Zeer geliefde Broeder en Kinderen:

Ik kan niet nalaten om mijn toestand van wege myne betrekking die ik op uw hebbé. Ik ben veel met myne gedachten by uw. Niet dat het my rouw maar ik verlangde naar uw en als broeders te zamen te wonen. Naar het lighaam ben ik nog goed gezond; ik ben nog niet ziek geweest, zooals vele ontmoetinge my hatkomen troffen. Zy hebben 39 dagen op het schip gewoont, en niet veel storm gehad maar de weR is vor en roujelyk ik ben in de kalonk ik hebe by Van Heeze een maand bestaet voor dertien dalers en de koet. By laerwans mine neulie(tante Mena) wy zijn te zamen gezond zy heeft veel lant gekoert en it heeft ook voetig zijn gekoert. De Grootse is vijftig mudden(akkers) lant naar het is alle vol met bomen maar de groot is goed het is alle klei dat ik gekocht hebbe;maar het is hier van boide, zant en klei.

Maer de lucht is hier vruchtbaar het is wel gezond maar door alle het hout zoo vries niet als by uw. Maar het is hier goed. Ik wenste wel mijn vrienden in den heere, dat gy hier waart. Hier is veel vroomvolk van alle kant van Vriesland znit not ons hier van Nieuw York wel 70 zielen met ons geraen, hier is gedwiz scheeen aankomen, zoodat my doet verbyden bloeden beeken, ligten sterren, ligt of ligt, zoodat my dek dat de Heere hier zyn kerk wil bouwen. Ach vrienden het is hier wel hout maar gy kunt gauwe wé om hebben een house wel droo voet hoor van de groot en het maar op maakkaer om te voorwonden. Ach vrienden, ik dacht eerst wel is dat kanaan toen ik het zag, maar toen ik met alles bekent toen ze moest ik nye beschamen. Dacht ik in de dagen van ouds op de voorwaderen hoe my in de koeten en de spilenken moesten verheven en hier zoo gezongen, zoodat het voor hier in de bosch van zelf voet woort of gy tien of tuintig verken heb is hetzelfde,zy worden hier niet goevoet. Koeien(cows) deselieh ruiste bosen worden hier voet. Toen ik dat alles aanschoude, toen dacht ik om moet my beschamen, omdat ik toen kon zien hoe gemakkelijk dat de mensch hier zyn voedsel kon. Dagte ik aan ons land aan arbeide aan gedeusocheid,aan zonde, en ongerechtigheid, wat is het hier dat goed.

Den leder kon hier zyn eigen broot eten gy behoef aan geen land wat op te brengen(tax) zoodat ik dat alles overdagde, zo kon de mensch hier zyn eigen broot eten. Zoo wensh ik wel dat alle vragers na den heere, hier waren dat gy de gedeusocheid niet langer behoefde te bouwen. Hier in de Kalonie kan een een persoon een half daler verdienen, maar die buiten saen kunnen in de koet mehr verdienen. Zoodat ik moet zeggen die hier gezond en wil werken(work) die kan zyn brood hebben onder Gods zegen. Zoo dat my dat ervele suilen op verlieft worden, maar ach de weG is mooielyk, brengt beheerstigen mede,help zo uit de verdrukkinge, die zyn werk kan doen die kant wel mehr verdienen wy hebben 15 woken onder weg gewoent. Zy dacht die wil komen moet in my komen nu vrienden komt toch hier,goed niet volmaakt, dat moet hier aan dezyde niet verwaten naar streeft er allem voortimmer man is het hier goed, voor shoon maker is het hier goed.
Men draagt hier veel schoenen. De klopmolen maken, en dekker hebben hier niet veel werk. Huizen dekken met plakken, huizen kan men gauw bouwen met een man of vier in een dag of drie. Nu vrienden ik nodig uw alle die hier gezocht is en wil werken die kan hier zijn brood wel hebben, en den zegen des heeren mag genieten. Nu vrienden kunt, het is hier goed voor een ieder, denkt maar zelf die een paar zullen heeft die worden hier van zelver. Gy behoeft aan gen lunt wat op te brengen. Zoo kunt gy zelf wel rekenen dat gy hier wel kunt leven. Hier zyn van allen, hands (zoort) van menschen van anhegt, maar geen koperslager. Nu vrienden komtoods dience in hier zondag en zingsdag een bit uur dat is hier nog niet op het volmakete maar ik verblyfd my dat ik hier bew, hoe wel mijn gedag- ten zijn velle by uw dan denke ik nog wel eens van de dagen ouds, maar ik hebbe hier ook vele vele vrienden die my liefde en dier- baar zijn het geld is hier zoo holants golt is hier net zoo hoog van vrywraak tegen zuwent vertig Hollandgeryks Balers die zyn hier ook goed maar ik rede uw veel aan gaat golt in vrakken, en dan die wil komen moet van allen mede brengen, een ieder nayn toestand, maar niem en ligt de vraeg is duur hier is het ook duijd duur.


Die moet en wil op dag huurgen een halfdaler dage nu laat ik het aan uw zelf over maakom-akt(dronken) en stelers en alle die Godloos leven leiden behoeften hier niet te komen. Nu vrienden ik moet sluiten, Zelzmk Zwemsoein is doed en wy anderen zijn allen gezon in omstaan of zwakheid van de jongen zyne vleue buiten de kolonie, jillig, popcorn, schelten wintergirls) Driennen witer, en Gerrit Jan Speet en Gerrit Berink, Luuds, Horzina en Kwa, en nog wel her en Gasper Lahuis in in de kolonie, Locks hebben 3 kolon en zoven vandens de anderen hebben ook als Nu vrienden het verblyfd ons dat wy hier zyn daar is nog een ge- komen die heeft nog Oostersiers mee kenrentik ik moet afbreken.

De groeckin aan alle alle naar dat ook aan Ruddle aan voor volto maar ook aan Koolink. Koot maar en dan alle het volk, om dat ik hier van vore van oordeelen daaren bid ik veale tot den heere dat hy uw mag lyden naar zijn raad ik ben veel by uw if brock off. Ik blijf uw Ceyroot.

Gerrit Bouws
Paid 10

Manlius, N.Y.
July 30, 1867
Mr. Kim Bouws to Campenlakap
Paid 10
Very dear brother and children,

I can't begin to tell you about my situation since the beginning of my journey. I am often with you in my thoughts. Not that I regret it but I long for you, to live together as brothers. Physically I am doing well; I have not been sick yet so I managed to meet many people. We were on the ship for 39 days and didn't have much stormy weather, but the trip is long and difficult.

I am in the colony. I have spent a month at VanRaalte for thirteen dollars and the cost. At Laarman's (Aunt Miena) we are all healthy. She bought much land and I have also bought 40 acres. DeGroote bought fifty acres of land which is all full of trees, but the soil is good. What I bought is all clay, but here it is both sand and clay.

But the air here is fruitful and is healthy despite the cold. It doesn't freeze like this where you are, but it is good here. I wish, my friends in the Lord, that you were here. There are many pious people from all parts of Friesland here. About 70 souls came with us from New York. Ships arrive continually, so that it makes me rejoice blooming brooks, light stars, light of light. I thank the Lord that he wants to build his church here.

Oh, friend, it is cold here. I should chop some wood and stack it up against the house so I can burn it.

Oh, friends, when I first saw it I thought it was Canaan but when I became more familiar with everything then I was ashamed of myself. I thought of the olden days of our forefathers and how they had to explore in the caves and caverns. The cattle are fattened by themselves in the
woods; if you have ten or twenty pigs, it is the same. They are not fed here. Cows, even the barren beasts, become fat here. When I observed all of this then I thought I should be ashamed of myself. I could see how easy it is for a person to earn his bread. I thought about our land, about poverty, about ungodliness, about sin and unrighteousness; is it ever good here.

Everyone here can eat his own bread. You have no need to produce anything on the land. So I wish that all who seek the Lord could be here, so that they don't have to put up with ungodliness anymore. Here in the colony a man can earn a half dollar, but going outside one can earn more. So that I must say that those who are healthy and can work, can earn their keep with God's blessing. So I think that many will fall in love with it, but, oh the road is difficult, bringing unexpected problems with it, helping them out of their oppression. Those who can do their work can surely earn more. We have been on the road for 15 weeks.

I think that he who wants to come here should come in May. Now, friends, do come here; things are good but not perfect, so we shouldn't be arrogant. It is good for carpenters here and also for shoemakers; many people wear shoes. The clog maker and roofer do not have much work here. Houses are roofed with planks and can be built quickly in approximately three days if about four men work on it.

Now friends, I invite you all, whoever is healthy and wants to work, to earn his bread here and to benefit from God's blessing. Friends, come; it is good for everyone here. Just think that if you have a few pigs, they will fatten themselves. You don't need to grow anything on the land. So you can assume that you can live here quite nicely.

There are many kinds of people here, but there are no coppersmiths.

Now friends, come. God's service is on Sundays and on Tuesdays.
Prayer here isn't yet as it should be, but I am happy to be here. My thoughts are often of you and then I think of the olden days. But I also have many, many friends here who love me and are dear to me.

The Dutch gold coins here are as valuable as in the Netherlands. Dutch rijksdaalders are also good, but I suggest that you bring gold coins, especially francs. Everyone should bring as much as possible and only bring new wares because transportation is expensive.

Don't take any axes with you, and the travel chest should be strong and not too large. Whoever wants to come will have to pay twenty-one guilders to go by ship. You should take lots of meal along: rice, barley, beans and meat. Take a pan to cook with, but don't take a big one, because it will be used on a little stove. We did not like the ship's bread, so I advise you to bake some and dry it. When you arrive in New York, sell your bread and also your rice and barley, because you can get a lot of money for them.

On the ship the beds are hard and there are many lice. Whenever you can, you must take plums, raisins and apples.

Oh, these are not land people. Five children died on the ship and Gerrit Nakken broke his buttock.

It is best to be in a small household because then you can take advantage of the cooking and other regulations that I don't want to mention.

Now, friends, I should contain my eagerness, but I want to know if you are coming. I will let you be the judge of this. You can get fifty acres that you can get trees from for fifty-three dollars. There people make plans, but here people don't need to mess with growing anything on land. When you buy five or six pigs, they become fat.

Whoever must or wants to come here will earn a half-dollar a day.
Now I will leave it up to you. But drunkards and thieves and all those who live godlessly don't have to bother coming.

Now, friends, I must close this letter. Zalemink Zwennemeiu is dead but the rest of us are still healthy. Because of weaknesses in the young people, there are many outside of the colony. Millige, Poppen, the Scholten girls, the Briennen girls, and Gerrit Jan Speet, Gerrit Derks, Loed, Hermina and Harm, Casper Lahuis and still others are in the colony. Loeks has three cows and seven pigs; the others also have animals. Now, friends, it makes us happy to be here. Another ship has come and brought sixty passengers with it. I must end.

Greetings to all who ask about me and also to Rosel, to VoorWolte and to Koelink. Come only with these people, because I hear from afar of trying times. Therefore I pray to the Lord that he may lead you according to his wisdom. I am often with you. I now end. I remain yours; best wishes, Gerrit Bouws.
Dearest Brother and Children:

I cannot refrain about my state by reason of my concern for you. I am often with you in my thoughts. Not that I have regrets but that I long for you that we as brothers may live together. As for my body I am still in good health; I have not been sick yet, so that I have been spared many of the ugly adversities that might have befallen me. We were aboard ship 39 days and we did not have much storm but the journey is long and difficult. I am in the Kalonie. I have contracted myself to Van Raalte one month for thirteen dollars and board. By Laarmaremeine meule (Tante Miene) we are both in good health. She has bought much land and I also have bought forty acres. (De Groote) The large one is fifty acres but it is all full of trees but the soil is good it is all clay that I have bought; but it is here of both, sand and clay.

The climate here is fruitful. It is certainly healthful but owing to the abundance of woods it is not so fresh (vries) as you have it. But it is good here. I do indeed wish, my friends in the Lord, that you were here. Here are many pious (religious) people from all sides from Vriesland some 70 souls accompanied us here from New York. Ships arrive here frequently, so that blossoming streams, shining stars, light upon light (ligt op ligt) fill my heart with joy, so that I think the Lord wishes to build his church here. Ah, my friends, it is indeed woods here but you can soon chop them down. You chop at least three feet above ground one on top of another to be burned. Ah, friends, my thoughts when I first saw it were this is Canaan, but when I became fully acquainted with it all, I had to feel ashamed. I thought of our forefathers of the days of old how they had to find shelter in caves and holes, and here there are so many blessings, so that here in the woods the cattle fatten without being fed, whether you have 10 or 20 pigs, it's all the same, they do not have to be feed here. Cows likewise (guste beesten grow fat here.)
When I beheld all this then I stopped to think and I had to feel ashamed because I then could see how easily man could here obtain his food. And when I thought of our country, its poverty, its godlessness, its sin and unrighteousness, I realized how good it was to be here.

Each and everybody can eat his own bread here. One does not have to pay tax on any land here, so considering all things, a man can here eat his own bread. And so I do wish that all those who seek the Lord might be here so that you no longer need to build the wicked world (de goddeloosheid). Here in the Kalonie one (men)person can earn a half dollar, but those who go outside can earn more in their board. So that I must say that any healthy person who is willing to work can with God's blessing supply his daily needs. So that it seems to me that many will take a liking to this place. But the trip is a trying one. Along those who are in need. Help them out of their state of oppression. Whoever is capable of his work can well earn more here. We have been 15 weeks under way. It seems to me that those who so desire should come in May. Now friends do come here, it is good, not perfect, that you must not expect on this side of the grave, but strive each and everybody thereunto. For a carpenter it is good here, for a shoemaker it is also good. Here one wears many shoes. A woodenshoe-maker and a decker do not have much work here. Houses one decks with boards. A house is quickly built by three or four men in two or three days. Now friends I urge (invitâ) you all anyone here who is in good health and is willing to work can certainly have his daily bread here and may here enjoy the blessings of the Lord. Now friends do come. It is good for each of you. Think for yourself, if you have a couple of pigs they fatten themselves, you need pay no tax. So you can figure it out for yourself that you can well make a living here. Here are men of all sorts of trade, but no coppersmith (koperslager). Now friends come.

Church services are here each Sunday and Tuesday an hour of prayer, not perfect by any means, but I rejoice that I am here, although my thoughts are often with you and then I think of the days gone by. But here too I have many friends whom I love and are dear to me. Money here is like Holland (zoo Holants) gold here just as high (van vytvranken tegen zuvent vertig Hollanderyks Dalere) they are also good here but I advise you much gold money in Franks, and then whoever desires to come must take all kinds of things along, each according to his means, but new and light, the freight is high here it is also high.

You must not take along any (eksen) and boxes small and strongtake along rather a (meet) measure and those who desire to come the boat fare (kost-meals) cost us 21 gulden. But take along much flour and rice and (gort) barley and beans and a pan for cooking; but you will all be cooking on one stove, you must not have a large one. Ship's bread we did not like, so I suggest that you have some baked and then dried and when you arrive in New York sell your bread and "als te rys, en gut want daar komt veel onkost, op, beede moet gy wel goet mee brengen" (import duty is high bedding you may or should take among) it is expensive in the Kalonie and aboard ship lying is hard and there are many lice and you must "van alle handen pruimen an roselynne apples ach lant liden gy deze niet." Aboard ship five children died en Gerrit Nakken broke his "bil!" Aboard ship you had better form a small household, that will be to your advantage in cooking and other matters that I do not wish to name. Now friends, I must close. My desire you know, come.
but I shall let you decide for yourself. Here you can buy 50 acres for 53 dalers. You can clear the land of trees. You plant the crops, you do not have to fertilize any land. Five or six pigs you buy, they will fatten.

Whoever must or wishes to work by the day, it is a half-daler a day. Now I must leave it to yourself, but thieves and all who lead godless lives need not come here. Now friends I must close. Zalemink Zwennemeijer is dead and the rest of us are in good health. "In omstaan van zwakheid van de jongen" many of the young ones are outside the Kolonie. Hilligi, Poppen, Scholten girls, Briennen girls, and Gerrit Jan Speet and Gerrit Derks, Leeds, Hereina and Harm and still others and Casper Lahuis is in the Kolonie. Loeks have 3 cows and seven pigs, the others also have. Now friends, we are happy that we are here. Another (ship) has come, it has brought along 60 passengers, now I have to break off.

Greetings to those who ask but also to Rosal to Voor wolte but also to Koelink. Only come with all the people because I from afar hear of trying times therefore I pray much to the Lord that he may lead you according to his wisdom. I am much with you I break off, I remain yours with best wishes.

Gerrit Bouws

Manlius, Mich.
July 30, 1841
England über Bremen

Mr. Harm Bouws te Emmelenkamp
ambt Nieuwenhuis Graafschap Bentham
Netherland in Europe

The translation follows the original literally as far as I was able to interpret it here, the punishment and incoherence.
AN IMMIGRANT’S LETTER

(This letter was written July 30, 1847 by Geert Bouws to his brother, Harm, in Graafschaft-Bentheim, West Germany. Geert was a recent immigrant to the Graafschaft, Michigan area. The Harm Bouws, to whom this letter was written, later came with his family to the Dutch colony in Michigan. This is a translated version of the letter.)

To my dearly beloved brother and his children:

I cannot forbear to write and tell you about my present circumstances because I think of you so often. I do not regret that I moved here but I long for you and wish we could live together. I am well, and have not been sick, although there have been many troubles. We were on the ship for 39 days. We did not have many storms but the journey was long and difficult. I am in the colony. I stayed with Van Raalte for a month for thirteen dalers (a Dutch coin). Our food was supplied by Aunt Minnie Laarman. She has bought much land. I have also bought forty acres. It is full of trees but the soil is good, it is all clay. The soil in this area is a mixture of sand and clay. The climate is good for the crops.

I sometimes wish that all my Christian friends were here with us. There are many religious people here. About seventy persons from Friesland, accompanied by a pastor from Zeeland have come here, intending to start their own church. They first landed in New York. (Ships also land here.) I believe God is beginning to build His church here and I rejoice!

Oh, friends, it is true, it is all work here, but you can quickly chop the trees down to within three feet of the ground and then haul it away and burn it. Friends, when I first saw it I thought, "Is this our Land of Canaan?" but after I saw more of it I was ashamed of my thoughts. I thought of the days of our ancestors—how they lived in dens and caves in the ground, while here we are so blessed. Here our cattle graze in the forest and we do not even have to feed them. It is the same with the pigs. You can have ten or twenty pigs and they are not even given grain. The same with the cows. When I saw all this happening I realized how plentifully we are supplied here with food. I thought of our homeland, our poverty there, but also our ungodliness, our sins, our unrighteousness. In comparison, how good we have it here. Everyone can eat his own bread. I wish that all who seek the Lord could come here where you no longer have to see wickedness all around you. Here in the colony a man can earn a half-daler in a day. Those who go out of the colony to the east can earn more, so that I must say, "Those who are healthy and willing to work can earn their own livelihood with the blessing of God." I think many of the immigrants love it here. But, oh, the way (the trip) is difficult and also costly—over 100 gulden (one gulden is 60¢ here). Those who are wealthy brought needy ones with them in order to bring them out from under oppression. Those who are competent to work can earn more here.
We were on our journey here for fifteen weeks. Those who plan to come should come in the month of May. My friends, come! It is good here, not perfect but we must not expect perfection this side of eternity, although we should strive for it. Carpenters do well here, also shoemakers. The people here wear leather shoes, not wooden shoes. The wooden-shoe makers and the roof thatchers will not find much work here. Roofs are built with planks. Four men can build a house in three days.

Now, my friends, I urge all of you who are well and able to work to come here. You can enjoy your own food with the Lord's blessing. If you have a couple of pigs they will get fat just roaming in the woods. You will not even have to own land and raise grain to feed them. So you see you can live here. There are many people here who are trained in various crafts (But no coppersmiths).

We have a religious service here on Sunday, and on Tuesday we have an hour of prayer. I am glad to be here although my thoughts are often with you and I remember old times. I have many friends here, too, that I love and are dear to me.

The money they use here is from Holland. Gold is not used much here. Five franks (a French gold coin) are worth about the same here as 47 Holland "dalers". I recommend that you bring gold franks. Those who come here should bring their own supplies, as much as they can afford, but keep them light in weight because of the freight cost. Do not bring an ax.

The chests in which you pack your belongings should be strong but small in size, even if you have to bring an extra one. We paid 21 gulden for passage for each person. Bring a lot of meal, rice, barley, beans, and meat. Bring a pan for baking and a pot for boiling. You can cook on only one stove. (It is possible that the writer here refers to a stove on board the ship.) We do not like the bread on the ship. I advise you to bake your own bread (before you leave) and then when you get to New York sell the bread, rice, barley, and beans so you will not have to pay for the freight. You must bring enough bedding because on the ship you will live on hard places and there are many lice. While we were on the way five children died. Also Gerrit Nakken fell and broke the bones in his buttocks. On the ship you must do some small housekeeping jobs. You do have the privilege of cooking and other benefits but I will not list them all.

Now my friends, I must close.

Zalmink Sweenemui has died. (This could mean Aunt Swenna Zalmink.) The rest of us are well. Due to circumstances or the illness of their children several of our group were not able to join us here in the colony.

The following are here with us: Hillige Poppen, Scholten Wigterink, Brunik Wigterink, Geert Jan Speet, Geert Derks, Harm and Hermima Loeks and Caspar Lahuis. (Because of the lack of punctuation we cannot be certain of the accuracy of this list.) The Loeks have three cows and seven pigs. The others have some livestock also.

Friends, we are glad we are here. Another ship arrived recently bringing sixty passengers.

I must break it off.
Greetings to all those who ask about us, especially Rosel, Voorwolte and Koelink. I have been hearing that some of those living in your area have been saying unpleasant (but untrue) things about our colony. Therefore, pray much to the Lord that He may guide you according to His will. I am much in prayer for you. Again, I greet you.

Geert Bouws