

# The Long Path to Preservation in The Netherlands

by

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*This essay is the third in an occasional series about the inventerisation and protection of buildings and sites in Europe. After the contributions on France (1995) by Monique Chatenet and on Germany (1997) by Walter Wulf the following article deals with the peculiar preservation history of The Netherlands. Usually the appointment of the lawyer Victor de Stuers as the first Head of the Department of Arts and Sciences in 1875 is seen as the crucial starting point of the Dutch national conservation policy. Here Marieke Kuipers explains that many more players acted on this stage and that it was not until 1961 that legal protection came into force.*

As Vermeer's famous *View of Delft* and other 'town portraits' demonstrate, most citizens of the Dutch Republic were proud of their built environment. Their concern – based on a love of the picturesque rather than of architecture – was reflected in the special genre of *Cityscapes* and in numerous topographical descriptions. The local building codes of several towns contained rules concerning the external appearance of new buildings and quarters from the point of view of beauty (*welstand*). In the same spirit, formulated to prohibit defacement (*ontsiering*) of the local scenery, any proposed removal of old buildings needed consent by the local authorities. But permission usually was granted if replacement by a nice new building was planned. In the Golden Age there was no central policy for cultural affairs, nor was there a specific concern for medieval buildings for mere reasons of age. On the contrary, during the eighty years' Revolt against the Spanish (1568-1648), and the related Reformation, all former Catholic churches, chapels and monastic buildings were confiscated and transformed for other uses (from stable to hospital, theatre, university or warehouse), or neglected and in some cases pulled down. But for simple economic reasons, most ancient religious and public buildings survived at least until the French Period (1795-1813). Afterwards, with the changing administrative and financial situation and the beginning of the first serious processes of renewal, town expansion and, later on, industrialisation, the demolition of historic monuments began in earnest.

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## DUTCH HISTORIC BUILDINGS DURING THE FRENCH PERIOD

Often the initiative for destruction came from the authorities, which seemed in the nineteenth century to be concerned only about their empty treasuries rather than for the public treasures of history and art. For instance, in 1808 the Minister of Finance (A. Gogel) had suggested pulling down the gothic Ridderzaal (Hall of the Knights) in order to save the expense of the repair and maintenance of this 'wreck', as he termed disparagingly the historic heart of the Binnenhof at The Hague. At that time the hall had lost its former glory as the late-thirteenth-century residence of the heroic Count Floris V of Holland and was in use as the state lottery room. Fortunately the building survived and later it became a typical test case for changing ideas about the conservation of the heritage (Fig.1).

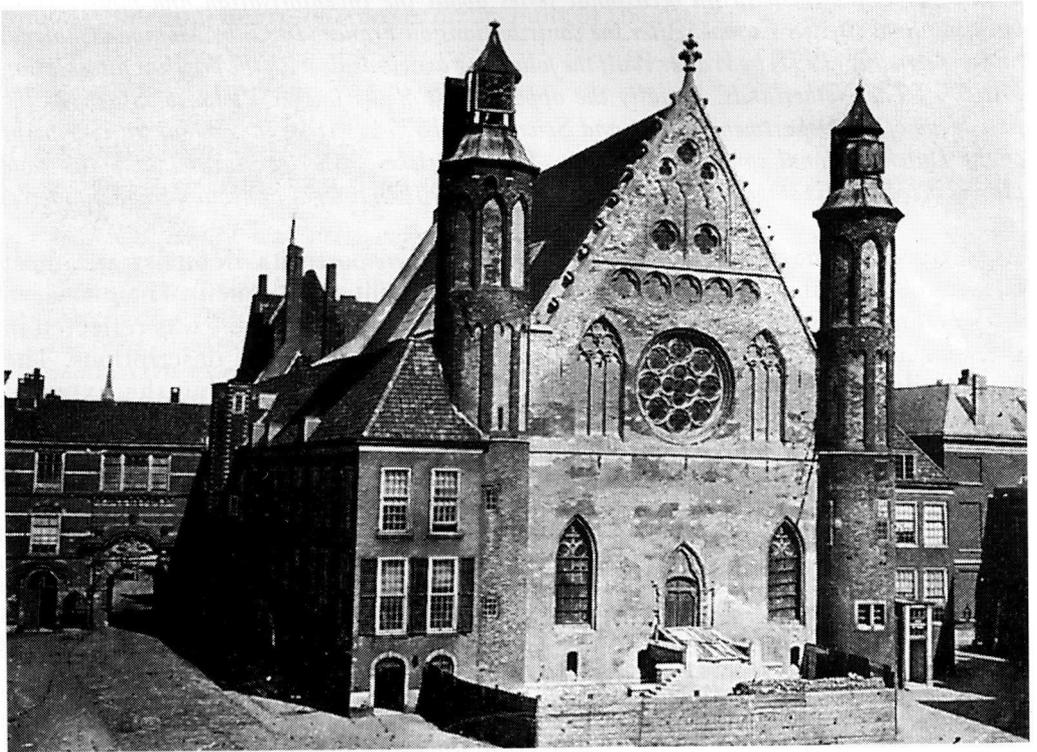


Fig.1

The medieval Ridderzaal (Hall of the Knights) at the Binnenhof, The Hague, in 1879 just before the restoration of the façade and towers begun under the direction of Victor de Stuers

In spite of the local building codes and artistic interest during the period of the Republic, the first steps towards governmental concern for the cultural heritage on a central level were made by foreign forces, at first French, then German, in turbulent times. After the foundation of the Batavian Republic (1795), the

revolutionary Constitution of 1798 declared the abolition of the guilds – which would bring a decline in technical education and craftsmanship – as well as the equality of religion, which ended the dominant position of the Reformed denominations and their properties. As a result, most Protestants were not very co-operative when a government regulation demanded the restitution of confiscated churches. Finally, about 170 churches were returned to the Roman Catholics, but many of them preferred new and greater buildings to show off their regained status. So, the restitution unintentionally caused a great loss of medieval churches at the beginning of the nineteenth century, mostly without protest. Sometimes the old towers remained because they were owned by the civic municipalities and also served public purposes.

In one case the citizens protested, in vain, when in 1813 the Emperor Napoleon (after his defeat at Leipzig) ordered the demolition of the frontal part of St Mary's Church, Utrecht, in order to sell its precious tufa stone for fundraising (Fig.2).



Fig.2

Demolition of the frontal part of St. Mary's Church, Utrecht, ordered by the Emperor Napoleon; latterly, the church was in use as a music hall and theatre; detail of a drawing by Johannes Jelgerhuis (1814)



Fig.3

View of the *Gebouw voor Kunsten en Wetenschappen* (Building for Arts and Sciences) at St. Mary's Place, Utrecht, designed by the municipal architect J. van Maurik and his director G.W. Deketh and completed in 1847; the building is still in use as a concert hall and since 1992 listed as a protected monument, notwithstanding the outspoken disapproval by Alberdingk Thijm and De Stuers in the nineteenth century; lithograph from Dr Wap's album *De stad Utrecht*, edited in 1859-60

However, one may wonder if the protest was not principally fed by anti-Napoleonic sentiments rather than by cultural or historic motives, because in 1843 the remaining choir and side-buildings, which had not belonged to the state, were removed without regret and replaced by the municipal Building for Arts and Sciences (Fig.3). Only the medieval foundations were saved and integrated in the new neo-classical building. The outlines of the inner walls were retained, but this act of conservation was motivated mainly by economic rather than historic arguments.

In 1806, Louis Napoleon had been made King of Holland in a period of economic and cultural decay and during his short reign he tried to elevate the arts and architecture to French standards. After his brother had incorporated the Low Countries as a part of his vast Empire, the inhabitants had to obey the August 1810 decree of the French Minister of Internal Affairs that the prefects of the departments should be informed about the historic buildings and other monuments in their areas. But by the time that William I of Orange was acclaimed as the Sovereign Prince, three years later (he became king in 1815), hardly any official

historical reports had been made. Nevertheless, the cultural influence of the French period persisted, albeit superficially, because King William continued some of Louis Napoleon's actions and several architects (such as J. de Greef, Z. Reijers, T.F. Suys and J.D. Zocher jr.) were sent to Paris or Rome with royal grants for their education. There they were influenced by current ideas about classical architecture, the rise of archaeology and the interest in history. These ideas were also gaining currency through publications.

#### EARLY INTEREST IN DUTCH MONUMENTS OF HISTORY AND ART



Fig.4

The Muider Slot at Muiden in 1899, after restoration and partial reconstruction by C.H. Peters, who then placed battlements on all the walls and towers and enriched some rooms with panels in the renaissance style; during a second restoration (1956-72), for conversion into a museum, many of Peters' additions were removed

Occasionally, William I was directly engaged in preservation matters. In 1814 the former local building codes concerning demolition were reintroduced, now on a national level, by an Act of June 25th. Ten years later, the rebuilding of churches and the reordering of their interiors were restricted by Royal Decree in order to avoid the disfigurement of cityscapes and sacred spaces. In 1824 the king also proposed taking over the provincial legislation of East Flanders (at that time still part

of The Netherlands), bringing the works of art and antiquity in that region under the control of a special committee, but the Council of State rejected this idea as too restrictive.

Compared with these restrained rules, the king's personal intervention in favour of the threatened Muider Slot – a medieval castle at Muiden, east of Amsterdam – was of far greater importance for the cause of conservation. This castle, still famous but disused, was offered for sale and demolition in 1825 by the department of *Domeinen* (state properties), which was more interested in saving money than in saving monuments. Of all ancient Dutch buildings, the Muider Slot was truly a monument of history and art (Fig.4). It was here that Count Floris V, the hero of Holland, had been murdered in 1296, and where in the seventeenth century the *Muiderkring* (the

literary circle around Pieter Cornelis Hooft and his daughter Maria Tesselschade) had met. For these important reasons, two organisations joined forces in petitioning the king to prevent the unacceptable loss of the building and William I exercised his power and forbade the sale.

One of those organisations, the Society of Dutch Literature, valued the Muiderslot for its literary associations rather than for its architectural history. The other, the Royal Institute of Literature, Sciences and Arts, founded in 1808 by Louis Napoleon (renamed in 1851 as the Royal Academy of Sciences and still active) strove more consistently for the conservation and documentation of historic buildings (for example, the ruins of the former castle of Brederode near Santpoort, the old Abbey of Egmond and the 'Byzantine' crypt in Deventer)(Fig.5). By this time, a more profound interest in history and archaeology had developed, encouraged by foreign publications and national activities. In 1818 Professor C.J.C. Reuvers was appointed as the first Director of the State Museum of Antiquities at Leiden. He led the excavations around Arensburg at Voorburg in search of Roman remains and founded the periodical *Antiquiteiten*. Apart from classical and prehistoric antiquities such as the *Hunebeds* ('giants' graves', in the north-eastern

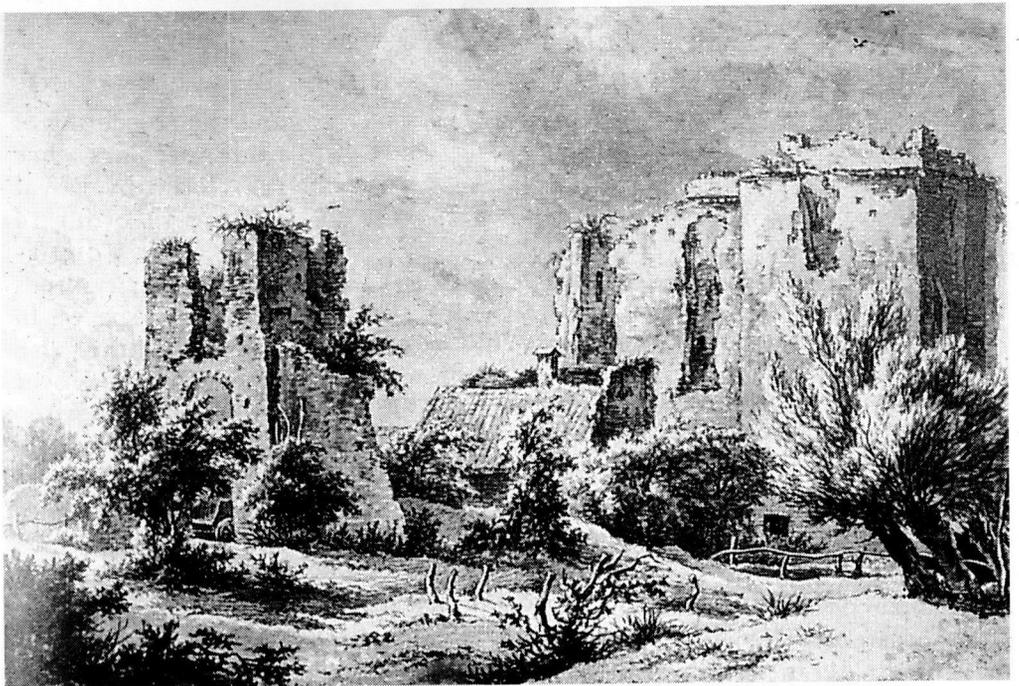


Fig.5

The romantic ruins of the late-thirteenth-century castle of Brederode near Santpoort, uninhabited since devastation by Spanish troops in 1573; in 1862 Victor de Stuers began the first restoration; afterwards the north-eastern corner tower received battlements (c.1880) and a roof (c.1900)

province of Drenthe), medieval churches and castles (or rather their romantic ruins) were the subject of early research as well.

For instance, in the early 1820s, the painter-architect Christiaan Kramm was commissioned by a German editor to draw the remains of the Dom church and tower in Utrecht, the former seat of the Roman Catholic bishop, for an architectural publication. Kramm's actions led to the first restoration of the surviving parts after the nave had collapsed during a cyclone in 1674. Moreover, the elegant Gothic tower (at 113 metres then the highest building in our country), narrowly escaped demolition after the state had transferred ownership to the municipality in 1825. In the same year the royal architect Suys added a wooden balcony (for which the walls and pillars were damaged) and a neo-gothic portal at the western façade of the transept. One year later the remains of the nave were removed. From the 1840s onwards, the Dom underwent several restorations. It was one of the first projects supported by state subsidies but was also the subject of dispute because of dubious repairs.

In 1823 and 1824 one of the Royal Institute's secretaries, Jacob de Vos, who was informed by Suys about the French *Conseil des Bâtiments*, argued for the establishment of a similar committee in The Netherlands. He proposed that this *Algemeene Bouwkundige Commissie* should be involved both with the design of new buildings and the repair and restoration of the old ones. Although this proposal was regarded as unworkable (which also meant too expensive), the Institute persisted. In 1832 it carried out an inquiry into the state of unattended monuments and requested the government to establish a special committee for inspection, probably inspired by the French example of the *Inspection générale des monuments historiques* (founded in 1830 under the *Direction des Beaux Arts* of the Department of Internal Affairs). But in the 1830s the government had other priorities, because the revolt of the southern provinces demanded almost all its attention and finances.

#### EARLY PUBLICATIONS ON DUTCH MONUMENTS

Following the independence of Belgium in 1839, the diminished Netherlands slowly recovered and achieved prosperity and pride in its own identity, initiated by better economic prospects and a burgeoning nationalism. Both artists and writers made references to the glorious past – especially the Golden Age – and encouraged contemporary architects and artists to equal those high standards. Everhardus Potgieter and Reinier Bakhuizen van den Brink did so in their new literary magazine *De Gids* (The Guide, started in 1837), together with Conrad Busken Huet, and Carel Vosmaer (in the *Nederlandsche Spectator*). Inspired by the works of Sir Walter Scott, historical novels also became popular, thanks to Jacob van Lennep (who also published studies about castles and historic folk art) and Geertruida Toussaint, wife of the painter Johannes Bosboom (who depicted many historic buildings in a romantic style).

However, the most influential author was the art connoisseur Joseph Alberdingk Thijm, who contributed to *De Gids* and began *De Dietsche Warande* in 1855 as a specialist magazine for Dutch antiquities, arts and literature. Later, in 1876, he

became the first Dutch professor in aesthetics and the history of art at the Academy of Arts in Amsterdam, but he had long before entered the debate on preservation policy. Thijm introduced not only the ideas of the early French protagonist Victor Hugo in his serial pamphlets *In-standhouding onzer monumenten* and *Wandalisme*, but also made the first scientific descriptions of historic buildings. As a catholic he was very much interested in the pre-Reformation period, principally in the gothic style, but he drew attention also to the historic cityscapes which evoked a past period of harmony between daily life, art and craftsmanship. He defended frequently the elaborate gable ends of the Golden Age against the current 'agony of flat mouldings'.

In 1848 Thijm addressed an open letter to the Royal Institute concerning the conservation of monuments and pleaded for the establishment of special committees for the control of new buildings and for the conservation and documentation of monuments. He received support from such members of the Institute as D.D. Büchler, M.G. Tétar van Elven and I. Warnsinck (with whom later he would have a serious disagreement). Both before and after Thijm's letter, in 1844 and 1849, two successive ministers sent circulars to the provincial governors, requiring them to take measures for the protection of art objects and historical monuments. Only the province of Gelderland drew up such regulations, but these were not very effective since they were too respectful of the rights of owners. In 1852 the *Maatschappij tot Bevordering der Bouwkunst* (The Society for the Promotion of Architecture, founded in 1841) began an illustrated series documenting *Oude Bestaande Gebouwen* (old existing buildings). Soon another society in Amsterdam, *Architectura et Amicitia* (1855), formed an enthusiastic debating club on historic and current building styles as well as on modern techniques. Foreign publications on these matters were circulated and the ideas of Eugène Viollet-le-Duc and other conservationist architects were discussed.

#### THE FIRST COMMISSION FOR SURVEY AND CONSERVATION (1860-71)

In 1860 the above mentioned societies were ready to inaugurate the *Commissie tot Opsporing, Behoud en Bekendmaking van Overblijfselen van Vaderlandsche Kunst* (Committee for Survey, Conservation and Information on the Remains of National Art) under the umbrella of the Royal Academy of Sciences. The initiator and chairman was the archaeologist Dr Conrad Leemans. The members were the theologian Professor Willem Moll, the government architect Willem Rose and the engineer of *Waterstaat* (The Department of Hydraulic and Civil Works) L.J. A. van der Kun. This small committee had high scientific aspirations, but low political and financial support (only 100 guilders per year). Although the Parliament in 1853 had allocated for the very first time a sum of 1000 guilders for the conservation of historic monuments in general, no funds were provided for systematic survey or control.

According to its first circular letter – sent to public and church councils, teachers, directors of schools of art, notaries and other dignitaries – the committee intended to collect information about historic buildings, works of art, furniture, weapons, tools, coins, seals, manuscripts, miniatures and other memorabilia as a first inventory

of the material remains of Dutch cultural history. In response to its request the committee received, apart from information, a great variety of objects. The members also carried out fieldwork themselves and asked for assistance from local correspondents and architectural draughtsmen, but without payment the response was not great. Despite many difficulties and frustrations the members succeeded in making several descriptions which they published in illustrated annual reports, summarized in *De Gids*. Leeman's drawing of the church tower at Dodewaard is a representative example (Fig.6).

The amount of interesting, threatened historic buildings to be documented was overwhelming and rather frustrating, because the committee had no power to prevent the continuous process of pulling down so

many churches, fortifications, gates, country estates and historic houses for modernisation and the minimising of repair costs. Moreover, the committee was vulnerable to internal divisions in conservation cases as became apparent in the *cause célèbre* of the Ridderzaal. In 1861 the Parliament had decided to re-use it as a concert hall and a hall of honour for displaying historic art objects and therefore had begun to take away the rickety oak roof supports. The Literary Department of the Royal Academy protested against this wanton destruction and requested consolidation because of the beauty of the carvings. Rose however, apparently not hindered by his ambiguous position as government architect and conservationist, had in mind the replacement of the authentic gothic timber work, which he wrongly dated to the seventeenth rather than the thirteenth century, by an up-to-date

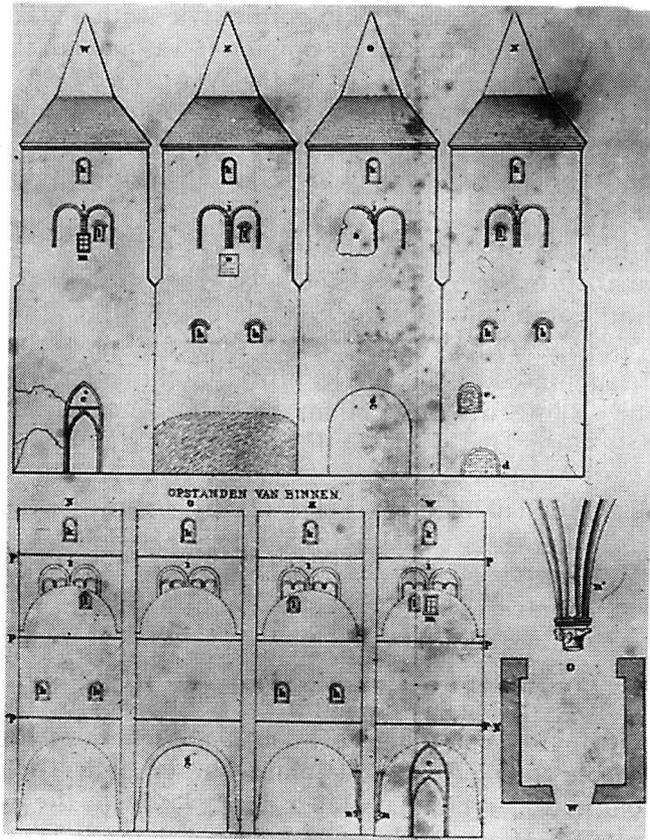


Fig.6

Survey drawing of the tufa-stone and brick church tower of c.1100 at Dodewaard (in the eastern province of Gelderland) by Conrad Leemans, as published in the annual report of the Royal Academy's Commission of 1864, showing external walls above, interior elevations below and at bottom right a ground-plan and a detail of the vaulting

construction of cast iron in gothic style, with a glazed roof, because this would be cheaper and lighter. In his opinion it was enough that some carved parts could be saved as museum objects. In the *Nederlandsche Spectator* both Rose's interference and its acceptance by the other committee members was heavily criticised (by Thijm and Vosmaer in particular), and the need for an official body able to prohibit 'such destruction of the sources of our history of art' was powerfully stated.

#### THE FIRST DUTCH STATE COMMISSION (1874-9)

In 1870 the Royal Academy asked the Minister of Internal Affairs to appoint a state commission for the systematic inventorisation of monuments. This request was repeated by Leemans in his final report of 1872 after his committee, disappointed by the lack of official and financial support, was disbanded. One of the voluntary correspondents would become the godfather of Dutch conservation policy: the lawyer Victor de Stuers (1843-1916), who had been a member of the Royal Academy of Sciences since 1864. He published his first protest against the demolition of historic buildings (the dismantling of the fortifications of the town of his birth, Maastricht) in the *Courier de la Meuse* (1867) and continued his struggle in *De Nederlandsche Spectator* and other magazines. In 1869 he completed a doctorate at the University of Leiden. One of his theses was that an inventory by the state of works of art and a classification of historic monuments to be kept by the state was badly needed.

When three years later he happened to visit the newly extended South Kensington Museum in London, De Stuers saw to his anger and astonishment the marble rood loft from St John's Cathedral at 's-Hertogenbosch, which had been sold in 1867 (Fig.7). After a direct letter to the recently appointed Minister of Internal Affairs (J.H. Geertsema), he wrote in fury his famous litany 'Holland op zijn smalst' (Holland at its narrowest) in *De Gids* of December 1873, enumerating all the acts of vandalism and crime against monuments of Dutch history and art. This time his plea had an effect, owing to previous propositions by Leemans and others as well as to changing economic and political conditions.

In 1874 the *College van Rijksadviseurs voor de Monumenten van Geschiedenis en Kunst* (more or less modelled on the Belgian *Commission des Monuments*) was established by a Royal Decree of March 8th, as a commission to advise on monuments, museums and public buildings. C. Fock, a former Minister of Internal Affairs, was appointed president, with Leemans as vice-president. Among the heterogeneous members were the architect P.J.H. Cuypers (1827-1921; the brother-in-law of Thijm), Eugen Gugel (Professor of Architecture in Delft), A.J. Enschedé (municipal archivist of Haarlem), the author Carel Vosmaer and the painter Johan Weissenbruch. De Stuers was appointed as secretary, but within one year he was forced to give up this position when he became the first civil servant (*referendaris*) of the especially created Department of Arts and Sciences at the Ministry of Internal Affairs. At the same time fifty-four unpaid correspondents and two 'inspector-draughtsmen' were assigned to assist the state advisers (who were paid only for their travel expenses).

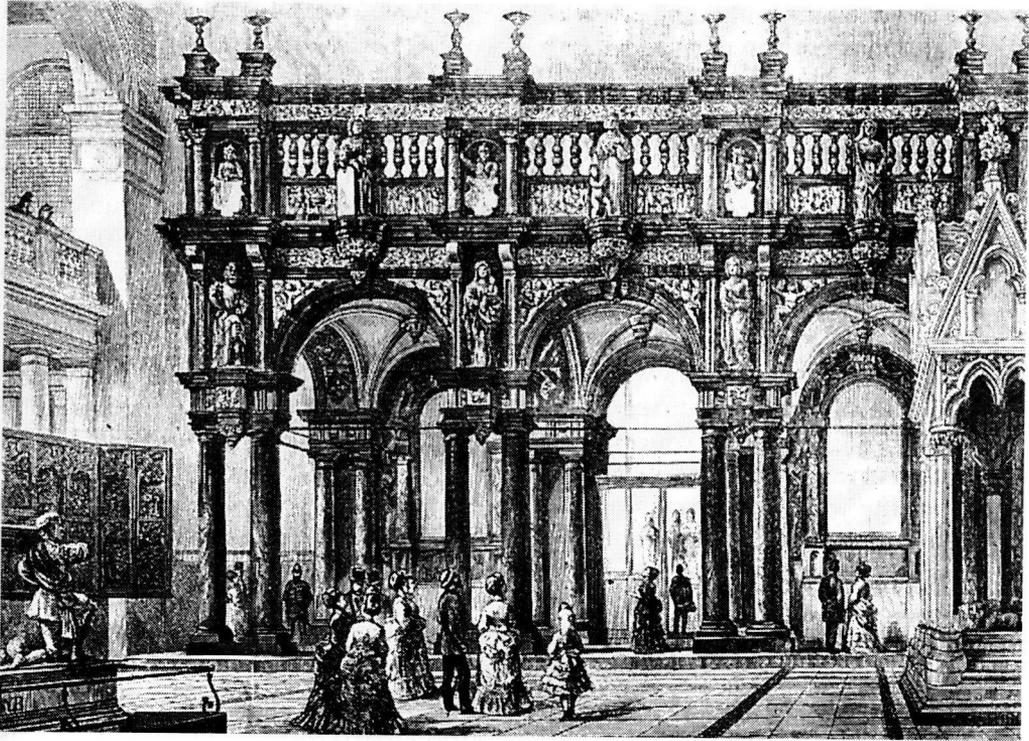


Fig.7

The rood loft from St John's Cathedral at 's-Hertogenbosch as a showpiece of renaissance art in the new wing of the South Kensington Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum), London; woodcut, signed HWB, as published in *De Gids* (1873) by Victor de Stuers; remarkably, the removal of the rood loft had the full consent of P.J.H. Cuypers, who had pleaded to restore the gothic character of the cathedral's interior, nor was the sale prohibited by the Dutch government in spite of the still current Royal Decree of 1824 on reordering church interiors

The Commission's activities had much in common with those of its predecessor and struggled with similar frustrations and internal conflicts. As long as the state advisers had no legal power, even over historic public buildings, they could only try to prevent intended demolitions by persuasion, often without success. Once more Willem Rose, although no longer in charge of conservation, played a dubious role when in 1875, as municipal adviser to Rotterdam, he replaced the Renaissance Meat Hall with its fine carved stone gate (of 1621) with a new building to his own design. Remarkably, the Commission initially had demanded in vain the reinstatement of the whole gable and as a 'second best option', visual documentation, which was carried out by the new tool of photography. After demolition, the sculptures were kept in a museum, like many other historic building fragments.

How many photographs and drawings were made for documentation in the late nineteenth century is not precisely known; in any case most drawings had to

wait a long time for publication – until 1921, when a special edition was produced to commemorate Cuypers' restoration work – because the Commission only published two annual reports (with eleven plates). Often survey drawings were made as an early method of rescue recording of threatened buildings, for instance of the Hogewoerd gate of Leiden, published in the first annual report and pulled down in 1876 in spite of the College's intervention. At the same time many other city gates were threatened and often removed, because the Fortification Act of 1874 largely abolished the traditional defence system of fortified towns in favour of a forward defence line of interlinked fortresses and because the towns wished to re-use the former defence zones for expansion.

The survival of historic private buildings depended completely on the will of their owners. Sometimes they were radically rebuilt, often replaced by more modern buildings and rarely well conserved. In some particular cases historic houses could be saved through personal concern and financing, as demonstrated by the politician G.G. Groen van Prinsterer in 1849 who bought on his own account the former estate of the well known scientist Christiaan Huygens, Hofwijck at Voorburg, in order to safeguard this important piece of heritage. De Stuers did the same for the late gothic 'Scottish' house 'het Lammetje' (Little Lamb) in the Zeeland town of Veere.

The situation was more complicated for churches. The catholics profited from the restoration of the episcopal hierarchy in 1853, which gave an immense impetus for the building of new churches and cathedrals, mainly in neo-gothic style and often designed by Cuypers. In 1868 the statutory governmental control over the rebuilding of churches was withdrawn by Royal Decree as an expression of the separation of Church and State and as an act of liberalism. Now the church councils could decide freely about rebuilding, refurnishing, plastering or the destruction of their buildings, being obliged only to inform the state advisers. The only means of influencing alterations were, besides persuasion, the state subsidies for restoration. Although the budget had substantially increased between 1874 and 1882, it could not cover all costs and frequently needed to be defended in Parliament.

The controlling body in the allocation of the arts budget for the repair of monuments, for new public buildings and for collections was the State Commission. Almost from the start the mixed characters and interests led to confrontation in debates and pamphlets. Antagonism was caused by differing opinions concerning both restoration and new building styles, which related to the old conflict between the reformed and catholic parties about the use of the neo-gothic style for national public buildings, and by conflicting ideas concerning the place of archaeological and other collections. The vigorous debates on the building of the new Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, designed by the catholic architect Cuypers, after a disputable intervention in the competition by De Stuers, represent a major example of this antagonism (Fig.8). In 1879 the dissolution of the council followed and again an opportunity for the preservation of monuments had passed.

In two cultural magazines J. VerLoren, a judge from Zutphen, argued for the prompt appointment of a new committee, consisting of 'solid scholars of the history



Fig.8

Cartoon by J.W. Holswilder, published in *De Lantaarn*, with Victor de Stuers, J.A. Alberdingk Thijm and P.J.H. Cuypers kneeling before the crowd under the motto 'Consecration of the Episcopal Palace, called the Rijksmuseum at Amsterdam', at the opening of the building

of art' (instead of practising architects), to be responsible for compiling a list of monuments to be protected by the state as 'sources of history' and to review plans for restoration, rather than to comment on new public buildings. Unfortunately, VerLoren published his proposal when the responsible minister was an anti-conservationist liberal, who seriously tried to stop the state subsidies for restorations. De Stuers, who was not pleased by some critical remarks, also failed to provide support.

#### SURVEY FOR RESTORATION AND DESCRIPTION

In the end, the two most controversial protagonists won the battle – Victor de Stuers and Cuypers, who had become close friends. Cuypers had received a special position as both the 'architect of the state museum buildings' (Rijksmuseum) and the main adviser on state restoration projects and budgets. Cuypers and De Stuers compiled a list of historic buildings which would deserve state subsidies, because of their value for art and history and their intrinsic significance. The list, made up mainly of castles, churches, town halls, gates and great historic houses from c.1000 to 1800, was not made public, nor did it have any official connection with

preservation. Conservation, or rather reconstruction, now dictated the survey work, for which in 1878 the inspector Ad Mulder was appointed as De Stuers' assistant. During the Commission's time, other draughtsmen, including R. Redtenbacher, had assisted, while both De Stuers and Cuypers made their own sketches (for instance of the church in Wassenaar) (Fig.9). Mulder later became head of the conservation bureau of De Stuers' department and would continue his important work until 1919.

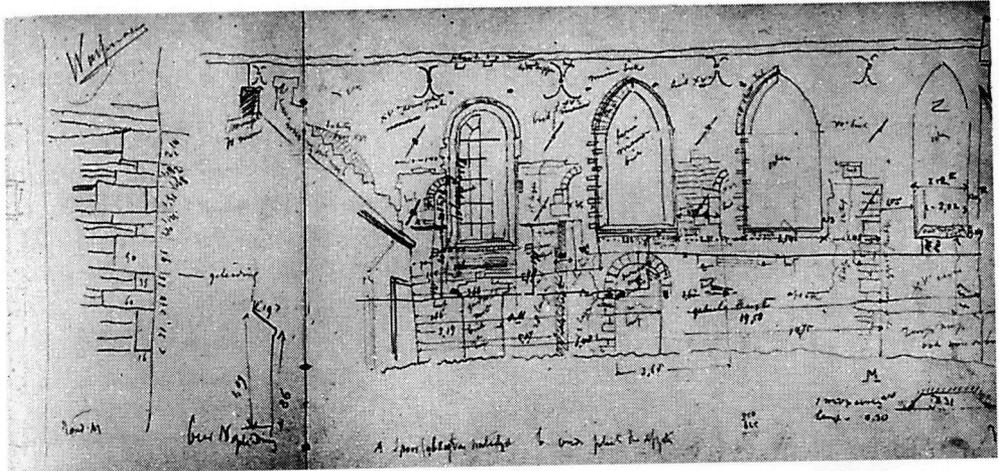


Fig.9

Survey drawing by Victor de Stuers of the northern side wall of the reformed church at Wassenaar (near The Hague), partly of the twelfth century; this is an early, but at the time unpublished example of detailed documentation. In a later restoration (1939-40) the Romanesque window at the left was replaced by a Gothic window similar to those at the right

Cuypers continued his independent restoration practice, directly inspired by the ideas of Viollet-le-Duc concerning reconstruction and addition. In 1863 he had designed additional towers for the Roermond Minster as the ideal medieval church (Figs. 10 & 11). From 1890 onwards he transformed the ruins of the castle of De Haar, like a Dutch Pierrefonds, into the romantic castle Haarzuilens, after Mulder had drawn the ruins (Figs. 12 & 13). The contemporary reconstruction of the medieval castle of Radboud near Medemblik, based on initial sketches by De Stuers, proved that Cuypers was not the only conservationist in favour of spectacular reconstructions (Figs. 14 & 15). However, Cuypers did not obtain control of all restoration projects, because resistance rose increasingly against his practice and his near monopoly. After protests by many members of the *Maatschappij tot Bevordering der Bouwkunst* in 1895, pleading again for the re-instatement of a state commission, Cuypers had to accept that the government architect C.H. Peters and his assistant J. van Lokhorst were to be charged with the restoration of two famous state buildings: the Ridderzaal and the Muiderslot. The Ridderzaal (re-opened in 1904) was not only restored to its medieval appearance (by reconstructing the

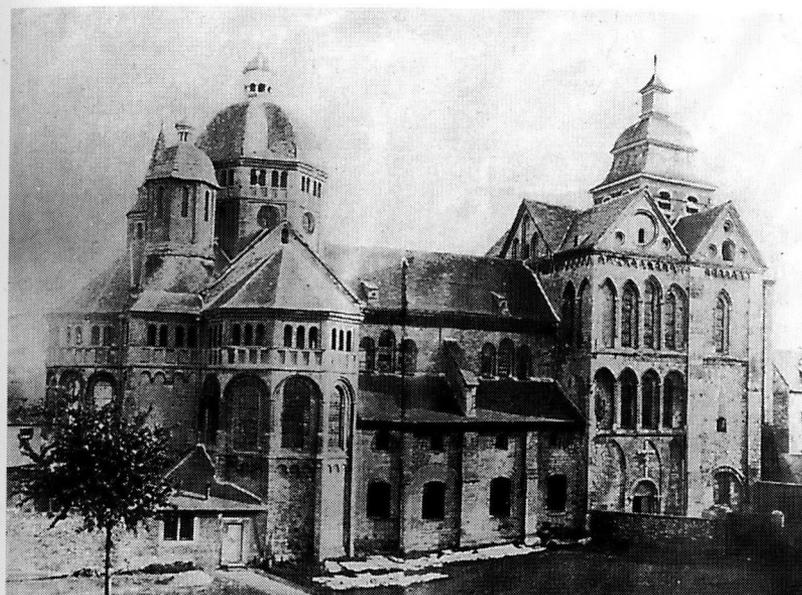


Fig.10  
The medieval  
Minster of  
Roermond (in the  
southern province  
of Limburg where  
P.J.H.Cuypers was  
born), seen from  
the north with its  
later alterations  
and additions,  
photographed in  
1863 before  
Cuypers began a  
transformation  
according to his  
ideals of true  
catholic religious  
art and  
architecture



Fig.11

Cuypers' proposal for reconstructing the Minster of Roermond as an ideal romano-gothic church by adding two pairs of side towers; this drawing was published under the slogan 'national monument' in brochures for fundraising by the Society for the Repair and Conservation of the Minster at Roermond, founded in 1862; the eastern towers were built in 1866-7, the western towers in 1874-5

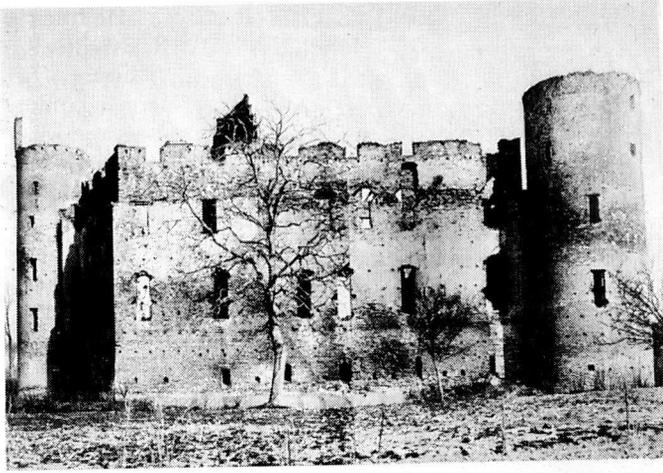


Fig.12

The ruins of De Haar castle near Vleuten (in the central province of Utrecht), photographed in 1890; the original castle dated from the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, but was partly rebuilt between 1505 and 1554 after devastation in 1482; after a long period of decay and neglect it was inherited by Baron Etienne van Zuijlen van Nijvelt (husband of Hélène de Rothschild) who began reconstruction in 1890

Fig.13

The completed castle of De Haar after the reconstruction by P.J.H. Cuypers of 1891-1914 (with the assistance of his son Jos); the design is inspired by both French and English houses: instead of an open courtyard there is a neo-gothic hall in the centre; the castle is surrounded by a large garden in a romantic English landscape carried out by Henri Copijn and requiring a complete relocation of the existing village; of the eighteenth-century buildings of Haarzuilens only survey drawings and photographs remain



wooden roof beams in place of Rose's iron columns), but was also returned to its former function, as the representative meeting hall of Parliament (Figs.16-18).

Although Cuypers resigned his membership of the architect's society, his dominant role in conservation remained unchanged and ironically would become even stronger. In 1899 a new society was founded by archivists, scholars and architects, the *Nederlandsche Oudheidkundige Bond* (NOB; Dutch Antiquities Association), striving for the legal protection and the scientific survey of historic buildings and monuments. The next year the Association's president J.C. van Overvoorde published a summary in the NOB *Bulletin* of all existing legislation

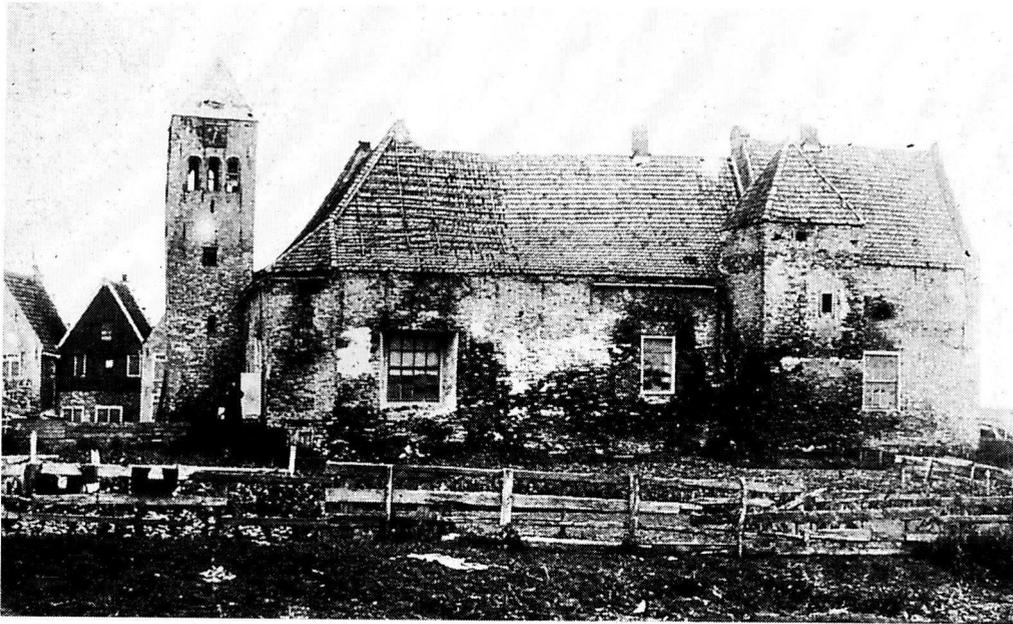


Fig.14 (above)

The former castle of Radboud at Medemblik (in the province of Noord-Holland near the Zuiderzee), photographed about 1890; the castle was incorrectly named after an early king, but in fact had been founded by Count Floris V in 1283 as a citadel against the recently subjected Westfrisians; it was transferred to the state in 1889 as an historic monument

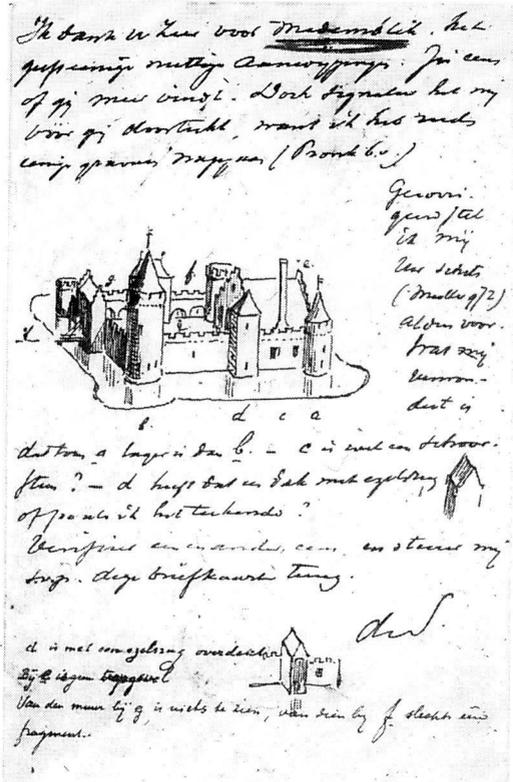


Fig.15

Sketch by Victor de Stuers for a reconstruction of the castle Radboud, drawn in 1890; the remnants were carefully drawn before the restoration begun by Jacobus van Lokhorst with advice from Cuypers, in a modest version of De Stuers' ideas

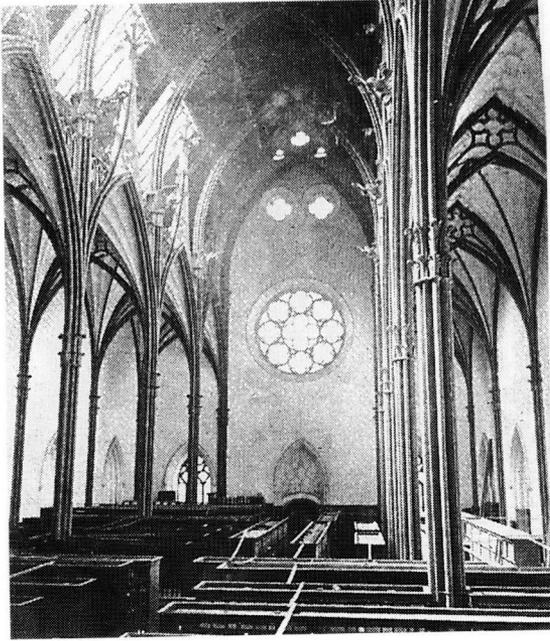


Fig.16

The Ridderzaal at The Hague with the cast iron construction of gothic arches and columns after Willem Rose's design in 1861; the building was then used as an archive room for the Ministry of Internal Affairs

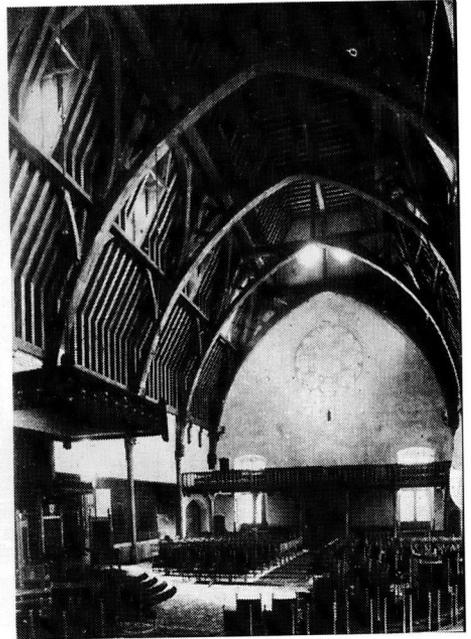


Fig.17

The Ridderzaal in 1905 after C.H. Peters had reconstructed the medieval wooden roof, using parts of the original construction (which had been kept in the Rijksmuseum); since 1904 the hall has been used for national ceremonies, of which the opening of the Dutch parliamentary year is the most important



Fig.18

Exterior of the Ridderzaal c.1905 after restoration, showing the reconstructed tops of the towers, a new entrance, and the side wings remodelled

concerning the protection of monuments abroad, together with an address to the Dutch government for a bill and a commission. When in 1901 the reformed party protagonist Abraham Kuiper was chosen as the new Minister of Internal Affairs, responsibility was given to someone who had long been interested in a national cultural policy. Van Overvoorde was invited to elaborate his proposals and after many debates the result was that Cuypers at the age of seventy-six became chairman in 1903 of the *Rijkscommissie tot het opmaken van een inventaris en eene beschrijving van de Nederlandsche Monumenten van Geschiedenis en Kunst* with nine other members (among them his son Jos Cuypers, De Stuers, Van Overvoorde, Peters and a coming man, Jan Kalf, art historian and assistant at the Rijksmuseum). Even when in 1918 the structure of both the Commission and its administration were reorganised, the ninety-one years old Cuypers remained in charge. When the Commission was split into two sections, one for inventory and one for restoration consultancy, Kalf became head of administration.

The state Commission, comparable in some respects with the Royal Commissions in the United Kingdom, started at once with the compilation of the *inventaris*, a Preliminary List of Dutch monuments, arranged by province with a separate volume for Amsterdam. The first volume of the Preliminary Lists was published in 1908, the last in 1933; they were intended to provide the material for the study of art history, which would be completed in the scientific inventories, called the *Geïllustreerde Beschrijving* (illustrated description). The first Dutch scientific inventory (on the *Baronie van Breda*) came out in 1912 and was written by Jan Kalf, the Commission's secretary and later director of the first *Rijksbureau voor de monumentenzorg* (state office for conservation), founded in 1918. In his preface Kalf explicitly mentioned that the German series (of which a manual was published in 1904 in the magazine *Die Denkmalpflege*) was the model for the Dutch inventories. However, he permitted himself one deviation, the exclusion of farm buildings, since they did not belong to the great works of history and art and because this category was already described in some ethnographic studies.

The publication of inventories made slow progress, since most commission members could fulfil their task only alongside their normal jobs and they had also to compose the Preliminary Lists. Although in 1923 the first permanent art historian, Eugène van Nispen tot Sevenaer, was appointed and in the 1930s new guidelines were introduced in order to simplify and speed up the production, no more than four volumes came out before the Second World War. After 1953 the series achieved greater productivity until the long awaited Monuments and Historic Buildings Act came into force in 1961, forcing the compilers to give priority to the listing work required for legal protection.

#### FROM PROPOSAL TO LEGAL PROTECTION

After the creation of the state Commission, the NOB continued to promote the idea of legal protection of monuments and sites, firstly by a proposal made in 1908. One of the most problematic aspects of protection was the intervention by the state in private properties, not only in principle but also because of likely financial

implications. In his above mentioned litany of 1873 De Stuers already had defended the state's right to protect and in 1912 the jurist J.W. Frederiks supplied more arguments in his thesis *Monumentenrecht* (Law on Monuments) by referring to foreign practice. Nevertheless, Parliament was not impressed and still feared that it might become liable for more costs than it spent already on conservation and the survey of monuments. Even the long enumeration of losses in the weekly *Buiten* in a series of articles on *Sloepend-Herboren Nederland* (Demolishing reborn Netherlands) in the following years had no effect on the national decision makers. Despite the announcement of a bill in Parliament in 1923, legal protection did not follow, and modernization and devastation continued.

Only some local authorities showed positive interest, either in building control as in the Republic period (influenced by *Schoonheidscommissies*, literally commissions for beauty, first established in 1911), or in the defence of the natural and historic beauty of the country (influenced by the Dutch Society for Natural Monuments, set up in 1905, and the *Heemschut* association, established in 1911). From 1920 onwards several municipal and provincial authorities made a start on the protection of monuments. Also, the national Open Air Museum (1912) and specialised societies on historic houses (Hendrick de Keyser, 1918), windmills (Hollandsche Molen, 1923) and fortifications (Menno van Coehoorn, 1926) were active for conservation and saved many monuments, partly with the financial support of the state.

Kalf remained keen on the practical safeguarding of the national cultural heritage when the threat of war became even more serious, in spite of the Dutch policy of neutrality. Since 1929 Kalf had been deeply involved, as the Commission's secretary, and from 1939 as State Inspector. Among many precautions, a list of 108 monuments to be 'specially protected' was compiled, of which eighty should be free from military use. Sourly enough, the first national requirement for the official protection of historic buildings and monuments was not imposed until after the Germans had invaded our country in May 1940. After capitulation, General W.G. Winkelman declared two decrees on reconstruction, instructing that the State Commission's permission was required for any demolition or alteration of historic buildings mentioned on the Preliminary List.

Following their assumption of power, the German occupiers had tried to maintain as far as possible the existing Dutch rules and institutions; they were even prepared to take over the legal rules for the protection of monuments. How embarrassing it must have been to confess to the culture-minded enemy that in The Netherlands such an act did not exist. So, by a German initiative a first attempt was made during the war for legislation on monuments. Five successive drafts were submitted, but finally none was acceptable because of the interference of the pro-German *Nederlandse Kultuurraad* which had caused too many controversies. Instead, Winkelman's Reconstruction decrees functioned as a Monuments Act and they were re-confirmed immediately after the war by an Emergency Decree.

In 1946 a new Commission was established, called *Monumentenraad* and modelled on the initial war-time drafts. A subsection of the Commission, chaired by the elderly Dr Frederiks, was appointed to prepare a proper Monuments Act.

Many years passed before he could see his dream come true. The politicians gave higher priority to economic reconstruction than to the preservation of monuments and hesitated again over extra costs and intervention in private properties. At last in 1961, after a Temporary Act (1950) and the submission of the first bill to Parliament in 1955, the first Dutch Historic Buildings and Monuments Act was approved.

In this Act many features from previous proposals were included, beginning with the title (deriving from the early French influence) and continuing with the special chapters on conservation areas and the legal position of the Commission (deriving from the war-time drafts); only the direct responsibility given to the minister, instead of to the Commission, was a fundamentally new element. The Act was restricted to buildings and sites of more than fifty years old and of general (national) importance because of their beauty, their meaning for science or their value for folklore; movable objects could only be legally protected if they were fixed by their use.

Since the passing of the Act, over 40,000 buildings have been listed as protected monuments (mainly dating from before 1850) and about 350 conservation areas have been designated. Compared with the pre-war Preliminary List of over 12,000 items, the number of recognised monuments has more than tripled, because of the recent interest in the vanishing vernacular architecture of ordinary houses, mills and farm buildings. We estimate that approximately 14,000 items of the more recent architectural or industrial heritage (1850-1940) will follow during the current Monuments Selection Project. Among these are many buildings which had previously given rise to the outspoken disgust of the Dutch founding fathers of conservation. How this came about is another story which demonstrates that the preservationist's scope is now tremendously enlarged. However, in a nutshell this story has features in common with the development described above: lack of knowledge, of appraisal and of money for maintenance; the threat of demolition or radical rebuilding and the fear of the defacement of both cityscapes and countryside, leading to the recognition of a new category of heritage. Since the 1980s, the Dutch Historic Monuments Act, as well as the organisation and financing of the conservation of monuments have fundamentally changed. Building activities, conservation and preservation practices nowadays demonstrate a great dynamism in The Netherlands. This makes a new consideration of the roots of these activities particularly instructive.

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