

Dr. Laura J. Meilink-Hoedemaker

Rotterdam, the Netherlands

[1] The Amsterdam Bell-foundry under Jan Albert de Grave
1699-1729

[2] The Amsterdam bell-foundry was directed by the Hemony brothers from 1657 until 1680, when their nephews Fremy took over the business. In January 1699, when the last Fremy died, the business was reorganized. During the first half of 1699 many important events took place before Jan Albert de Grave took over the company in July.

[3] The Fremy widow Catarina ten Wege became the owner of the business, however, for the technical know-how she had to rely on the foreman Claes Noorden. Noorden had been employed in the foundry since 1662 under Hemony and the Fremys.

The widow and the craftsman so-to-say were condemned to each other and had to carry on together as best they could. They hired the premises on the Lijnbaansgracht from the Amsterdam City Council for a period of six years and through a public notary concluded a formal partnership agreement. [4] [5] The partnership contract, dated 27 February 1699, provides insight into what was considered to be important at that time and reflects how trade was carried on at the end of the 17th century, the so called Golden Age of the Dutch Republic.

[6] The contract concerns three main categories: the business, the interests of both adults and children and the use of the premises. [7] The business aspects are the following: The contract, just as the lease of the premises, was concluded for a six year period. During this period Claes Noorden was not allowed to start his own business. Ten Wege and Noorden shared the benefits and the investments on a fifty-fifty basis. Claes Noorden was charged with the common cash and bookkeeping, which he had to present to Catarina ten Wege or her representative every six months.

An inventory of the bell-foundry was drawn-up in duplicate, one copy for each of the business partners. Claes Noorden was allowed to use the moulds, patterns and archives of the late Fremy. The sets of metal bars were explicitly considered in the contract. This was probably because they are the backbone of the business, i.e. the reference when tuning the bells.

It was also agreed that from now on all the bells produced in the foundry would carry the names of both partners. [8] And indeed, bells that were made in the beginning of 1699, for purposes of enlarging the five carillons of the City of Amsterdam, mention both names. [9] Claes Noorden is mentioned on the official legend, Catarina's name is on the flank. It is a remarkable detail that the original keyboard of the Zuidertoren still exists and bears the marks of this enlargement of the carillon with new keys and slots for the three additional bells. [10] [11]

[12] The personal aspects are interesting as well: Catarina ten Wege had given birth to at least six Fremy children and their rights were regulated in the partnership contract, that is at least those of the three boys. If the boys chose to be educated in the bell-founders profession, Claes Noorden was obliged to teach them as if they were his own children. On the other hand, it was determined that the boys had to obey him unquestioningly.

Claes Noorden, who himself was a widower and had a daughter of marriageable age, was entitled to teach a future son in law in the art of bell-founding.

[13] The contract deals with the premises too. The building consisted of a workshop and a house. Thus far the Fremy family had taken up residence in the house. But in 1699 some of the rooms were assigned to the Noorden household and it was emphasized that the attic, cellar, garden and the rainwater tank were for communal use.

[14] So far, after signing the document, everything between the business partners seemed to have been settled nicely. [15] However, soon a glitch emerged: in July of that same year, 1699, the widow Catarina ten Wege remarried. The groom was Jan Albert de Grave, gun-founder by profession. Through this marriage De Grave became the co-owner of the business, and Claes Noorden had to submit himself to De Grave's will, which, of course, raised difficulties. The partnership contract had to

be re-established between the new partners. Intervention by a public notary, who on behalf of De Grave paid a visit to Claes Noorden in 1704, did not succeed in coming to an agreement as Claes Noorden refused to sign the new contract.

[16] This problem was solved in a natural way when Catarina ten Wege died in 1704. During the five years of her marriage she had given birth to three De Grave children. [17] However, at the time of her death only one was still alive. As a result of Catarina's death De Grave became the owner of the business.

[18] The death of Catarina had consequences for the business. Now De Grave and Noorden had to co-operate and so they did. In connection with the estate, a probate inventory of the house and workshop was made. This document offers an insightful picture of both the household and the bell-founder's workshop. The rooms and the kitchen with their furniture, clothes and household articles are described in detail. [19] In the foundry, the three ovens were considered to be part of the building and belonged to the City of Amsterdam. But the instruments and tools, such as moulds, profiles, coarse metals such as copper and tin, fragments of broken bells, iron clappers, bells and mortars in stock, and – again – sets of metal bars, belonged to the business.

Tuning of the bells is of vital importance in the production process. Claes Noorden might have been an experienced founder, but he was not a tuner. The late André Lehr wrote: "If Claes Noorden had been a good tuner, the Fremy bells would have been of better quality than they are considered to be." [20] However, there is evidence of an invaluable contribution by the Amsterdam organist Sybrand van Noord to the musical quality of the bells produced. The city treasurer, in 1699 and 1700, paid Van Noord for the tuning of several small bells. Moreover, it is documented that in 1704 Van Noord supervised the casting and tuning of the three carillons ordered by Czar Peter the Great for the gates of the Kremlin in Moskou. [21] Van Noord must have been active in assisting the Amsterdam bell-foundry until his death in 1705.

[22] During the following ten years - 1705 until 1715 - the bell-foundry enters a quieter period. De Grave and Noorden concluded a formal partnership. Together they were responsible for the production of 37 swinging bells and 6 or 7 carillons. [23] In 1710 De Grave also concludes a second marriage, which ends as early as 1711, due to the death of his wife, shortly after childbirth. These private events, however, did not influence the business.

[24] In 1716 Claes Noorden died, then 83 years of age, twice married, twice widower. During 54 years he had worked in the Amsterdam bell-foundry. Noorden never became the owner of the business. At the time of his death only one of his seven children was alive. This daughter, a widow, still lived in the Noorden household in the premises of the bell-foundry. [25] De Grave continued the business on his own. He produced 56 more swinging bells and 3 or 4 more carillons. Among the latter are the carillons of Potsdam and Berlin.

[26] In a third marriage De Grave had three more children, the third one being posthumous. This third marriage ended with De Grave's death in 1729. [27] In 1728, one year before his death, De Grave had contracted with the City Council for another term of six years. So his widow, Margareta Dralle, could continue the business until 1734. This might explain that after De Grave's death his name still appeared on 11 bells, albeit in combination with the name of Nicolaas Muller, probably the new foreman. [28] In 1732 the widow married Pieter Oudeborn, a bell-founder. From that time De Grave's name is no longer used on bells, but the bells are still signed by Nicolaas Muller alone. André Lehr erroneously considers 1733 as the year of De Grave's death, based upon the disappearance of his name on bells. The date of the funeral in 1729, however, is beyond any discussion.

The De Grave business came to an end when in 1734 the City Council let the bell-foundry, not to the actual resident couple Oudeborn - Dralle, but to Ciprianus Crans of Enkhuizen, as its new director.

[29] Alas, all De Grave's carillons have been lost, due to wars, lightning and fires. [30] Many of the swinging bells are lost as well, but some of them are still in function today.

1

THE AMSTERDAM BELL-FOUNDRY UNDER JAN ALBERT DE GRAVE 1699 - 1729

LAURA MEILINK - HOEDEMAKER

World Carillon Federation - Congress 2011

2

From Hemony via Fremy to De Grave

- 1657- 1680: Hemony brothers
- 1680-1699: Fremy brothers
- 1699-1729: Jan Albert de Grave


3

1699: Claude Fremy died

- The widow Catarina ten Wege owns the business
- The foreman Claes Noorden has the know how
- Together they rent the premises from the city-council
- They conclude a formal partnership agreement


4

The Amsterdam bell-foundry



5

Public notary



6

Partnership agreement - 1699

- Business aspects
- Personal aspects: adults and children
- Splitting of the living accommodation

Partnership agreement - 1699
Business aspects

7

- for a six-year period, including a rivalry stipulation
- finances on a fifty-fifty base
- cash in common
- inventory of the bell-foundry
- metal bars for tuning
- both names on the bells*

Amsterdam 1699

8

- New small bells added to five carillons:
 - Westertoren 3
 - Zuidertoren 3
 - Stadhuis 2
 - Oude Kerk 2
 - Regulierstoren 1

Both names on the bells - 1699

9



- Claes Noorden on the upper legend
- Catarina ten Wege on the flank

Zuidertoren: adaptation keyboard

10



Keyboard - detail

11

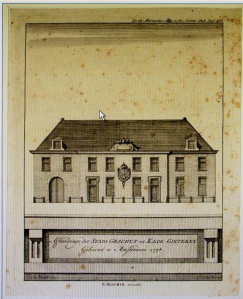


Partnership agreement - 1699
Personal aspects

12

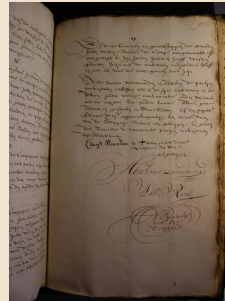
- Fremy boys to be educated in the bell-founders profession
- Same for the future Noorden son in law

Partnership agreement -1699
living accommodation



- authorization of
 - access to workshop
 - access to closets
- 2 sets of keys
- communal use of attic,
cellar, garden,
rainwater tank

Partnership agreement -1699



- Signature of Claes Noorden
 - Mark of Catarina ten Wege
- Comment: This business-woman is illiterate !!

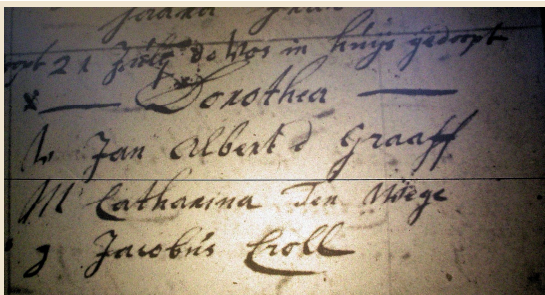
1699: enters Jan Albert de Grave

- July: Catarina ten Wege remarries
- The groom, Jan Albert de Grave, is a gun founder
- De Grave becomes co-owner
- Friction between De Grave and Noorden

1704 - Change of situation

- 22 April: Catarina De Grave - ten Wege dies
 - three children: 1700, 1701, 1703
 - she leaves one child only
 - the other two died at early childhood

De Grave - ten Wege: 3 children



Inventory of estate of Catarina

- Premises: housing and workshop
- Household: furniture, clothes etc.
 - Workshop: stock-in-trade

Inventory of the bellfoundry -1705

19

Tools, instruments and materials

- Raw metal for guns and bells
- Old copper and blocs of tin
- Moulds and patterns for bells
- Mortars and bells in stock

- Metal bars for tuning

Tuning of the bells

20

- 7 october 1700: The Amsterdam city treasurer pays Sybrand van Noord for tuning of 9 bells

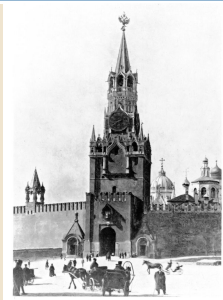
- Sybrand van Noord supervised in 1704 the casting and tuning of the bells for Moscow



Sybrand van Noord 1659-1705

Moscow 1704

21



44. The Spasskiy Gate from Red Square and the Tsarskiy Tower on the Kremlin wall (left). From Barten'ev, Moskovskiy Kromf., (p. 122), fig. 116.



45. The Tsarskiy Gate as it appeared before its destruction in 1860. The Tsarskiy Tower in the background. From Barten'ev, Moskovskiy Kromf., (p. 122), fig. 117.

Production of bells 1699 - 1716

22

Partners Claes Noorden and Jan Albert de Grave

- 37 swinging bells

- 7 carillons: Moscow 3x, Louvain, demo for Brussels, Sneek, Middelburg

De Grave - 2nd marriage - 1710

23

- 1710 Elizabeth de Jong

- 1711 Elizabeth dies
 - ▣ she leaves 1 child
 - ▣ I found no baptism nor a funeral of the child

1716 - Claes Noorden dies

24

- 83 years of age, twice married, twice widower

- Worked since 1662 in the profession = 54 years
 - ▣ with Hemony, Fremy and finally with De Grave

- Claes Noorden never became the owner of the foundry

- De Grave continues the business on his own

Production of bells 1716 -1729

Jan Albert de Grave

- 56 swinging bells
- 3 (4?) carillons: Hattem, Berlin, Potsdam
St Petersburg?

De Grave - 3rd marriage - 1722

- Margaretha Dralle
- Marriage settlement
- Three children: 1723, 1726, 1729

Final curtain for De Grave

- Renewal of the 6 year contract with the city council in 1728
- De Grave dies in 1729
- The widow continues the business
- De Grave's name still appears on bells until 1732 together with Nicolaas Muller [foreman?]

- The widow marries bell founder Pieter Oudeborn in 1732
- In 1734 the couple Oudeborn - Dralle does not continue the business
- The City Council lets the premises to Ciprianus Crans from Enkhuizen

Carillon Louvain - Swinging bells NL



Delft - De Grave 1719



- The survivor of a peal of three swinging bells