Van Gogh
Heritage Locations in Drenthe
G.J. Landweer, Farmhouse with a Barn in the Kremboong Area near Hoogeveen, c. 1884-1894, Drents Archief, Drents Museum collection
‘So I say to you, plant yourself in the soil of Drenthe – you will sprout there.’ Vincent van Gogh wrote this in a letter to his brother Theo from Nieuw-Amsterdam on 28 October 1883. Letters, paintings and drawings by the artist are silent witnesses to his stay in Drenthe in the autumn of 1883.

The locations in the Province of Drenthe that Van Gogh visited and/or inspired him have finally been charted. The publication Van Gogh Heritage Locations in Drenthe has filled a gap and laid the foundation of the story of Van Gogh in Drenthe. By making visible the fifteen buildings, locales and landscapes that played an important role in the artist’s time there, a more complete story about Vincent van Gogh can now be told.

Experts from the Drents Museum, the Drents Archief (Drenthe Archive) and Het Drentse Landschap (The Drenthe Landscape Foundation) joined forces to inventory all of the Van Gogh heritage locations in Drenthe. This represents a unique partnership, in which expertise and insights from art-historical, historical and landscape vantage points were pooled and deployed on the locations.

The researchers analysed letters and works by Van Gogh, consulted archives, studied previous research, went into the field and conducted numerous interviews with relevant experts and individuals involved with the locations. The Van Gogh Brabant heritage programme served as an excellent model and guide. The present project could not have been realised without the support of all the local parties in Drenthe. Moreover, the research was encouraged by the Van Gogh Europe Foundation, which is a unique collaboration between various international organisations.

Van Gogh Heritage Locations in Drenthe is the result of a careful analysis and assessment of the various locations related to Van Gogh and was made possible with financial support from the Province of Drenthe. The Van Gogh Museum in Amsterdam was pleased to learn of the results of the investigation and has endorsed the project team’s findings. The previously fallow land can now be cultivated.

We hope that this research will serve as the starting point for developing more concerted initiatives to preserve Van Gogh’s heritage in Drenthe for the future. May it also enthuse the largest possible national and international public about Van Gogh’s Drenthe period. For information about Van Gogh heritage locations in Drenthe now and in the future, please visit: www.vangoghindrenthe.nl.

Corinne Rodenburg, director Drents Archief
Sonja van der Meer, director Het Drentse Landschap
Harry Tupan, general director Drents Museum

1 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, 28 October 1883, letter no. 400, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let400/letter.html
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On Tuesday, 11 September 1883 Vincent van Gogh (1853-1890) boarded a train in The Hague bound for Drenthe. He had never been there before and knew it only through stories from others. What he found was something he could only fantasise about. Although not the first artist to set foot in this picturesque province, his decision to travel there in the autumn instead of the summer is curious. Even more remarkable is the fact that he did not plump for Drenthe’s idyllic sandy villages, but instead lost his heart to its peat bogs. What he saw there impressed him and stayed with him for the rest of his days. The hard country life and the purity of the local inhabitants bolstered his aim of becoming a painter of peasants. He wanted to understand life on the land, and in doing so, did not allow himself to be constrained by the customs and fashions of the art world. Van Gogh followed his own path and the months he spent in isolation in Drenthe served to convince him even more of his avowed vocation.
Drenthe Oeuvre
What remains of this brief yet critical chapter in the life of this famous painter are a modest oeuvre of paintings and drawings, a series of wonderful letters, and the places he visited, i.e. the heritage locations. In the past decades several important publications about the Drenthe period have appeared, including: the book *Vincent van Gogh in Drenthe* by Mark Edo Tralbaut in 1959; the extensive study *De Drentse tijd van Vincent van Gogh* by Meent van der Sluis and Wout Dijkstra in 2001; the publications *Hoogeveen 1883. In de voetsporen van Vincent van Gogh* in 2018, and *Drenthe 1883. In de voetsporen van Vincent van Gogh* in 2020 by Ronald Wilfried Jansen; and numerous articles about his Hoogeveen period by Albert Metselaar. The Van Gogh House in Nieuw-Amsterdam, the Stichting Kunstenaarsdorp Zweeloo (the Zweeloo Artists’ Village Foundation) and the Veenpark, among others, have been promoting Van Gogh’s story in Drenthe for years with great enthusiasm.

The Drents Museum, too, is increasingly putting the topic of Van Gogh in Drenthe on its agenda, with the first major retrospective devoted to this period slated for 2023.

Unknown Chapter
The time seems ripe to bring Van Gogh’s Drenthe period to the attention of a larger public. The initiatives mentioned above notwithstanding, the Drenthe chapter of one of the world’s most famous artists remains widely unknown. Perhaps this is because of the relatively small number of works, or the obscure or in the course of time strongly changed locations, or because in the past decades so few people were aware of Drenthe’s impact on Van Gogh.

In international exhibitions and publications Drenthe is mentioned only in passing, if at all. And that is a great pity: not only for the millions of Van Gogh lovers worldwide who are entitled to hear his whole story, but also for the local authorities who do not always recognise the significance of identified locations. The traces that Van Gogh left behind in Drenthe should be made visible once and for all.

Charting Traces of Van Gogh
The Drents Museum, the Drents Archief and Het Drentse Landschap have joined forces with many local partners to thoroughly investigate sites related to the months the world-famous painter Vincent van Gogh spent in the province of Drenthe in 1883. While this is certainly not the first time that these places have been examined, never before has this taken place within the framework of such a province-wide collaboration. For the project, extensive archival research was conducted, previous studies were consulted, discussions were held with experts in situ and field research was undertaken. By pooling resources, it was possible to look at the sites from an art historical point of view as well as from a historical and landscape perspective. This collaboration significantly enhanced the research. It was also crucial to separate fact from fiction in order to define the exact traces this famous painter left behind in Drenthe and determine the current status of these heritage locations. The inventory provides material for disclosing the heritage and for fact-based ‘storytelling’ about Van Gogh in Drenthe. The results of these efforts are presented in this publication in which the heritage sites have been visualised with a map of cultural landmarks and the archival material underlying them. This allows governments, cultural institutions, tourist organisations and local businesses to develop special activities that do justice to the historical significance of the sites in question.

Working Partners
The Drents Museum, the Drents Archief and Het Drentse Landschap used their respective expertise to jointly inventory the heritage locations. Not only did these organisations deploy manpower, they also consulted the rich archives, networks and other sources that they have at their disposal.

The Drents Museum
One of the Drents Museum’s aims is to acquire, conserve, research, document and present the province’s cultural heritage. The museum collection includes the paintings *The Peat Barge* and *Peasant Burning Weeds* (Drents Museum/Van Gogh Museum) by Vincent van Gogh, pictures by famous contemporaries seeking out the painters’ paradise of Drenthe and objects that provide historical context. And as mentioned, an exhibition on Van Gogh in Drenthe is planned for 2023. By participating in this inventory project, the individual art and heritage in the collection will be embedded in the complete story of one of the greatest artists the Netherlands ever brought forth.
The Drents Archief
The Drents Archief tells the story of Drenthe and has the statutory task of administering authentic archives of governments, private individuals and businesses in Drenthe. By means of this material, the Drents Archief makes the past visible for a broad public. With the sources from the Drents Archief, the traces of Van Gogh in Drenthe are illustrated with information about the locations he visited and the people he met. In addition, an image of Drenthe as Van Gogh encountered it is sketched in a broader sense with the help of documents present in the archive, such as historical maps. This brings Van Gogh’s Drenthe period to life more than ever before.

Het Drentse Landschap
Het Drentse Landschap is a private organisation dedicated to the nature, landscape, cultural history and heritage of Drenthe. It manages almost 9000 hectares of nature reserves, more than 300 buildings and objects and half of the 54 dolmens in the province. Het Drentse Landschap feels it is important for a large public to become acquainted with the history of Drenthe. Through this collaborative project it will soon be possible to literally revisit the places in Drenthe that Van Gogh once painted. This represents a unique opportunity for both local residents and other visitors to become familiar with the backgrounds of these landscapes in a different way.

Concept and Working Method
In 2017 Van Gogh Brabant published the book Van Gogh Monuments in Brabant and launched the accompanying website. This vital study formed a point of departure and source of inspiration for the research in Drenthe. The Drenthe project was supported at various times by the researchers from Brabant, for which we are greatly indebted. We also realised beforehand that there would never be as many locations to research in Drenthe as in Brabant.

Van Gogh, of course, only stayed in Drenthe for a short period of time. Whereas Brabant is already some steps ahead in Van Gogh’s story and was able to identify official Van Gogh monuments, for Drenthe this remains a wish for the future. The content team’s aim therefore was not to work towards monument status, but first to lay a solid foundation by making an inventory of the heritage locations. Unfortunately, many buildings and landscape settings have either disappeared or changed beyond recognition. Moreover, we do not know all of the places that Van Gogh actually visited.

At times this made it complicated and not always possible to designate a concrete location. In such cases, however, we felt it was crucial to classify a particular place as an ‘inspiration area.’ For example, while we know that Van Gogh walked around in the centre of Hoogeveen, he did not always mention precisely which places he looked at or visited. Nevertheless, in such cases we have rated Hoogeveen’s historic centre as an area of inspiration. It plays an important role in his story of Drenthe. What he saw and whom he met indirectly influenced his journey through the province and the works of art he produced there. This fact offers important starting points for local cultural and tourist entrepreneurs who want to tell Van Gogh’s story.

Furthermore, were we to be as strict as Van Gogh Brabant, only a handful of locations would remain. This is why our inventory looks somewhat different from our Brabant model.

Cultural Values Table for Locations
The inventory of Van Gogh heritage locations in Drenthe includes buildings, landscapes and areas, each with a specific value. To recognise that value at a single glance, icons have been designed to represent it. A heritage location is sometimes assigned several values.

The locations are classified into the following four categories:

- Locations in Drenthe related to Vincent van Gogh’s life, as mentioned, for example, in the letters to his brother Theo.
- Motifs in Drenthe that play a special role in Vincent van Gogh’s work.
- Landscapes and areas in Drenthe that bear the marks of Van Gogh’s time.
- Locations in Drenthe that tell a story about Van Gogh.
The inventory encompasses not only the identification of locations from the above categories, but also a description of them, with their current owners and users, date, status as a national monument or protected nature, the condition of the given location and background archival material such as literature, photographs, films, letters and websites. The values are assigned in relation to a biographical link with Vincent van Gogh, the relevant motif, the atmosphere and the story in a broader context. In this publication, all locations are first portrayed in narrative and visual form, followed by an overview of the factual data. An overview of the complete cultural values table of the locations is found on page 72.

We hope that this publication will shed light on the Van Gogh heritage in Drenthe and inspire the development of activities and further research into Van Gogh in the province. In addition, we urge local authorities, heritage organisations and the province to take even greater care to preserve the patrimony in the Province of Drenthe that recalls the presence of the world-famous artist Vincent van Gogh. A number of these heritage locations are currently in decline, are at risk from project development or have simply not yet been recognised. An inventory of all these locations must provide clarity once and for all if we are to track Van Gogh in the Province of Drenthe.

Acknowledgements
In the course of our research we were generously helped by numerous local partners. We are particularly grateful to the board and staff of the Van Gogh House in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, Stichting Kunstenaardorp Zweeloo and researchers Albert Metselaar, Ronald W. Jansen, Wim Visscher and Tineke de Roo. They were incredibly hospitable and helpful. The work they have been doing for years now, often selflessly, proved invaluable. We trust that this project will further strengthen collaborative efforts in Drenthe in regard to Van Gogh.

The success of this project could never have been achieved without the instrumental subsidy granted by the Province of Drenthe. In addition, we are grateful to the ‘Van Gogh municipalities’ of Hoogeveen, Emmen, Coevorden and Assen for their interest and support. Van Gogh Brabant has been mentioned extensively above and is therefore included in this list. Special thanks are due to Ron Dirven, Helewise Berger and Frank van den Eijnden for their advice. The Van Gogh Museum was also involved in the project from the start. Researchers Louis van Tilborgh and Teio Meedendorp provided valuable counsel and supported our research findings.

It is also important to mention the Van Gogh Europe Foundation in this context. This network is dedicated to the preservation and collective promotion of Van Gogh’s heritage. The Drents Museum and the Van Gogh House in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord team with museum and heritage partners from various countries. With the inventory of heritage locations in Drenthe, we hope to provide a beneficial addition to this network and thereby further refine the story of Vincent van Gogh’s stay in Drenthe.

Various colleagues also extended their help, including Rosanne Knol, Jan Bruggink and Bertil Zoer. Art historian Karlijn de Jong converted the research files into public-friendly texts, Sake Elzinga took beautiful photographs on location and Jolanda Schachtschabel designed this publication.

We are aware that research into the world-famous artist Vincent van Gogh is never-ending and that new facts and sources can always emerge. Some results will be called into question. We have consistently attempted to rely solely on the facts and not draw conclusions that cannot be traced back to the sources. We hope that our research will inspire others to delve deeper into the Drenthe chapter of Van Gogh’s life story!

On behalf of the research team:
Annemiek Rens (Chief Curator Drents Museum), Egbert Brink (former archivist Drents Archief), Erwin de Leeuw (archive processing and information Drents Archief) and Frank van der Velden, (head of the Monuments and Locations team Het Drentse Landschap).
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6. Cemetery, Pesse

#### Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord

7. Waterway from Hoogeveen to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
8. Driftbrug Zwinderen
9. Scholte Boarding House, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
10. Former Drawbridge, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
11. Environs of Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord

#### Zweeloo

12. Route Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Zweeloo
13. Zweeloo Village
14. Orchard, Zweeloo
15. Church, Zweeloo
Historical Map 1883

Stationsweg, Hoogeveen, c. 1896-1906, Historische Kring Hoogeveen
In the Footsteps of Van Gogh

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Current Map

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15. Church, Zweeloo
On 11 September 1883, Vincent van Gogh arrived by train in Hoogeveen, where he would spend the next three weeks. He stayed at Albertus Hartsuiker’s boarding house, using it as a base from where he explored the town and its environs. The historic centre and immediate surroundings of Hoogeveen, as well as the cemetery in Pesse, were important areas of inspiration for him. Van Gogh left Hoogeveen on 2 October. He boarded a tram to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, where he would sojourn for two months.
1. Railway Station, Hoogeveen
2. Hartsuiker Boarding House, Hoogeveen
3. Historical Centre, Hoogeveen
4. Post Office, Hoogeveen
5. Environ of Hoogeveen
6. Cemetery, Pesse
Setting Foot on Drenthe Soil

Vincent van Gogh first set foot on Drenthe soil at the Hoogeveen Station. He had boarded a train in The Hague on 11 September 1883, probably at 2:05 pm, and arrived in Hoogeveen at 9 pm. As he had been unable to see his surroundings in the dark, he rose early the next morning. He wrote to his brother Theo about the marvellous weather and the clear, sparkling Drenthe air.¹
In his letter, Van Gogh described the train journey, but not Hoogeveen Station. It was designed by Karel Hendrik van Brederode (1827-1897) and stood there from 1870 to 1984, when it was replaced by a new building designed by Cees Douma (1933). The tall roof of the current station’s forecourt recalls the silhouette of the old building.

Van Gogh also left Drenthe via Hoogeveen Station. On 4 December he took a long walk from Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord through the heathland towards Hoogeveen. It lasted more than six hours, and did him good. He wrote to Theo: ‘my feelings were so in sympathy with nature that it calmed me down more than anything else.’

The next morning Van Gogh took the train to Nuenen, from where he posted a letter to Theo on 6 December. He wrote that he had been feeling unwell for the past three weeks. According to Van Gogh, this was because he had caught a cold and suffered from ‘nerves.’ In need of distraction, he decided to go home. He concluded: ‘Drenthe is superb, but staying there depends on many things –... depends on whether one can endure the loneliness.’

2 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about 6 December 1883, letter no. 409, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let409/letter.html
3 Letter no. 409, see note 2.
Farmer’s Lodging in Hoogeveen

Vincent van Gogh arrived in Hoogeveen on 11 September 1883. From there he intended to venture deeper into the countryside: he could take a barge down the Hoogeveen canal to explore the south-eastern corner of Drente. He had also heard good stories about the heathland north of Hoogeveen, and so wanted to see that too.
Hartsuiker Boarding House
Van Gogh found lodgings in a farmhouse near the station. Albertus Hartsuiker, his wife Catharina Beukema and their three children lived there. Catharina ran a taproom and Albertus, according to Van Gogh, was a 'real workhorse' on the railway. Van Gogh described his accommodations several times in his letters: it had a large lounge, where guests could sit, a garden, a stable and a back attic. He looked out through a small window onto the railway.

Albertus Hartsuiker made it easy for Van Gogh to undertake his journeys from the boarding house: when Van Gogh was there, he paid one guilder a day and when he left, he could store his suitcase in the attic free of charge. To his regret, Van Gogh could not immediately begin exploring the Drenthe countryside. He first had to replenish his paint supply, for he had brought very little with him.

Departure from Hoogeveen
Despite the beauty of the scenery and the friendly Hartsuiker family, Van Gogh’s spirits sank ten days after arriving in Hoogeveen. He had reservations about his accommodations because to work from models he needed more light and space.

He considered setting up a studio in the attic of the boarding house, but even there the light was not sufficient. Moreover, his supply of paint and tools was limited, reducing the number of excursions he had planned. And, he felt rushed. The season was already well under way and he wanted to find housing deeper in the moors before winter set in.

Fortunately, he received some money from his father and his brother. After a three-week stay in Hoogeveen, Van Gogh could set off on his journey and left for Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord. For the time being he kept the Hartsuiker boarding house as his postal address and stored his luggage there. At the beginning of October he wrote from Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord that he would be back in Hoogeveen on 12 October. Van Gogh did not mention the boarding house in his letters again. He may have collected his belongings there when he travelled from Hoogeveen to Nuenen in early December.

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1. Although initially there was doubt about the boarding house’s precise location – both Pesserstraat and Grote Kerksteeg in Hoogeveen were forwarded – the various descriptions by Van Gogh suggest that Hartsuiker’s establishment was located at 24 Pesserstraat (then Toldijk). Albert Metselaar and Ronald W. Jansen’s extensive research points to this as well.
3. This would not have been possible from the boarding house on Grote Kerkstraat because of the buildings.
Vincent van Gogh stayed in Hoogeveen for three weeks from 11 September. He explored the town and its environs from Albertus Hartsuiker’s boarding house on Pesserstraat. Immediately after his arrival he wrote to Theo about what he had seen there. He rhapsodised about the ‘really authentic peat barges,’ the bargemen and the women in traditional dress: ‘Women wearing the local costume in the hayfield – fine. It will probably be even more beautiful deeper into the countryside, but meanwhile I’m already seeing very good things – even here.’¹ He described Hoogeveen itself as a long row of houses by the harbour, with many new houses and ‘a few more beautiful old ones.’²

¹ Het Kruis/Schutstraat, Hoogeveen, 2020

² Het Kruis/Schutstraat, Hoogeveen, 2020
Hoogeveen’s historic centre was a source of inspiration for Van Gogh. It comprised the area around ‘Het Kruis,’ the place where De Nieuwe Grift Canal (now the Hoogeveense Vaart) crossed two smaller canals. The centre was the starting point for Van Gogh’s local walks, and a good base for his boat trips. He wrote to his brother: ‘There are 4 or 5 canals in the village, to Meppel, to Dedemsvaart, to Coevorden, to Hollandscheveld.’ If you followed them, Van Gogh noted, you saw here and there ‘a curious old mill, farmhouse, shipyard or lock. And always peat barges coming and going.’ In 1883 Hoogeveen was a bustling locale for peat transportation, and so Van Gogh saw numerous barges laden with peat sailing through the village. There was even a shipyard, where vessels were built or repaired.

Along the canal were long rows of houses, a chemist, inns, workshops and stores. The canal served both as a water reservoir and as a sewer, which brought about diseases, stench and rat plagues. While the centre of Hoogeveen has changed greatly since 1883, some of the buildings Van Gogh would have seen have been preserved, including the windmill (now 47 Van Echtenstraat), the synagogue on the waterfront (filled in; now 147 Schutstraat) and the Reformed Grote Kerk on Grote Kerkstraat.
4. 
Post Office, Hoogeveen

Located at 26–28 Grote Kerkstraat, the Hoogeveen post office was a vital place for Vincent van Gogh. The building has been remodelled beyond recognition and now houses an eatery. Because Van Gogh regularly visited the post office, this location is a meaningful part of his Drenthe biography.
Letters and Postal Orders
Van Gogh mailed his letters to his brother Theo and could cash the latter’s money orders at the post office. This had been a reliable method for sending money since 1870. Theo lived in Paris and was able to deposit a cash sum at a local post office. Van Gogh then received a money order sent to him per his address in Hoogeveen, at Albertus Hartsuiker’s boarding house. He could take this money order to the post office in Hoogeveen and cash it. This process was not immediately clear to Van Gogh: two weeks after arriving in Hoogeveen he wrote that he did not yet know how to collect the money and that he was looking for a currency exchange office. In another letter he grumbled about not receiving his mail, but whether this was due to the postal service or to Theo himself is not known.

Exchanging Money in Hoogeveen
When Van Gogh left Hoogeveen to travel deeper into Drenthe, he still returned there to collect his mail. Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord did not have a post office until 1809, while Hoogeveen had already had one for some time because of the presence of the railway station. Theo sent Vincent money orders for 50 French franc notes, which he exchanged in Hoogeveen. He was there for that purpose on 12 October and probably again in November. Van Gogh did not write about this in detail, but did mention to his brother that he always spent a whole day collecting the money. To do so he had to travel from Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Hoogeveen and back, but as there was no daily round-trip boat service he had to either go or return from there on foot.
5. 
Environs of Hoogeveen

Peat Extraction, Wasteland and Heathland
While in Hoogeveen, Van Gogh regularly ventured into its outskirts.¹ The countryside he saw there had been shaped by large-scale peat extraction, which ceased around the end of the nineteenth century. Most houses were situated along the canals. The land – at right angles to these canals – was divided into long narrow strips connected by waterways, with ditches in between. The plots between the waterways and the ditches consisted of meadowlands dotted by fields and woods.

Hoogeveen developed into the largest town in Drenthe. North of the village were the hamlets of Stuifzand and Zwartschaap. The Oude Diep meandered through the countryside between Fluitenberg and Hoogeveen, ending in the Hoogeveense Vaart. From the villages of Pesse, Hoogeveen and Stuifzand, various sand tracks ran through the heathland. The ‘essen’ (sandy domed complexes of elongated fields) around the villages, the marshlands in the stream valleys, and the rough grounds higher up could still be distinguished from each other. The Pesserveld was a rugged landscape with extensive open heathland including wet and dry heaths, fens and sand hills. On the heathland there were pools, such as the Boerenvensche Plassen (still present) and the Zwarte Water.

Huts on the Moors
Not long after arriving in Hoogeveen, Van Gogh wrote to Theo: ‘Now that I’ve been here for a few days and have walked around a good deal in different directions, I can tell you more about the region I’ve fetched up in. I enclose a scratch after my first painted study from this part of the world, a hut on the heath. A hut made of nothing but sods of turf and sticks. I’ve also seen inside about 6 of this type, and more studies of them will follow.’² The ‘scratch’ and the study of the hut are not known.
Vincent van Gogh, Huts, Nieuw-Amsterdam, September-November 1883, oil on canvas, 35.4 cm x 5.7 cm, Van Gogh Museum, Amsterdam (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
Peat Barges, Sheepfolds and ‘Superb’ Figures

Van Gogh saw peat barges towed by men, women, children and horses. He described a waterway through the heath, saw marshy meadows which reminded him of the work of Théodore Rousseau (1812–1867) and noted how ‘rich’ he found the heathlands.⁵ He sent several studies of them to Theo. One of these drawings may have served as the basis for/may have been for the painting Huts in the Van Gogh Museum (see illustration). Van Gogh wrote about sheepfolds and shepherds ‘that were more attractive than those in Brabant’.⁶ Such sheepfolds were common to nearly all of the farms in the region. Sheep were inextricably linked to farming, especially in the ‘es’ villages of Drenthe. Not only did they provide meat and wool, but also the manure needed to fertilise the fields on the sandy soils. In the villages of Stuifzand and Zwartschaap, Van Gogh experienced an incident he deemed worth describing in order to give his brother ‘a sample of the authentic character of this region: while I was sitting painting that hut, two sheep and a goat came up and started grazing on the roof of the house. The goat climbed onto the ridge and looked down the chimney. The woman, who heard something on the roof, shot outside and threw her broom at the said goat, which leapt down like a chamois.’⁷

Van Gogh described the people he encountered as ‘superb’ and ‘striking in their expression of soberness’.⁸ He was happy that the men wore breeches, because it showed off the shape of their legs and made their movements more expressive. He did notice that many people had something wrong with them ‘it isn’t exactly healthy here, I think — perhaps because of unclean drinking water. I’ve seen some girls of, I would say, 17 or younger who still had something very beautiful and youthful, in their features too, but generally it fades very early. Yet this doesn’t detract from the fine, noble bearing of the figure that some of them have, who prove to be very withered when seen close to.’⁹
‘The longer I stay here, the more beautiful I find it, and from the outset I’ll try to stay here in this region.’
Studies in Colour and Form

Van Gogh was impressed by the contrast between the village of Hoogeveen and the authenticity of its immediate environs, with its sod huts, shepherds and ovens in the gardens. ‘Everything is beautiful here, wherever one goes. The heath is much vaster than it is in Brabant, near Zundert or Etten at least — rather monotonous, particularly when it's afternoon and the sun's shining, and yet it's that very effect, which I've already vainly tried to paint several times, that I shouldn't want to miss.’ Colourfully he described ‘a red sun between little birches standing in a marshy meadow from which the white evening mist rises; above this one can just see a blue-grey line of trees and a few roofs on the horizon.’ Van Gogh made a croquis of it, just like of the heath. He made studies in watercolour, and also with pen and ink, which allowed for greater detail. He would have to make two studies for each picture, he wrote: ‘one entirely drawn for the way things are put together, and one painted for the colours.’

On 24 September, Van Gogh wrote ‘the longer I stay here (the environs of Hoogeveen), the more beautiful I find it, and from the outset I'll try to stay here in this region.’ And yet he broadened his horizon shortly thereafter, leaving Hoogeveen eight days later to go to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Weenoord.

1 Because it is not clear exactly where Van Gogh went in and around Hoogeveen, the area as a whole has been designated as an inspiration area.
2 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Hoogeveen, on or about 14 September 1883, letter no. 386, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let386/letter.html
3 Letter no. 386, see note 2.
4 Letter no. 386, see note 2.
5 Letter no. 386, see note 2.
6 Letter no. 386, see note 2.
7 Letter no. 386, see note 2.
9 Letter no. 387, see note 8.
10 Letter no. 388, note 3.
On 15 September 1883 Van Gogh visited a small cemetery near Hoogeveen and made a study of it. The next day he described to his brother Theo what the churchyard looked and smelled like and what colours he had seen: ‘The dark band of pines that encloses it separates a shimmering sky from the rough ground, which is generally a reddish colour — tawny — brownish — yellowish, but with lilac tints everywhere. It wasn’t easy to paint; I’ll carry on looking for other effects in it. In the snow, for example, it must be very singular.’ To clarify his words and give an idea of the study, he made a croquis (sketch) of it in the letter. Later, in March 1884, he wrote Theo again about the drawing of the cemetery, this time from Nuenen. Van Gogh seemed piqued, probably because Theo had written him that he was overly inspired by the work of the French artist George Michel (1763–1843). Van Gogh was displeased by Theo’s reproach, because he had painted the study ‘quietly and calmly simply outdoors,’ trying to ‘say nothing in them but what I saw.’ He had not thought about Michel’s work, but only about the subject he was depicting.
At One with Nature
Van Gogh had been preoccupied with the theme of the cemetery before. He regularly went to the grave of his brother Vincent, who was stillborn, in Zundert, and also visited churchyards in other towns and villages. He found an atmosphere of unity with nature there, he told Theo.3 A year before he visited the one in Pesse, he had already written about his wish to draw a cemetery:

‘I certainly would like to try doing that kind of old church and churchyard with sandy graves and old wooden crosses. I hope it will happen one day.’4 Moreover, in his letters he frequently referred to artists who addressed this theme, such as Louis Apol (1850-1936), Jacob Maris (1837-1899) and Anthon van Rappard (1858-1892).
Location
Since we do not know what happened to the
study of the churchyard, Van Gogh’s croquis is
the only clue as to its location. Van Gogh might
have exercised artistic freedom in this, making it
uncertain to what extent it truly reflects reality.
Moreover, Van Gogh drew the croquis quickly,
and probably at home while writing his letter,
to give his brother an impression of what he had
seen. He did describe the churchyard in detail in
his letter: ‘a patch of heath with a hedge of small,
closely planted pines … there’s an entrance —
a short avenue and then one comes upon a number
of graves overgrown with bent-grass and heather.
Many of them marked with white posts bearing
the names.’⁵

There are two locations that qualify for further
research: the cemetery of Pesse and that of
Hollandscheveld. Van Gogh’s description and the
way he depicts the cemetery in his sketch point
in the direction of the one at 48 Hoogeveenseweg
in Pesse.

According to research by Het Drentse Landschap,
the soil profile fits well with the ‘bunt’ (a type of
purple moor grass) Van Gogh mentioned in his
letters. Also, on topographical maps from Van
Gogh’s time, an area of countryside bounded
by pine trees is clearly recognisable. It is quite
likely that the Pesse graveyard’s small scale and
secluded character appealed more to Van Gogh
than that of the large, well-maintained cemetery
of Hollandscheveld, given the examples by other
artists he forwards and the way he spoke about it.⁶

Both the angle of the gravestones in relation to
the spire and the latter’s shape in the letter sketch
correspond to the situation in Pesse. The distance
from the cemetery to the spire also makes it likely
that this was the spire that Van Gogh observed.
Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Hoogeveen, 16 September 1883,

Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nuenen, on or about 2 March 1884,

Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Laken, 13, 15 or 16 November 1878,

At the time, cemeteries were subject to municipal supervision for reasons of public hygiene.
Information about the appearance of cemeteries at that time, the number of new graves and their maintenance
can therefore be found in the municipal reports of Hoogeveen (Hollandscheveld) and Ruinen (Pesse) from the 1880s.
From 2 October 1883 onwards, Vincent van Gogh spent two months in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord. He found lodging in Hendrik Scholte’s boarding house in Veenoord on the border of Nieuw-Amsterdam (now 1 Van Goghstraat, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord). From there Van Gogh undertook several outings to explore his new surroundings. He drew what he saw and wrote to Theo about an area where everything was much more unspoilt than he had ever seen before. Even though his stay in Drenthe brought him peace, he became sombre after a few weeks there. Van Gogh left Drenthe around 5 December 1883 and went, via the Hoogeveen railway station, to his parental home in Nuenen in Brabant.
7. Waterway from Hoogeveen to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
8. Driftbrug Zwinderen
9. Scholte Boarding House, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
10. Former Drawbridge, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
11. Environs of Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
An ‘endless trip through the heath on the barge.’

‘How I wish that we could walk together here and — paint together. I believe that the countryside would win you over and convince you. … I thought about you again and again on this trip.’ This is what Vincent van Gogh wrote to his brother Theo on 3 October 1883. Van Gogh had probably taken the afternoon barge the day before. The first part went along the Hoogeveense Vaart and from there along the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord. It was an approximately 30-kilometre journey and took 6 hours by barge.
Journey through Peat and Heather

Van Gogh crossed the peat bog of the Hollandsche Veld. On his way he encountered peat barges and could look out over a countryside in various stages of peat extraction and reclamation. He traversed the countryside around Zwinderen and Oosterhesselen, with old ‘es’ villages and vast stretches of open heathland where flocks of sheep were grazing, and some stream valleys along which the grassland lay. He probably saw the Noord Esch of Wachtum with its rye fields and, during the last part of his journey, the sweeping raised bogs around Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord.

Comparison with Paintings

In his letter Van Gogh described what he had seen during his ‘endless trip through the heath on the barge.’ He lacked words to describe the land properly, he wrote to Theo, but he compared the banks of the canal with paintings by Georges Michel (1763-1843), Théodore Rousseau (1812-1867), Jan van Goyen (1596-1656) and Philips Koninck (1619-1688). ‘Flat planes or strips differing in colour, which grow narrower and narrower as they approach the horizon. Accentuated here and there by a sod hut or small farm or a few scrawny birches, poplars, oaks.’ Van Gogh saw peat barges and stacks of peat, thin cows, and many sheep and pigs. The people he caught sight of from time to time on the plain were of ‘great character,’ and at times ‘really charming.’ There were types that he compared to characters in paintings by Adriaen van Ostade (1610-1685), or others whose physiognomies ‘remind one of pigs or crows,’ but once in a while he spotted a figure ‘that’s like the lily among the thorns.’
A Sheet of Sketches with the Letter

Writing to Theo, Van Gogh enthused about the trip and said he was full of what he had seen. The heath had been extraordinarily beautiful in the evening. The windmills were ‘Don Quixote-like’ and he saw the drawbridges as ‘strange hulks,’ with their spiky silhouettes ... profiled against the teeming evening sky. The blanket of clouds had covered the entire sky in tones of lilac, grey and white, with a single rent through which the blue gleamed. On the horizon he had seen a sparkling red streak with, beneath it, a surprisingly dark expanse of brown heath.

Van Gogh had already drawn several studies during his trip in the barge. To his missive he added a sheet of sketches illustrating some of the subjects he had mentioned in his letter: a woman with black crepe around her cap brooches, a mother with a child and small farms and mud huts. In the upper right Van Gogh sketched the Driftbrug near Zwinderen. In the bottom croquis he depicted his destination, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, with a dark overcast evening sky above the street (possibly the Schooldijk) with cottages and huts on either side.

Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord

Van Gogh informed his brother that he would stay in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord for some time to paint. Although he did not mention it in his letters to Theo, he must have taken the barge more often. In any case, he travelled at least once from Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Hoogeveen to collect his post and cash his money orders. Because the Hoogeveen - Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord waterway formed the link between the two locations where Van Gogh stayed, it was an important source of inspiration for him. The sheet of sketches in his letter of 3 October is concrete evidence of this.

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1 All quotes are taken from: letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 3 October 1883, letter no. 392, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let392/letter.html

Vincent van Gogh. Letter Sketch Barge Trip Hoogeveen – Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, 3 October 1883, Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
In early October 1883 Van Gogh travelled from Hoogeveen to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord. He wrote to Theo about the journey, which he made by barge through the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart. To his letter he added a sheet with several sketches illustrating what he saw on the way (see illustration). The drawing at the top right features a rider on horseback with a bridge in the background. This is the former Driftbrug near Zwinderen.
Drawbridge

Historical maps show where the bridges over the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart were located at the end of the nineteenth century. The canal winds gently here and there and in one place there was a bridge right after a bend to the left, as Van Gogh drew. This was the Driftbrug, a drawbridge across the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart built around 1860. It was replaced by a swing bridge in 1923. And, the current bridge dates from 2015. Although the bridge Van Gogh saw no longer exists, its location has remained unchanged.

1. Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 3 October 1883, letter no. 392, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let392/letter.html

Vincent van Gogh. Letter Sketch Barge Trip Hoogeveen – Nieuw-Amsterdam (detail), 3 October 1883. Sketch of the rider on horseback towing the barge on which Van Gogh is sitting. Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation)
Vincent van Gogh arrived in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord on 2 October 1883.¹ He had boarded a barge in Hoogeveen and reached his destination at the end of the day. That same evening he wrote to Theo about the inn where he was staying in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord. There he could rent a room with good light and where a stove could be set up in winter. He considered staying there for a longer period, he wrote to his brother, but only if the ‘area here where there are very large, very old sod huts’ is within easy reach.²

¹ Van Goghstraat, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, 2020
A Stove and a Small Balcony

Apparently this was the case, for a few days after his arrival Van Gogh informed Theo that he had moved into a reasonably large room at the inn, with a stove and a small balcony. From that balcony he could see the heath with the huts, as well as a ‘curious drawbridge’. The room was spacious and light enough to work in, which was convenient since it rained regularly. His stay at the inn cheered him up. Van Gogh wrote that the peasant kitchen with its open peat fire was very cosy in the evenings: ‘One can think best by one of those peasant hearths with a cradle beside it. If I feel melancholy or can’t work something out, I just go downstairs.’ He could hold out here for a while, and he concluded his letter by saying that his address would remain the same for the time being.

Hendrik Scholte’s Inn

The inn that Van Gogh wrote about was Hendrik Scholte’s boarding house in Veenoord, on the border with Nieuw-Amsterdam (now 1 Van Goghstraat, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord). Scholte lived there with his wife Gezina Alberta Arink and their four children. Next to the boarding house was a barn with stables. They housed the visitors’ horses and carriages, coaches, and Scholte’s own farm wagons (he also had a farm). A few years earlier the building had been designated as a ferry house: the shuttle boats moored there and departed from the boarding house. Upon arriving in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, Van Gogh must have disembarked right in front of the inn.
View of a Canal and Farmlands
Van Gogh rented a room on the first floor of the front house, which probably had three rooms in all. His room (in the middle) had a balcony from where he could look out over the wooden drawbridge that spanned the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart in front of the inn. The shacks along Heerendijk were situated behind the drawbridge and to the left of them, across the canal, was a windmill, which burned down in 1904. Van Gogh wrote to his parents that he had a view of the land between the farms: through the window he saw a ‘delicate green wheatfield’ and ‘alder bushes.’

Renovations
The premises with the boarding house was built in 1871. Around 1900 the façade was faced with white plaster, and other intensive renovations took place in the following decades, including the demolition of the rear house. During the restoration in 2000, a portion of the front house collapsed, but the right section of the façade and Van Gogh’s room remained intact. Parts of the building were preserved, as was some of the original material from the Van Gogh room, in particular structural elements such as the floor and ceiling beams. Everything else in the building was refitted to the extent possible in keeping with the situation at the end of the nineteenth century. Today, the building has a modern extension and houses a restaurant and the Van Gogh House visitors’ centre.

Return to Nuenen
Working in Scholte’s boarding house did Van Gogh good, he wrote to his brother. He wished Theo could see the silent heath, ‘for such a thing soothes one and inspires more faith, resignation, calm work.’ Van Gogh lodged with Scholte for two months. His mood darkened when the weather worsened. He wrote of the loneliness and nerves he suffered. In order to ‘get some rest and resolution’ Van Gogh returned to his parental home in Nuenen in early December 1883.
Vincent van Gogh probably arrived on 2 October 1883, see: letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 3 October 1883, letter no. 392, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let392/letter.html
2 Letter no. 392, see note 1.
4 Letter no. 395, see note 3.
5 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theodorus van Gogh and Anna van Gogh-Carbenius, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 26 October 1883, letter no. 399, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let399/letter.html
6 Letter no. 392, see note 1.
7 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 6 December 1883, letter no. 409, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let409/letter.html
When Van Gogh informed his brother Theo of his new accommodations in New Amsterdam, he also wrote that from his room he saw a ‘very curious drawbridge.’¹ A few weeks later he reported that he had made three large studies of it. One of them is the watercolour *The Drawbridge in Nieuw-Amsterdam* (see illustration).²
The Veenbrug Opposite the Boarding House

The drawbridge Van Gogh recorded was built around 1860 across the then recently completed Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart. The Veenbrug owed its name to the vast peat bogs of southeast Drenthe that began just beyond the bridge. Around 1915, it was replaced by an iron swing bridge. The current iron drawbridge was built around 1956. Compared to the old Veenbrug that Van Gogh recorded, this bridge is situated several metres to the east and no longer faces the former Scholte boarding house. Even though the Veenbrug and the buildings that Van Gogh portrayed are no longer there, the location is an important part of Van Gogh’s Drenthe biography because of its direct link with the watercolour and the boarding house.

1 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, 12 or 15 October 1883, letter no. 396. www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let396/letter.html
2 The other two large studies Van Gogh made of the drawbridge are not known.
From Hendrik Scholte’s boarding house in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, Van Gogh undertook several trips to explore his new surroundings. He felt he had gone back in time 40 years, and described to Theo an area where everything was far more unspoilt than he had ever seen before. His stay in Drenthe made him calm. He wrote to his brother: ‘I’ve now been breathing heathland air for a month, I absolutely needed it ... I speak calmly, I think calmly now.’
Twin Village of Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord

Nieuw-Amsterdam was twinned with the reclaimed village of Veenoord, which came into existence in the years 1852-1853 with the construction of the Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart. Nieuw-Amsterdam was initially located much farther south, but shifted towards Veenoord from 1852 onwards. Named after the financiers of the local peat exploitation, Nieuw-Amsterdam was part of the municipality of Emmen in the Amsterdamsche Veld area. The surroundings of Nieuw-Amsterdam consisted of an extensive high moorland where the first peat waterways had just been dug to make it possible to transport the peat by ship. Especially on the eastern side of Nieuw-Amsterdam, the peat waterways and drainage ditches were laid out in a regular pattern. The plots of peatland that had been excavated were converted into grassland and arable land. The first buildings were concentrated along the canal, which was also lined by the young oaks that had just been planted in Van Gogh’s time.

Veenoord was then in the municipality of Sleen and consisted of wooden or sod dwellings for the peat workers and several houses made of stone. These stone structures, including the future Scholte boarding house, had been built on a sand ridge on both sides of the canal for craftsmen and peat traders. At the time of Van Gogh’s stay in Veenoord, the extensive peat bog area to the east of the village had been partially excavated. The countryside near Scholte’s lodgings was characterised by the low-lying Ermer Veen with stacks of peat, and huts made of peat and of sod.

Seemingly Monotonous

More than three weeks after arriving in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, Van Gogh wrote to his parents about the fickle weather. Although there were sunny autumn days, he liked the stormy ones best. Working outdoors was more difficult – sometimes even impossible – but he still delighted in it. The impressions he thus gained enabled him to adapt an earlier study to the poorer weather conditions. Van Gogh would set out without a pre-conceived plan and draw whatever he chanced upon; a plan would follow once his studies had sunk in. He wrote to Theo that the countryside around Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord was seemingly monotonous, but that he saw many different things. He could visit potato fields that looked the same – with ploughmen and potato pickers – on two separate days, yet the experience was different: “this is the singular thing about it here, always precisely the same and yet just that variation; the same subjects as in paintings by masters who work in the same genre and yet differ, oh it’s so singular here – and so quiet, so peaceful. I can find no other word for it but peace.” ²
Vincent van Gogh, *The Peat Barge*, 1883, oil on canvas on panel, 37 x 55.5 cm, Drents Museum.
Letter Sketches of the Environment

Van Gogh occasionally includes sketches that were studies for his paintings in his letters. For example, for the painting *Farm with Stacks of Peat* he first made a drawing to accompany his letter, in which he wrote: ‘... little delicate green wheatfield in the foreground and withered grasses behind the cottage and stacks of peat, is another glimpse of the heath, and the sky very light.’ It is conceivable that Van Gogh worked for this painting near the peat fields on Herendijk, which lay to the west of Scholte’s house. These fields may also have inspired the art works *Peasant Women on the Moor* and *Landscape with Bog Trunks.*

‘Weed Burner’

In addition to elements of the landscape and figures such as ploughmen and peasant women working in the fields, Van Gogh also depicted the landscape at night. ‘Here are a couple of evening effects— I’m still working on that weed burner, whom I’ve caught better than before in a painted study as far as the tone is concerned, so that it conveys more of the vastness of the plain and the gathering dusk, and the small fire with the wisp of smoke is the only point of light. I kept going out to look at it in the evenings, and one muddy evening after the rain I found the little hut, which was very beautiful in its natural setting.’ Van Gogh probably did not venture out far at dusk. It is therefore likely that he made the painting *Peasant Burning Weeds* (see illustration) in the vicinity of the boarding house.

Peace, Space and Solitude

The ‘seemingly monotonous countryside,’ as Van Gogh described the barren bog landscape around Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, gave him a sense of peace and space. Yet loneliness set in after a few weeks, and Van Gogh became melancholy. In November he hardly wrote about Drenthe anymore. The weather was poor and he could no longer work outside. He must have gone home around 5 December. A day later, he wrote to his brother: ‘The last 3 weeks I was actually rather unwell — was troubled by various things that arose out of having caught a cold, and nerves as well. One must try to break something like that, and I felt that I would get worse if I didn’t have a change.’ He explained: ‘Drenthe is superb, but staying there depends on many things – depends on whether one has the money for it, depends on whether one can endure the loneliness.’
1 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 16 October 1883, letter no. 397, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let397/letter.html
2 Letter no. 397, see note 1.
3 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 15 October 1883, letter no. 396, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let396/letter.html
4 Peasant Women on the Moor: Van Gogh Museum (Vincent van Gogh Foundation). Landscape with Bog Trunks: Museum of Fine Arts Boston, USA
5 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 22 October 1883, letter no. 398, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let398/letter.html
6 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, on or about 15 October 1883, letter no. 396, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let396/letter.html
7 Letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, on or about 6 December 1883, Letter no. 409, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let409/letter.html
From Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord Van Gogh made a day trip to Zweeloo. He was attracted to the picturesque village because the German painter Max Liebermann had worked there. Van Gogh wanted to paint the apple orchard that Liebermann had captured the previous year, and he hoped to meet the painter. Unfortunately Liebermann was not there, nor did Van Gogh find any other artists in Zweeloo. He drew the orchard and the church of Zweeloo and returned to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord on foot. The day had passed like a dream, and, as he later wrote his brother, the route had been hugely inspiring.
12. Route Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Zweeloo
13. Zweeloo Village
14. Orchard, Zweeloo
15. Church, Zweeloo
A Day Trip to Zweeloo

On 1 November 1883 Van Gogh made a day trip from Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Zweeloo. He hitched a ride on the cart of Hendrik Scholte, his landlord, on his way to the market in Assen. He walked back on foot. He gave a detailed account of his outing in a letter to Theo the next day.
On a Cart Across the Heath

‘Imagine a trip across the heath at 3 o’clock in the morning in an open cart (I went with the man where I lodge, who had to go to the market in Assen). Along a road, or “diek” as they say here, which they’d put mud on to raise it instead of sand.’

Van Gogh found this excursion ‘much nicer even than the barge’ on which he had travelled earlier from Hoogeveen to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord. This was not least because of the sunrise, which lit up the landscape and reminded him of the mystery and peace in the paintings of Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot (1796-1875).

Yet it was still quite dark when Van Gogh arrived with Scholte in Zweeloo at 6 o’clock in the morning. On their three-hour ride they probably passed by the villages of Erm, Sleen and Noordsleen. Van Gogh described an old squat tower in a churchyard: this was most probably the church tower of Sleen, which was without a spire after a fire in 1867 until 1909.

Back on Foot

Van Gogh did not stay long in Zweeloo. He had hoped to meet other artists there, but apparently for them the painting season was already over. He did not wait for his landlord, but decided to return to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord on foot, so that he could draw along the way.

He followed the same route as in the early hours of the morning, which probably also took him three hours or so. He colourfully described to Theo how instructive the surroundings were: ‘... that area around Zweeloo is entirely given over to young wheat — vast, sometimes, that most tender of tender greens that I know. With above it a sky of a delicate lilac white that gives an effect — I don’t think it can be painted, but for me it’s the basic tone that one must know in order to know what the basis of other effects is.’ The fields of young fresh green winter rye so prevalent at this time of the year, must have formed a welcome contrast to the predominantly brown heathland.
The earth and sky felt infinite, and the figures in the vast landscape seemed like specks, as in Millet’s paintings. Van Gogh saw farmers, ploughmen and road workers. In a roadside inn he drew a woman at the spinning wheel, with a ‘dark silhouette – like something out of a fairy tale.’ He followed the flock of sheep he came across at dusk: ‘Imagine this muddy mess in the evening twilight with a whitish sky above, so everything black on white. And in this muddy mess a rough figure — the shepherd — a throng of oval masses, half wool, half mud, that bump into one another, jostle one another — the flock.’

Engrossed in a Symphony
‘That day passed like a dream,’ Van Gogh wrote to his brother. He had been so overcome by his surroundings that he had forgotten to eat: ‘I had been so engrossed in this sublime music all day that in a literal sense I had even forgotten to eat and drink .... The day had passed and from dawn to dusk, or rather from one night to the next, I had forgotten myself in that symphony.’ He wrote that he had only made a few ‘scribbles’ along the way, and yet had gotten something important out of the day: ‘... a calm passion for work.’

1 All quotes are taken from: letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, 2 November 1883, letter no. 402, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/let402/letter.html
2 It is unknown which drawing this concerns.

‘I had been so engrossed in this sublime music all day that in a literal sense I had even forgotten to eat and drink.’
Historical map of Zwielen and environs, 1904, Drents Archief
‘Dear brother, Just wanted to tell you about a trip to Zweeloo, the village where Lieberman stayed for a long time,’ Van Gogh wrote to his brother on 2 November 1883. The previous day he had visited the picturesque village of Zweeloo, in the footsteps of the German painter Max Liebermann (1847-1935). Van Gogh had already been planning this visit for some weeks. His brother Theo had written to him that Liebermann had worked at Zweeloo the previous year. It was now rumoured that Liebermann was back in town, and Van Gogh was eager to meet him.
A Colourful Village
Van Gogh wrote to Theo about what he had seen when he rode into Zweeloo at 6 o’clock in the morning. ‘Huge mossy roofs on houses, barns, sheepfolds, sheds. The dwellings here are very wide, among oak trees of a superb bronze.’

He described the colours in the village lyrically: ‘Tones of golden green in the moss, of reddish or bluish or yellowish dark lilac greys in the soil, tones of inexpressible purity in the green of the little wheatfields. Tones of black in the wet trunks, standing out against golden showers of swirling, swirling autumn leaves, which still hang in loose tufts, as if they were blown there, loosely and with the sky shining through them, on poplars, birches, limes, apple trees. The sky unbroken, clear, illuminating, not white but a lilac that cannot be deciphered, white in which one sees swirling red, blue, yellow, which reflects everything and one feels above one everywhere, which is vaporous and unites with the thin mist below. Brings everything together in a spectrum of delicate greys.’

Mecca for Painters
It is not surprising that Zweeloo attracted Liebermann, Van Gogh and other painters. The village was characterised by an organic layout of roads, yards and farms. Today it is one of the few places in Drenthe where Van Gogh’s time has been well preserved. The remaining farmhouses with outbuildings, orchards, monumental trees and other planted areas conjure up that bygone ambiance.

Stichting Kunstenardsorp Zweeloo tells the story of the many artists who flocked to this painters’ paradise.

No Liebermann
In his letter, Van Gogh included extensive descriptions of the surroundings – the industriousness of ploughmen, shepherds and road workers – as well as some specific spots, such as the church and the orchard painted by Liebermann. Van Gogh’s stay in Drenthe had given him a greater understanding of Liebermann’s work, he told his brother: ‘... his coloration consists of slate-grey tones with transitions chiefly to brown, to yellow-grey. I’ve never seen anything by him, but now that I see nature here I understand perfectly how reasonable it is that he arrives at it.’

Van Gogh was disappointed to not find Liebermann, or for that matter any other painters in Zweeloo. He made a drawing of the church and the apple orchard that Liebermann had portrayed and then returned to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord.

2 Letter no. 402, see note 1.
3 Letter no. 402, see note 1.
Van Gogh visited Zweeloo on 1 November. The following day he wrote briefly about a drawing he had made of an apple orchard. ‘So I started to make a sketch of the very apple orchard where Liebermann made his large painting.’ Van Gogh had visited Zweeloo mainly because the German artist Max Liebermann (1847-1935) had painted there in 1882. He knew from Theo that Liebermann, who worked in the Netherlands many summers, had laid the foundations for his painting *Die Rosenbleiche (The Bleaching Field)* during his stay in Zweeloo.
Lime Tree

Like Liebermann, Van Gogh wanted to draw the apple orchard in Zweeloo. The locals probably told him where to go, namely the orchard behind the inn of Jan Mensingh and his sister Lammechien. Van Gogh recorded the lime tree, but from a different perspective than Liebermann. In Van Gogh’s drawing the tree, recognisable by the supporting structure around its branches, appears on the right while in Liebermann’s painting it is hidden behind another tree. The fenestration façade of the farmhouse at 5 Kruisstraat is visible in the background of Van Gogh’s drawing.

Although in Van Gogh’s time the façade probably had three windows, as it does today, he drew only two. He may have omitted the third window for compositional reasons.

Today there is no longer an orchard at this location in Zweeloo. Behind what used to be the Mensingh Inn, now Bistro Tante Sweel at 15 Hoofdstraat, there is only the monumental lime tree, a reminder of Van Gogh’s day trip to Zweeloo.


Mensingh Hotel on Hoofdstraat, Zweeloo, c. 1900-1904, Drents Archief, Drents Museum collection
Vincent van Gogh. Orchard, 1883, pen and brown ink over black chalk, heightened with white, on paper, 25.4 x 31.7 cm. Museum Boijmans van Beuningen, Rotterdam.
15.
Church, Zweeloo

An Old Church in a Sea of Young Wheat

Dutch Reformed Church, Zweeloo, 2020
During his day trip to Zweeloo on 1 November 1883, Van Gogh recorded the village church in the drawing Shepherd with Flock near a Little Church at Zweeloo. He wrote to his brother: ‘I passed a little old church, just exactly, just exactly the church at Greville in Millet’s little painting ... but here, instead of the little peasant with the spade in that painting, a shepherd with a flock of sheep came along the hedge.’¹ Van Gogh compared the wheatfield he drew with the view of the sea in Millet’s painting: ‘... the sea of young wheat, the sea of furrows instead of that of the waves. The effect produced: the same.’

Restoration
The church Van Gogh drew was built in the second half of the thirteenth century for Roman Catholic worship. Today it is a Dutch Reformed Church (10 De Weem, Zweeloo). Its design and appearance, which feature characteristics of both Romanesque and Gothic architecture, have hardly changed since 1883. Large-scale restoration was carried out in 1929-1930, during which reconstructions and adjustments were made.

One and two windows were added in the south and west façade, respectively. Despite these alterations, the appearance of the building was barely affected. The surroundings, on the other hand, have changed significantly: in Van Gogh’s time, the church stood alone in the landscape, while now large trees have grown up next to it.

¹ All quotes are taken from: letter from Vincent van Gogh to Theo van Gogh, Nieuw-Amsterdam, 2 November 1883, letter no. 422, www.vangoghletters.org/vg/letters/le422/letter.html. The painting in question is The Church at Greville (between 1871-1874) by Jean-François Millet (1814–1875), RMN-Grand Palais (Musée d’Orsay).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Railway Station, Hoogeveen</th>
<th>2. Hartsuiker Boarding House, Hoogeveen</th>
<th>3. Historical Centre, Hoogeveen</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Municipality:</strong> Hoogeveen</td>
<td><strong>Municipality:</strong> Hoogeveen</td>
<td><strong>Municipality:</strong> Hoogeveen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Category:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Category:</strong></td>
<td><strong>Category:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Data</td>
<td>Data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of the old railway station</td>
<td>House (where Van Gogh lodged)</td>
<td>Hoogeveen as Van Gogh saw it in 1883</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7901 AA Hoogeveen</td>
<td>24 Pessestraat (historical address: B 646. The street was called Toldijk. The address is mentioned in 1886 together with the property’s land register number, A 2761, in an application for a liquor license for the premises). See Jansen, Hoogeveen 1883… p. 48</td>
<td>Historical centre, esp. the area around Het Kruis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nederlandse Spoorwegen</td>
<td>Van Goghshuis Hoogeveen, A. van Weert and J. Korfage</td>
<td>Municipality of Hoogeveen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nederlandse Spoorwegen</td>
<td>*?Idem</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1870–1984</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 September 1883, 11/12 September 1883 (while the station itself is not mentioned in the letters, the train trip is)</td>
<td>11/12, 14, 16, 21, 24, 28, 29 September 1883, 12 October 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heritage</td>
<td><strong>Heritage</strong></td>
<td><strong>Heritage</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lot, location former building</td>
<td>Historical centre</td>
<td>Historical centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
<td><strong>Value</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biographical</td>
<td>Biographical</td>
<td>Biographical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The place in Drenthe where Van Gogh arrived and departed</td>
<td>Van Gogh stayed in Hoogeveen from 11 September through 2 October 1883, and returned there a few times in the period through 5 December 1883 to collect his mail and exchange money orders</td>
<td>Van Gogh stayed in Hoogeveen from 11 September through 2 October 1883, and returned there a few times in the period through 5 December 1883 to collect his mail and exchange money orders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work/motifs</td>
<td>Work/motifs</td>
<td>Work/motifs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
<td>Atmosphere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanished village view</td>
<td>Village view</td>
<td>Inspiration area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Erfgoed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Erfgoed</strong></td>
<td><strong>Erfgoed</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Building</td>
<td>Building</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes:**
- The railway station is no longer extant.
- The boarding house was occupied by Joachimus Lunsing and Tonckens.
- The historical centre was the place where Van Gogh stayed in Hoogeveen from 11 September through 2 October 1883, and returned there a few times in the period through 5 December 1883 to collect his mail and exchange money orders.
### 4. Post Office, Hoogeveen

**Municipality:** Hoogeveen  
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>User</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Heritage** Place, building remodelled beyond recognition

**Value**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical</th>
<th>Post office where Van Gogh mailed his letters to Theo and received mail and where money orders were exchanged</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Work/motifs | - |

| Atmosphere | Vanished village view |

### 5. Environs of Hoogeveen

**Municipality:** Hoogeveen  
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>User</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The surrounding villages and countryside of Hoogeveen</td>
<td>Environ of Hoogeveen</td>
<td>Municipality of Hoogeveen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>11/12 September, c. 14 September, 16 September, c. 21 September, 26 September, 28 September 1883</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage** Landscape, surrounding villages

**Value**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical</th>
<th>When Van Gogh stayed in the vicinity of Hoogeveen, he regularly ventured out into the surrounding area</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work/motifs</th>
<th>Some works of art are attributed to the Drenthe period and specifically to the Hoogeveen area, although their exact location cannot be determined. It is (almost) certain that: Farmhouses among Trees (F178/JH397), Landscape with a Stack of Peat and Farmhouses (F1099/JH399), Row of Farmhouses (F1035/JH403), Cottages (F177/JH395) and Churchyard (F- /JH396) were made in the vicinity of Hoogeveen. Less certain cases are: Country Road with Trees (F1088/JH168) or The Hague?, Dune Landscape (F1103/JH393) or The Hague?, Landscape (F-/JHadd 27), Marshy Landscape (no F-no./JH394) or The Hague?, Digging for Peat (F1094/JH398) or in Nieuw-Amsterdam?, Landscape with a Farmhouse (F1101/JH407) or in Nieuw-Amsterdam?, Farmhouse (F1202/JH422) or in Nieuw-Amsterdam? and Landscape in Drenthe (F1104/JH424) or in Nieuw-Amsterdam?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Atmosphere | Inspiration area |

### 6. Cemetery, Pesse

**Municipality:** Pesse  
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Owner</th>
<th>User</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Miscellaneous</th>
<th>Literature</th>
<th>Letters</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Cemetery</td>
<td>48 Hoogeveenseweg in Pesse</td>
<td>Municipality of Hoogeveen</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1861-1883/1870. The minutes of the Pesse Dutch Reformed Church indicate the provision of land for a cemetery in 1860/1861. Cadastral map no. 81 (Municipality of Ruinen) shows the boundaries of the cemetery in May 1883. The cadastral records do not mention the foundation until 1870</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Condition** First extension in 1928 at the southwest corner of the plot. Grave stones at the location of the drawn part have disappeared

**Value**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical</th>
<th>-</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| Miscellaneous | - |

|--------------|---|

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Letters</th>
<th>16 September 1883 (letter no. 387) on or about 2 March 1884 (letter no. 432)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Heritage** Cemetery

**Value**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Biographical</th>
<th>Van Gogh visited and drew this cemetery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Work/motifs</th>
<th>Letter sketch 16 September 1883 (F-/JH398)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
<th>Cemetery</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
### 7. Waterway from Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
**Municipality:** Hoogeveen-Coevorden-Emmen  
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Canal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>The section from Hoogeveen through Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td>Province of Drenthe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>The foundation was laid around 1627, with expansion from Noordscheschut as of 1853 onwards. The area of the future Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord was reached around 1860</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td>Well maintained</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td>3 October 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage**: Canal

**Value**
- Biographical: Van Gogh took this route between Hoogeveen and Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord on 2 October 1883 and described the trip in a letter the following day
- Work/motifs: Letter sketch 3 October 1883
- Atmosphere: Inspiration area

**Atmosphere**: Inspiration area

### 8. Driftbrug, Zwinderen
**Municipality:** Coevorden  
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Bridge in the Verlengde Hoogeveensche Waart</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Driftbrug past Zwinderen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td>Province of Drenthe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>The bridge was drawn by VG: c. 1860. It was replaced by a swing bridge in 1923. Present bridge 2015. Made by the Rusthoven firm, after an older model</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td>Demolished and replaced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
<td>Dijk, W.J. and M.W. van de Sluis, De Drentse tijd van Vincent van Gogh, Groningen 2001, pp. 150-151</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td>Around 3 October 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage**: Bridge

**Value**
- Biographical: Van Gogh made some letter sketches on his barge trip from Hoogeveen to Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord and also drew this bridge
- Work/motifs: Letter sketch Rider by a Waterway (F-/JH405)

**Atmosphere**: Village view

### 9. Scholte Boarding House, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord
**Municipality:** Emmen  
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Scholte boarding house (where Van Gogh lodged)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>1 Van Goghstraat, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord. (Originally Veenoord, Municipality of Sleen, bordering on Nieuw-Amsterdam, Municipality of Emmen)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td>Stichting DBF 2020</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td>Stichting Van Gogh en Drenthe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>1871. Front façade remodelled around 1900; the front and rear houses intensively refurbished 1950-1960s. Rear house demolished 1999, front house partly collapsed during reconstruction April 2000. VG's room preserved in the process. (Nieuwsblad vh Noorden, 15 April 2000)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td>Extensive renovation. Right part of the façade intact</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>In use as a restaurant, upper floor museum, including modern extension</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Literature</strong></td>
<td>Dijk, W.J. and M.W. van der Sluis, De Drentse tijd van Vincent van Gogh, Groningen 2018</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td>Around 3 October, 12/13 October, c. 16 October, c. 26 October 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage**: Building

**Value**
- Biographical: Van Gogh lodged and worked here
- Work/motifs: -
- Atmosphere: Village view

**Atmosphere**: Village view
### 10. Former Drawbridge, Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord

**Municipality:** Emmen  
**Category:**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Data</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
<th>Drawbridge opposite Scholte's boarding house in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, painted by Van Gogh</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Verlengde Hoogeveense Vaart at Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord at the junction Van Goghstraat-Schooldijk-Vaart Zuidzijde. The current bridge is located a few metres to the east</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td>Province of Drenthe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>Circa 1860, demolished c. 1915. Current bridge 1956</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td>Demolished and replaced</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td>12/13 October, 26 November 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage** Bridge

**Value**

- **Biographical** Van Gogh saw this bridge from his room at Scholte's boarding house and painted it in a watercolour
- **Work/motifs** The Drawbridge in Nieuw-Amsterdam (F1098/JH425)
- **Atmosphere** Village view

### 11. Environs of Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord

**Municipality:** Emmen  
**Category:**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Data</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
<th>The villages of Nieuw-Amsterdam and Veenoord and the surrounding countryside</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord and environs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td>Municipality of Emmen</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td>3, 7, 15, 16, 22, 28, 31 October, 6 December 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage** Village and landscape

**Value**

- **Biographical** Van Gogh stayed in Nieuw-Amsterdam from 3 October to 5 December 1883
- **Work/motifs** Some works of art are attributed to Van Gogh's Drenthe period and specifically to the area of Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord, although the exact location is usually impossible to determine. The following works were (almost) certainly made in the surroundings of Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord: *Landscape with Bog Trunks* (F1095/JH406), *Ploughman* (recto: Sketches of Figures) (F1096r/v/JH411 and F-J/H421), Farmhouse at Night (F-J/H419), *Sod Hut* (Peat Bog at Night) (F1097/JH400), *Drawbridge in Nieuw-Amsterdam* (F1098/JH425), *Heath with a Wheelbarrow* (F1106/JH409), Woman with a Wheelbarrow (F1106/JH400), Women with a Wheelbarrow (F1248/JH407), Two Women in the Peat (F118/JH409), Peasant Burning Weeds (F22/JH417), Peasant Burning Weeds (F-J/H419), The Peat Barge (F23/JH418), Peat Barge with Two Figures (F-J/H426), Farmhouse with Mounds of Peat (F22/JH420), Farmhouse with Mounds of Peat (F-J/H423, Women Working in the Peat (F-J/H413, Ploughman with a Stooling Woman (F-J/H422), Stooling Woman in a Landscape (F-J/H414), Workmen beside a Mound of Peat (F-J/H413, Man Pulling a Harrow (F-J/H413), Less certain: Country Road at Dusk (F118/JH413) (or Hoogeveen? or Nuenen?) |
- **Atmosphere** Inspiration area

### 12. Route Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Zweeloo

**Municipality:** Emmen/Coevorden  
**Category:**  

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Data</strong></th>
<th><strong>Description</strong></th>
<th>Route between Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Zweeloo</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Location</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Owner</strong></td>
<td>Municipality of Emmen and Municipality of Coevorden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>User</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Date</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Status</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Letters</strong></td>
<td>2 November 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage** Village and landscape

**Value**

- **Biographical** Van Gogh made a day trip from Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord to Zweeloo on 2 November
- **Work/motifs** -
- **Atmosphere** Inspiration area
### 13. Zweeloo Village
**Municipality:** Coevorden
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Zweeloo, village</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Municipality of Coevorden</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>2 November 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage** Village

**Value**

**Biographical** Van Gogh made a day trip on 1 November

**Work/motifs** Orchard, 1883 (F902a/JH10) and Shepherd with Flock near a Little Church at Zweeloo, 1883 (F877/JH423)

**Atmosphere** Village view, inspiration area

### 14. Orchard, Zweeloo
**Municipality:** Coevorden
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Orchard behind Mensingh Inn, now Bistro Tante Sweel</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>15 Hoofdstraat, Zweeloo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Buchner family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User</td>
<td>Buchner family</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>18th century?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Rebuilt (outer walls)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>-</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Dijk, W.J. and M.W. van der Sluis, De Drentse tijd van Vincent van Gogh (Groningen 2001), pp. 234–238</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>2 November 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage** Former orchard

**Value**

**Biographical** Van Gogh visited this place because he knew that Max Liebermann had drawn there

**Work/motifs** Orchard, 1883 (F902a/JH10)

**Atmosphere** Village view

### 15. Church, Zweeloo
**Municipality:** Coevorden
**Category:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Dutch Reformed Church</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>10 De Weem in Zweeloo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>Dutch Reformed Congregation of Zweeloo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>User</td>
<td>Dutch Reformed Congregation of Zweeloo</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>2nd half 13th century</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condition</td>
<td>Good</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Listed building</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>Restored 1929–1930: addition of a window on the south side and two on the west side</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literature</td>
<td>Dijk, W.J. and M.W. van der Sluis, De Drentse tijd van Vincent van Gogh (Groningen 2001); Encyclopedie van Drenthe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letters</td>
<td>2 November 1883</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Heritage** Building

**Value**

**Biographical** Van Gogh drew this church on his day trip to Zweeloo

**Work/motifs** Shepherd with Flock near a Little Church at Zweeloo, 1883 (F877/JH423)

**Atmosphere** Village view
Vincent van Gogh, *The Drawbridge in Nieuw-Amsterdam* (detail), 1883, pencil and watercolour on paper, 40.3 x 82.2 cm, Groninger Museum
In addition to field work and numerous conversations with local experts, the research for this publication frequently drew on the rich sources of the Drents Museum, the Drents Archief and Het Drentse Landschap. The data from the Land Registry were also regularly consulted, as were the archives of the Van Gogh Museum and the RKD – Netherlands Institute for Art History. The online publication of Van Gogh’s letters by the Van Gogh Museum and the Huygens Institute was the most valuable guide within the project.

Overview of the most important sources:


G. Kuipers, Van Goghs omzwervingen door Drenthe 1883, Meppel 1990.


Provinciale Drentse en Asser Courant (advertisement of skipper Van Dalen’s winter timetable 1883).


A. Kleijn, ‘Vincent van Gogh’s bezoek aan Drenthe’, Nieuwe Drentsche Volksalmanak, Assen 1942, pp. 73-86.
Van Gogh Europe
The Van Gogh Europe Foundation is an international collaboration of European sites and collections connected with the life and work of Vincent van Gogh. The foundation strives to make Van Gogh’s cultural heritage accessible to a wide audience and to inspire, unite and appeal to current and future generations. Three countries, six museums, nine heritage sites and fourteen cities collaborate within Van Gogh Europe to conserve, develop and share the legacy of Vincent van Gogh. Route Van Gogh Europe makes it possible to visit the various locations where Vincent van Gogh lived and where his art is displayed. The Drents Museum and the Van Gogh House Nieuw-Amsterdam are affiliated with Van Gogh Europe.

For additional information, see:
www.routevangogheurope.eu

Van Gogh House, Nieuw-Amsterdam
In the visitor centre of the Van Gogh House in Nieuw-Amsterdam/Veenoord you can see the room where Van Gogh stayed in 1883 in the former boarding house of Hendrik Schoite. Dating from 1871, the building has undergone many renovations and restorations over the years, but the room where Van Gogh stayed has always remained intact. It is the only building in the Netherlands where Van Gogh lived and worked that is open to the public (see pp. 46–49). A film transports visitors back to 1883, showing them southeast Drenthe as seen through the artist’s eyes. In the nearby Veenpark the visitor discovers the fen landscape, life in the peat bogs and the people, in other words everything that inspired Van Gogh.

For additional information, see:
www.vangogh-drenthe.nl

Stichting Kunstenaarsdorp Zweeloo
The former Mensingh Inn in Zweeloo, now Bistro Tante Sweel, where Vincent van Gogh painted the orchard with the lime tree (see pp. 66 to 69), is the ‘home base’ of the Stichting Kunstenaarsdorp Zweeloo. It is where the foundation presents a permanent exhibition about Vincent van Gogh, Max Liebermann and other artists who were drawn to the village of Zweeloo at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition, the foundation organises a variety of cultural activities related to the artists’ stay in Zweeloo.

For additional information, see:
www.kunstenaarsdorpzweeloo.nl
This book is a joint publication of the Drents Museum, the Drents Archief and Het Drentse Landschap. It was made possible thanks to financial support from the Province of Drenthe.

Maart 2021

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Photograph on p. 53 (Vincent van Gogh, The Drawbridge in Nieuw-Amsterdam. 1883, Groninger Museum) is by Marten de Leeuw.

Photograph on cover and back page
Bedroom Van Gogh (reconstruction Van Gogh House Nieuw-Amsterdam), 2020

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The Drents Museum, the Drents Archief and Het Drentse Landschap have jointly carried out an inventory study of the locations Vincent van Gogh visited during his stay in Drenthe in the autumn of 1883. This research focused on places where the artist had been, locations that played a role in his work and/or that inspired him.

Mapping out these heritage locations is a key step towards safeguarding Van Gogh’s traces in Drenthe for the future and further developing the story of Van Gogh in Drenthe.