte Press and the driving force behind the Van Raalte Institute in Holland, Michigan. She has since retired, but I still cannot imagine the VRI without her.

I was the initiator of the Scholte Conference and contributed the introductory essay to the volume, “Ties That Bind: Scholte in the Netherlands and the United States.” My hope remains that this conference and this collection of essays will prompt the writing of a biography of Scholte, especially now that the man who intended to undertake this task, Ron Rietveld, passed away on November 27, 2025, at the age of 88. His two articles in the Scholte volume are a fine testament to his knowledge of Scholte’s life.

For me, the VRI falls under my international engagements. In that field, I published in 2025 “Abraham Kuyper as a Transnational Networker: Insights into His Correspondence,” in *Neocalvinismus/Neo-Calvinism. Formationen und Vernetzungen einer transnationalen theologischen Bewegung* [Formations and Networks of a Transnational Theological

Movement], eds. Kai-Ole Eberhardt, Marco Hofheinz, and Hans-Georg Ulrichs (Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2025), 25–38.

In 2025, together with a Dutch-American steering committee, I was also engaged in preparations for international conferences to be held in 2028, both in the Netherlands and in the United States, to commemorate the fact that four hundred years ago the first Reformed church in North America was instituted from the Dutch Republic.

Furthermore, in the autumn of 2025 I was pleasantly surprised by the award of the Abraham Kuyper Prize for Excellence in Reformed Theology and Public Life, granted by Calvin University and Calvin Theological Seminary. I hope to receive the prize in March 2026 during the annual Kuyper Conference. The prize is dear to me for several reasons, not least because it was established in 1998 by Rimmer and Ruth de Vries, whom I knew well personally and with whom I shared many experiences.



Judy Tanis Parr

This year I focused on cultivating relationships that provided additional information and original versions of photographs for the biography of Edward D. Dimnent that I have been writing. I had learned from ancestrylibrary.com that E. K. Brandel had made available to that website a dozen photographs of Dimnent and his parents, grandfather, and siblings. I did some internet searching to find Brandel and learned that she is the wife of Edward Dykhuizen, son of Daniel Edward Dykhuizen, who owned the originals of the photographs.

Subsequently I engaged in extensive email exchanges with Daniel Edward Dykhuizen. As a result, he sent to the Hope College Archives and Special Collections his set of photographs related to Edward D. Dimnent, his great-uncle. He also sent a quilt that displayed the embroidered names of Edward D. Dimnent, his parents, and siblings, and members of the Trinity Reformed Church of Chicago; the Daniel Dimnent family Bible; and Edward D. Dimnent's typescript for his *The Book of Job: The Poem*.

This year Daniel Dimnent, his sister Ann Brenner, and his cousin Ann Kansfield emailed me accounts of their memories of Edward D. Dimnent. I added some of these anecdotes to the biography.

In December, I invited Thelma Leenhouts and her husband Joseph MacDoniels to a coffee hour at the Theil-Nyenhuis Research

Center and shared with her the genealogical resource that I had used to learn about Edward D. Dimnent's ancestors. Using links from ancestors.nl, we were able to trace her Leenhouts ancestry back to Jen Lenout, born in Brabant, Belgium, 1588, and died in IJzendijke, Netherlands, 1669.

I followed up on a remark about Dimnent by James Bratt in one of the Hope Academy of Senior Professionals courses he taught this year on the history of religion in America. He provided me the source of his remark, an endnote from his book *Dutch Calvinism in Modern America*. That note referred to three articles Dimnent had written in 1928 in the RCA weekly newspaper *The Leader*. When I found these articles in a bound volume in Western Theological Seminary's Cook Library, I explored earlier and later volumes and discovered a mother lode of editorial comments that I could mine for Dimnent's biography. Van Raalte Institute director Phil Tanis is exploring with me and VRI intern Mackenzie Niswonger ways to scan and digitize searchable files of Dimnent's editorial comments published in *The Leader* in the late 1920s.

I continue to pursue various details about Edward D. Dimnent and add them to the biography. Soon it will be edited for publication. I also continue to enjoy informative and entertaining conversations over coffee and sweets around the table with colleagues in the conference room of the Theil-Nyenhuis Research Center.



Dimnent family names embroidered on a quilt made by members of Chicago's Trinity Reformed Church



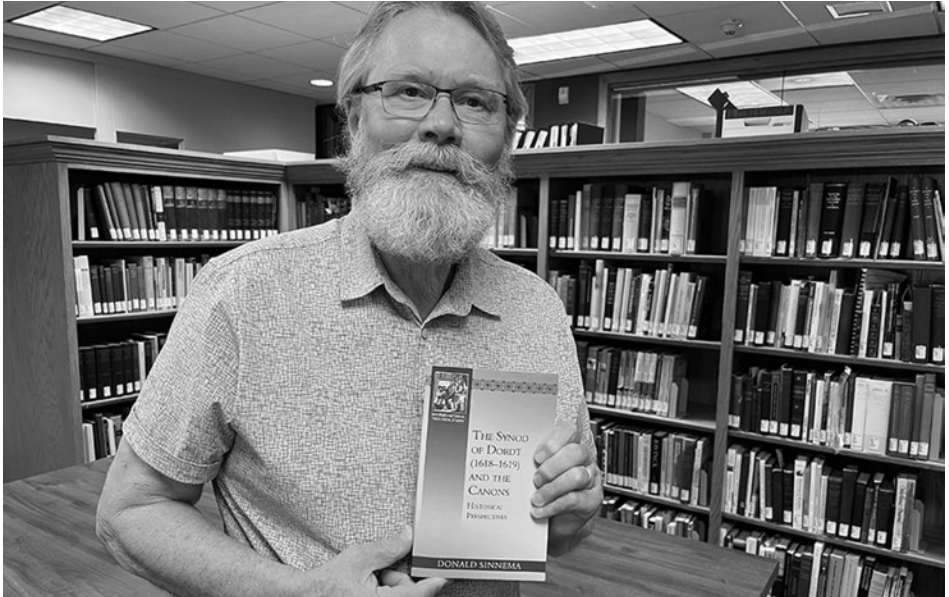
Donald W. *Sinnema*

As an honorary fellow at VRI, I continue to spend one day a week doing research at the institute. For me, the highlight of the past year was the summer publication of *The Synod of Dordt (1618-1619) and the Canons: Historical Perspectives* (Reformation Heritage Books, 2025). This volume is a collection of articles that I have written about the Synod and the Canons of Dordt. Half of them were previously published in various books and journals, and the rest are newly published articles that originated as conference papers. The whole collection seeks to provide a comprehensive study of all the major aspects of this important synod.

In October, I presented a paper at a conference at Puritan Reformed Seminary on the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625), the major volume of systematic theology produced by Leiden University theologians in the wake of Dordt. My paper focused on Antonius Walaeus' disputation on predestination, in comparison with other predestination literature at the time.

Besides my continuing work as a general editor of the series, *Acta et Documenta Synodi Nationalis Dordrechtanae*, a project to publish all the documents of the Synod of Dordt, I have also been involved in editing two translation projects. One is a translation from Latin of the original *Acta Authentica* of the Synod of Dordt; the other is a translation from Dutch of all the early Dutch Reformed church orders—beginning with

the Acta of the 1571 Synod of Emden and culminating in the 1619 Church Order of Dordt. The church orders of most denominations of Dutch Reformed heritage are based on the Church Order of Dordt. Both of these translation projects are the result of my participation on the board of the Dutch Reformed Translation Society.



Don with his book, The Synod of Dordt (1618–1619) and the Canons: Historical Perspectives



Jan Boersema, with Anthonia Boersema-Bremmer

For us, the past year was a year with and without the VRI. Without, because we didn't travel to Holland, Michigan, in 2025. But in a sense, also with, because in April we were able to launch our book, *Wij brachten de wildernis tot bloei* (*We Brought the Wilderness to Blossom*). For ten years, we had been working on it for a few months at a time in the heart of the hospitable VRI. We had toured the archives of the former Dutch settlements and pored over memoirs, letters, magazines, and newspapers. And on April 11th, we were able to welcome approximately 100 guests in the auditorium of the Center for Environmental Sciences at Leiden University, who came to listen to three fascinating presentations on various aspects of the book's theme.

After the symposium, attendees were able to obtain the book and celebrate its publication. The book was well received by reviewers. At the urging of several sources, we will be exploring the possibility of a translation into English in 2026.

April was also special for us because we moved 400 meters west into an apartment. After living in Leiden for over 30 years, we are now residents of Oegstgeest. Our apartment is located in the former mission house of the Hervormde Kerk (Reformed Church), so we live in a mission house not only in Holland, Michigan, but also in the Netherlands. The mission house was built in 1917, and until 2000 the building served as a training institute for people who went on to work in Protestant missions. Now that it's been divided into twelve apartments, we live in one of them, on the ground floor.

Now that the publication of our “America book” is complete, I’m working one less day at the university, leaving more time for other important matters. I divide my three days at the university between two ongoing research projects (America and Easter Island) and writing articles.

Anthonia and I are both active in our PKN (Protestant Church in the Netherlands) congregation, and Anthonia continues her work as a language buddy. I have continued volunteering as leader of the “Thursday morning circle,” a group of (primarily) retirees who meet every three weeks to discuss societal issues related to Christian living.



Presenters and attendees at the formal presentation of Wij brachten de wildernis tot bloei



Anthonia and Jan presenting the book to Hester Bijl, Rector Magnificus of Leiden University



Jan and his American granddaughter Rella in front of the Boersemas' new home



Hans Krabbendam

Over the past year, I've continued to be involved in a number of projects that broaden the scope of the collections of the Catholic Documentation Center (KDC) at Radboud University. Among those are the various archives documenting the life stories of Catholic emigrants to Australia between 1947 and 2011 and the activities of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, the social care for farmers by their organizations between 1958 and 2010.

In September, the KDC hosted a reception marking the publication of an inventory of the personal archives of Adriaan Cardinal Simonis. At the reception, the author, Bas van Nieuwland, presented copies of the inventory to the president of Radboud University, José Sanders, and the present archbishop, Willem Eijk.

My own research concentrates on writing a concise history of the Catholic pillar; the book, which I am coproducing with a colleague, is in its final stage.



Reception at the KDC, with van Nieuwland, Sanders, and Eijk pictured left to right (photo by Dick van Aalst)



James C. Kennedy

In 2025, I completed my last year as dean of community engaged learning at Utrecht University. Our program board facilitated the embedding of this kind of education—reciprocal relationships with societal partners—in every faculty. We’re happy with that success. From 2026 I have become “academic lead” at the university to further work out the next phase of the vision. I was reappointed professor of community engaged learning until my retirement.

At the same time, I continue to function as head of the Political History Section in the Department of History and Art History, a team of about 25 ambitious scholars and great teachers. I am at the same time professor of modern Dutch history there, guiding various doctoral dissertations.

I have finished several articles respectively on the cultural history of work in the Netherlands, about community engaged learning in history education, and about the crisis of democracy—in conjunction with other colleagues in the section.

Although my various appointments leave little room to teach, I taught history of the Netherlands again and also an MA course in community engaged learning (on the history of foster care, a topic on which I am personally well versed given our home situation). I also regularly teach civil servants in The Hague about Dutch political culture.

Continuing to be active in various boards, I helped advise a report for the *Raad voor Leefomgeving en Infrastructuur*, in which we urged the government to give a greater role to civil society in solving knotty problems. A highlight was serving as day moderator at a symposium in the Royal Palace of Amsterdam to celebrate the city's 750th anniversary.

As this was a year in which a lot happened politically in the United States, I have been asked to be an analyst and commentator for events in the US, and I devote my fortnightly columns in the daily *Trouw* to developments there. Giving me the most pleasure was the extended end-of-the-year-interview the *Financieele Dagblad* had with me, in which many topics near to my heart were explored.



*James and Simone at a Northwestern
College football game in Orange City,
Iowa, October 2025*

Publications and Presentations

2025

Publications

- Aay, Henk. "The Many Pastors at Eastern Ave. Church, A Poster Gallery" *PEPP: Presenting Eastern's People and Programs* 38, no. 4 (2025): 4–5.
- Boelkins, Richard C. and James N. Boelkins. *Faith and Family in a Time of War: Letters of WWII Field Surgeon Dr. Richard C Boelkins*. Van Raalte Press, 2025.
- Boersema, Jan J. "Duurzaamheid heeft een dragend verhaal nodig" *Milieu* (December 2025): 6–8.
- . "Amerika is niet geschapen om wild en woest en onbebouwd te blijven: De Reis van Evert Bloemendaal in 1867-1870." *Transparant* (December 2025); 12–16.
- , and Anthonia M. Boersema-Bremmer, *Wij brachten de wildernis tot bloei. Nederlandse immigranten in de Verenigde Staten*. Atlas Contact, 2025.
- Harinck, George. "Abraham Kuypers as a Transnational Networker: Insights into His Correspondence." In *Neocalvinismus/Neo-Calvinism. Formationen und Vernetzungen einer transnationalen theologischen Bewegung* [Formations and networks of a transnational theological movement], edited by Kai-Ole Eberhardt, Marco Hofheinz, and Hans-Georg Ulrichs. Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2025.
- . "Ties That Bind: Scholte in the Netherlands and the United States." In *Vision, Conflict, and Controversy: H. P. Scholte, Founder of Pella, Iowa*, edited by George Harinck, Donald J. Bruggink, and Lori Witt. Van Raalte Press, 2025.
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- Heusinkveld, Paul. *A Call for Dutch Emigration: An Appeal Based on Faith, Family, and Famine*. Van Raalte Press, 2025.
- . *Dutch American Studies, 1985: Papers Presented to the 1985 AADAS Conference*. Mindscapes Press, 2025.
- Japinga, Lynn. "Fierce, Feisty, Faithful, Furious, Fatigued: Reflections on the Vocation of Clergy Women." In *Like a Watered Garden: Essays in Honor of Carol Bechtel*, edited by James Hart Brumm. *Historical Series of the RCA*, no. 111. Reformed Church Press, 2025.
- Sheeres, Janet. *Present, But Not Counted: Dutch-Immigrant and Second Generation Midwives Working in Dutch Colonies in the United States, 1840-1940*. Van Raalte Press, 2025.
- Sinnema, Donald W. *The Synod of Dordt (1618-1619): Historical Perspectives*. Reformation Heritage Books, 2025.
- Staal, Harvey. *The Arab Bible of AD 867*. Edited and annotated by Paul Heusinkveld. Mindscapes Press, 2025.

- Swierenga, Robert P. “Dutch Chicago Revisited: Upward Mobility and White Flight.” In *E. Pluribus Unum: The Weaving and Unraveling of a Singular “Dutch American” Identity in North America*, edited by Donald A. Luidens, Henk Aay, and Michael J. Douma. Van Raalte Press, 2025.
- . and Ralph Hoekstra, “House With A History: 1641 West 14th Street—Chicago Address of Three Prominent Dutch ‘Garbios’” *Origins* 43, no. 2 (2025): 4–19.
- . Book Review: Paul M. Kuiper, *Through Many Dangers, Books 1 and 2* (Reformed Free Publishing Company, 2021). In *Newsletter of the Association for Dutch American Studies (AADAS)*.
- Sytsma, Richard E. *We Served Side by Side: The Cooperation of the Christian Reformed Church and the Reformed Church of Japan, 1951-2017*. Van Raalte Press, 2025.

Presentations

- Aay, Henk. Lecture. “Making an Atlas, Hits and Misses.” Calvin University. Sponsored by the GEO Dept and the Frederik Meijer Chair in Dutch Language and Culture, November 24, 2025.
- . Lecture. “(Carto)graphic Survey of Post-WWII Dutch Immigration to North America.” Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS), Holland, Michigan, June 27, 2025.
- Heusinkveld, Paul. Lecture. “Looking into the Oceans.” Hope Academy of Senior Professionals (HASP), Holland, Michigan, February 3, 2025.
- . Lecture. “What Lies Beneath the Waves.” Holland Professional Club, Holland, Michigan, May 1, 2025, and Farmstead by Resthaven, Holland, Michigan, June 20, 2025.
- Kennedy, Nella. Lecture. “Two Immigrations: Travels and Travails.” Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS), Holland, Michigan, June 27, 2025.
- Sinnema, Donald W. Lecture. “Antonius Walaeus’ *Synopsis* Disputation on Predestination in Light of the Treatment of Predestination at the Synod of Dordt and in Contemporary Disputations.” Conference on the *Synopsis Purioris Theologiae* (1625), Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary, Grand Rapids, Michigan, October 2025.
- Swierenga, Robert P. Lecture. “Dutch Chicago Revisited: Upward Mobility and White Flight.” Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS), Holland, Michigan, June 27, 2025.
- . Lecture. “Helping Hands: Old Dutch Help Young Dutch.” Holland Society of New York, Midwest Branch, Holland, Michigan, November 1, 2025.
- . Interview. “The Other Reformation.” Laymen’s League, October 20, 2025.
- . Interview. “Zeeland History.” Zeeland Historical Society, September 17, 2025.
- Verhave, Jan Peter. Lecture. “Reflections on Paul de Kruif and Sinclair Lewis.” Sinclair Lewis Society, Sauk Centre, Minnesota, April 2025.

Publications **by Senior and
Visiting Research Fellows** and
Other Associates of the Van Raalte
Institute, 1994–2025

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- *Bruggink, Donald J., Dennis N. Voskuil, and William Katerberg, eds. *Dutch Immigrant Stories*. Van Raalte Press, 2022.
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VRI Visiting Research Fellows Lecture Series

Dutch American Identity Politics: The Use of History by Dutch Immigrants (2003)

Hans Krabbendam, Roosevelt Study Center, the Netherlands

The Rain of God: Reformed Church in America Growth and Decline in Historical Perspective (2004)

Lynn M. Japinga, Hope College

Dutch Entrepreneurship: Spirit or Ideology? (2004)

Hans Niemantsverdriet, Amsterdam

Reassessing 1857: Overlooked Considerations Concerning the Birth of the Christian Reformed Church (2006)

James A. De Jong, Calvin Theological Seminary

Disease and Death among the Early Settlers in Holland, Michigan (2006)

J. P. Verhave, Radboud University Medical Center, Nijmegen, the Netherlands

Growing Up Dutch American: Cultural Identity and the Formative Years of Older Dutch Americans (2007)

Peter Ester, Tilburg University, the Netherlands

The Dutch Equation in the RCA Freemasonry Controversy, 1865-1885 (2008)

Harry Boonstra, Calvin College and Seminary

*“We live presently under a waning moon”:
Nicholas Martin Steffens as Leader of the Reformed Church in America in the West in Years of Transition (1878-1895)* (2008)

George Harinck, VU University Amsterdam

*Preachers, Pews, and Pupils:
Commemorating the Past in Twentieth-Century Dutch America* (2008)

David Zwart, Dordt College

“Pope of the Classis”?: The Leadership of Albertus C. Van Raalte in Dutch and American Classes (2009)

Leon van den Broeke, VU University Amsterdam

Dutch Americans and the Rise of Heritage Studies (2010)

Michael Douma, Florida State University

Hope: The Legacy of Van Raalte (2011)

Rein Nauta, Tilburg University, the Netherlands

Documentary Films of the Netherlands Shown in the United States, 1942-1973: Viewership, Representativeness, and Visual Rhetoric (2013)

Henk Aay, Calvin College

Hendrik P. Scholte: His Legacy in the Netherlands and in America (2015)

Eugene Heideman, RCA staff member, retired

*“We Made the Wilderness to Blossom”:
Nineteenth Century Dutch Immigrants and the Natural World* (2015)

Henk Aay, Calvin College, and Jan Boersema, Leiden University, NL

Seeds of Hope, Seeds of Hate: A Love Story (Begins) (2016)

Don Luidens, Hope College

A Japanese and a Dutchman in Science: Stories of a Dramatic Disaster (2017)

Jan Peter Verhave, Radboud University, Nijmegen, NL

Plugging in the Electric Church: Robert Schuller, the Crystal Cathedral and Entrepreneurial Evangelicalism (2018)

Mark Mulder, Calvin College

***Eleanor Calverley, First Doctor to Kuwait:
Celebrating 100 Years of Kuwait-American
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***Paterson, New Jersey: Dutch Immigration's
Largest Afterthought (1846-1950)* (2019)**

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***The Pull at Hope College: Then and Now, 1898-
2018* (2019)**

Bruce Geelhoed, Ball State University

***Patriots and Internationalists: Dutch
American Religion and Global Consciousness
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Andrew Klumpp, Southern Methodist University

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***Edward D. Dimment and His Memorial
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Judy Tanis Parr, Honorary Research Fellow

***The Origins of the Hope-Calvin Men's
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Chad Carlson, Hope College

***The Holland Area's First Entrepreneurs: Who
They Were, What They Did, and Why They
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Steven VanderVeen, Hope College

***Videos links of lectures since 2022 are
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