The library of the University of Wisconsin, U.S.A., possesses a remarkable collection of books, information on which should prove interesting to the readers of *Nederlands Archief voor Kerkgeschiedenis*. A guide to historical literature cites this collection as one of the best in the United States on Dutch church history¹.

The collection derives its name from its donor, Mrs. Nils Otto Tank. However, because it originally was the library of her father, the Reverend Reinard Jan van der Meulen of Amsterdam, it would have been more appropriate to call it the "Van der Meulen Collection". The Reverend Van der Meulen, who was born in 1768 and ordained as a minister in the Reformed Church in 1792, served congregations at Hoorn and Haarlem and later at Amsterdam. He was a descendant of a family of renowned art collectors and bibliophiles. According to one writer,

> Het huis der Van der Meulens was een waar museum en bevatte een schat van antieke meubelen, oud porcelein, schilderijen en zeldzame kunstvoorwerpen. Bovendien was er een kostbare bibliotheek van duizenden deelen, oude boeken en handschriften van onschatbare waarde².

How this collection came to rest in the stacks of a library in middle-western America and became known as the Tank Collection is simple to explain. In 1849, Katharina, daughter of the Reverend Van der Meulen, married a Norwegian missionary named Nils Otto Tank. The Reverend Tank, who had earlier spent a short time as a missionary in Surinam, took his new bride to the United States where he became active in missionary work in the northern part of Wisconsin.

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² C.K. Kesler, "Nils Otto Tank (1800-1864)", *De West-Indische Gids*, 1923-24, p. 75. Reinard van der Meulen’s wife was a lady of noble rank and the daughter of a famous Netherlands general, Baron van Boetselaer.
When the Reverend Van der Meulen died, Mrs. Tank inherited most of
her father's estate, including his library. In 1867, she presented it to the
State Historical Society of Wisconsin, where it became known as the
Tank Collection. In 1953, the collection, with the exception of the
atlases, was transferred to the Memorial Library of the University of
Wisconsin at Madison.

The Tank Collection consists of about 5000 books and 300 pamph-
lets. About one-fourth of the books are of large folio, folio, and quarto
size. Many of the works are handsomely bound in fine calfskin or
sheepskin and are richly illustrated. The major portion of the collec-
tion consists of material published in the seventeenth and eighteenth
centuries, but there are a few works from the sixteenth century. Most of
the books are printed in the Dutch language, but many of these are trans-
lations of works originally written in other languages. Second in
numbers are those printed in Latin, followed by those in French.
There are also a number of items in English, German, and Greek and a
few in Spanish, Portuguese, Hebrew, and Syriac. Because Van der
Meulen was a clergyman, the collection deals mainly with Dutch
church history and the development of Dutch Protestant thought.
However, there are also several hundred books on secular history, juris-
prudence, geography and travel, literature, language, and science.

The religious section contains many fine editions of the Bible and
portions of the Bible, most of which are from the seventeenth century
and are in various languages. The great bulk of the religious books,
however, consist of Biblical commentaries, collections of sermons,
books on church history, and works on Christian dogma. Almost all of
the great Dutch theologians are represented here, but notable
omissions are Gomarus, Episcopius, Hoornbeek, and Vorstius. For
most of the Dutch theologians, there are several works often as many as
twenty works by one author. Apparently, the Reverend Van der
Meulen was not averse to having "unorthodox" writers represented in
his library, because one finds works by Jean de Labadie, Pontiaan van
Hattem, Pasquier Quesnel, Johannes Stinstra, e.a. Foreign writers are

3 Mrs. Tank died at her home in Fort Howard, Wisconsin in 1891, at the age of eighty-
eight. In her will she bequeathed to the Wisconsin Historical Society her collection of
sixty-five engravings and paintings, a list of which may be found in Proceedings of the
39th Annual Meeting of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin (Madison, Wisconsin,
1891), pp. 37-41. Most of these works were done by Mrs. Tank herself, and include an oil
portrait of her father, the Reverend Van der Meulen.