1864
A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps Jr.

_Holland Mich_

_Jan.- 11 / 64._

*Rev P Phelps.*

_Dear Brother!_

*Dk Oggel did get yesterday a fever and feels sick and unable to give the Boijs the lesson: Please be so kind to notifij the Boys.—*

_Yours trulij_

A. C. Van Raalte

Pieter J. Oggel began his teaching duties at the Holland Academy in January 1864.¹ Van Raalte wrote the above brief note to notify Phelps, the principal of Holland Academy that his son-in-law was not well and unable to teach. Van Raalte may have written the note so his daughter, Johanna Maria Wilhelmina (Mina or Minnie), would have one less thing to do while she was busy caring for her husband.

Oggel was well known and loved by Van Raalte. He studied with Van Raalte at the Theological Training School started by Van Raalte in Ommen, the Netherlands, and continued to study with him when the school moved to Arnhem in 1844. After finishing his theological training, when he was only twenty years old, he became the pastor of a church in Utrecht in 1849. He emigrated to America in 1856 and was a pastor first in Grand Haven (1856-60) and then at Pella, where he started and edited a Dutch newspaper, _Pella’s Weekblad._ He came to Holland in 1863 and taught at the Holland Academy and then at Hope College as Professor of Sacred Literature. He was the first editor of the religious newspaper _De Hope._ He was a gifted man; unfortunately, he suffered from ill health and died at the age of forty in 1869.

Pieter Oggel and Mina Van Raalte were married in 1860. They lived on campus in a house originally built for Giles Vande Wall, an earlier teacher at the academy; that house became known as the Oggel House.² They had four children, but only one daughter survived beyond infancy—Christina, who died unmarried at age forty-six having had heart trouble for some time.³

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¹ “Historical Sketch,” 47.
² In 1942, Hope College lost “one of the landmarks of pioneer days,” when the Oggel House was sold to the Capital Lumber and Wrecking Co. of Grand Rapids and torn down. The Oggel House was located on the corner of Tenth St. and Columbia Ave., on or near the current site of Phelps Hall built in 1960 (The Holland City News, 14 May 1942).
³ Bruins et al., _Albertus and Christina_, 100-108.
A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps Jr.

_Holland Mich:  
Jan: 18 / 64._

Rev P Phelps.

_Dr Brother._

_Dr Oggel is again unwell and will be unable to attend to day to his lessons. Will you be so kind to tell it to the Boys, that they may not wait in vain._

_Yours truly_  
_A C Van Raalte_

This letter was written just a week later; Oggel again was not well.
Figure 24. Pieter J. Oggel with his father-in-law, A. C. Van Raalte; after serving as a Reformed Church pastor, he became a professor at Hope College
Dear Brother. –

Much obliged for your trouble. I take rather the whole Box of Envelopes; my account then will be 32 cts higher. If you want some for your own use, keep some till you get your own Box. I inclose $4.87 the balance of the Bill. – If you send for some again, will you be so kind to write for a half ream of the smallest kind of notepaper. –

The weather is only good to keep within at least for a dyspeptic as I am. –

Sincerely yours
A C Van Raalte

This letter is very business-like, written to accompany the money Van Raalte sent in payment of what he owed Phelps for obtaining envelopes and other supplies for him. His note at the end about the bad weather explains why he did not bring the money to Phelps in person.

4 This may have been the paper Van Raalte used for his sermons. Extant Van Raalte sermons are on very small sheets of paper that measure 7.75” x 6.25”. These sheets were folded in half, making a little booklet that would slip inside his Bible or another small book (JAH).
A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps Jr.

Holland Mich:
Feb: 20 / 64

Revd P. Phelps

Dear Brother.

I will take the liberty of announcing your preaching next Thursday morning half past ten in our Church; I consulted yesterday with Wakker: and he thought it best that The First Church held her meeting in the evening. –

Please keep the inclosed letter to yourself and return after reading. –
I wish we could sell that property. –

Your Friend and Brother. –
A. C. Van Raalte

Although Van Raalte did not say here why Phelps was going to preach on Thursday morning, or what meeting may be happening in the evening, we know from the Holland Classis Minutes of 27-28 September 1859 that the last Thursday of the month (which this was) had been set aside by the General Synod of the Reformed Dutch Church as a day of prayer for colleges and seminaries. It would have been very appropriate for Phelps as principal of the Holland Academy to have preached on that day. The minutes also indicated that the sermon preached on the Sunday preceding the last Thursday of February should be on education.

5 Gerrit Wakker (1815-1901) was an elder at First Reformed Church, Van Raalte’s congregation, and served as the clerk of consistory in 1864 (1860 Federal Census; Pilgrim Home Cemetery Records; First Reformed Church Minutes, 11 January 1864). He was a delegate to Holland Classis and treasurer of the Holland Academy during the 1860s (Classis Holland Minutes, 30 September 1858; Earl Wm. Kennedy to Bruins).

6 The letter referred to here no longer exists and there is no indication as to its contents, but we do learn from this reference that Van Raalte certainly did take Phelps into his confidence.

7 Classis Holland Minutes, 27-28 September 1859, p. 14. See also Corwin, A Digest, 514.
A. C. Van Raalte to Philip Phelps Jr.

Holland Mich
Apl 8 / 64

Rev Phelps

Dear Brother

I did look through my papers but no book account there. I do live
under the impression that when I did answer you about envelopes I did
send back at the same time that book account. Yet I will look into the
corners.

Your Friend
A C Van Raalte

Phelps could not find the book account, which was probably
related to accounts at the Holland Academy; Van Raalte thought had
he returned it with an earlier note but said he would continue looking.