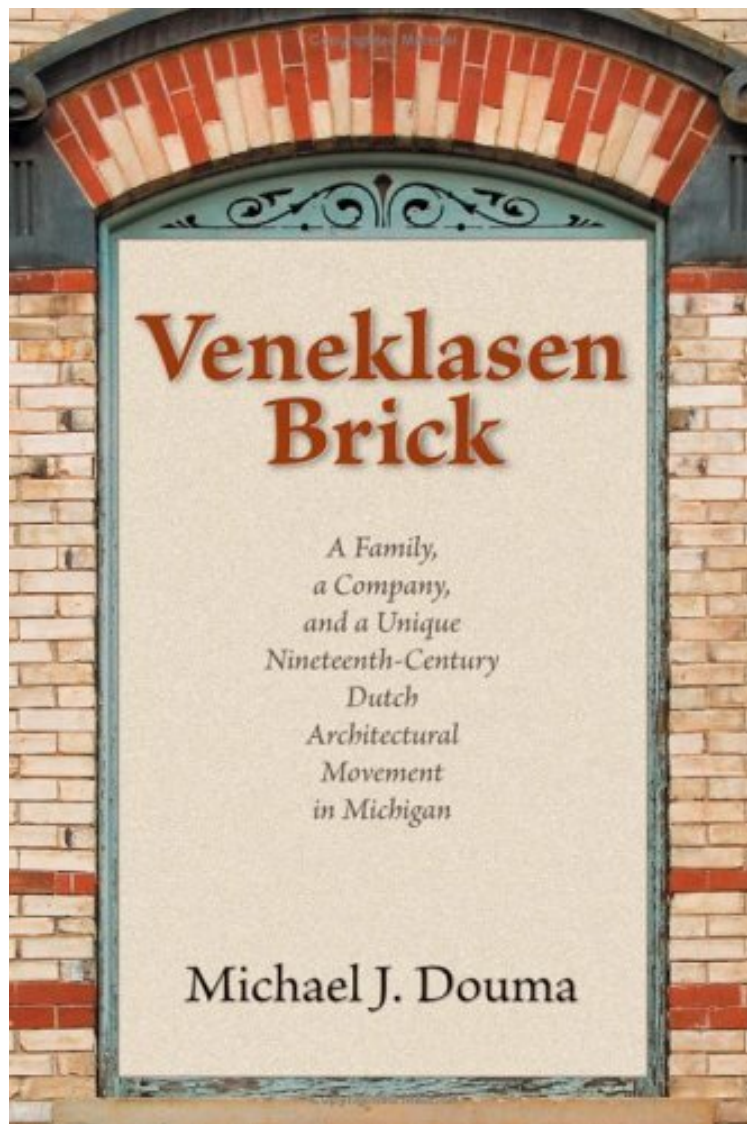


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Veneklasen Brick: A Family, a Company, and a Unique Nineteenth-Century Dutch Architectural Movement in Michigan

Michael J. Douma

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Michael J. Douma : Veneklasen Brick: A Family, a Company, and a Unique Nineteenth-Century Dutch Architectural Movement in Michigan before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Veneklasen Brick: A Family, a Company, and a Unique Nineteenth-Century Dutch Architectural Movement in Michigan:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Nicely Done! By Stephen Hamstra Excellent information for anyone

interested in West Michigan history! Especially for those of us fortunate enough to live in Zeeland, Michigan! 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. I love the way Douma takes his readers on a tour ...By Lydia Ingram This book fell into my lap, and though I can't say that I have any particular interest in brickwork, masonry, or 19th century Dutch-American architectural styles, I still found myself quite engrossed in the slim volume. I now have an almost irresistible urge to make pilgrimage to western Michigan so I can see some of the noted structures in person. In a simple, accessible style, "Veneklasen Brick" tells the story of a Dutch immigrant family, their brick business, and the legacy of unique structures they left behind. Douma has a knack for making one pause and not only notice but also appreciate almost-invisible things that tell almost-lost stories. In this case, it's the polychromatic (red and white) brickwork that makes Veneklasen buildings under-appreciated works of art. They are, sadly, endangered relics of days gone by. I love the way Douma takes his readers on a tour of the communities he so lovingly researched. This book is a quick read, but like the one-of-a-kind homes it documents, it is a treasure. My only "complaint" (and I use that term very loosely) is that I'd have really loved for there to have been more details included in photo captions--who people pictured were, or when photos were taken (only some were so-labeled)--and I also would've enjoyed seeing then-vs-now pictures of some of the buildings that were still standing at the time of Douma's research (like the octagon building which was said to have been dramatically remodeled). But that's just me... I'm one of those people who likes books with lots of pictures. Anyway... if you know of a person (or are such a person) who has an interest in architecture, artistic brickwork, historical preservation, western Michigan history, the contributions of Dutch immigrants, or any combination thereof, this book is most definitely worthwhile. 1 of 4 people found the following review helpful. More Like Architectural Movement in AWESOMENESS! By LA Comedian As a non-Dutch person who grew up in Michigan and now a world famous comedian living in Los Angeles, I think very little about architecture. In fact, I think very little about anything that doesn't involve me. But on a friend's recommendation, I picked up a copy of Veneklasen Brick. And what can I say? I loved it! Mr. Douma clearly knows his way around Michigan. Anyone who grew up there will love the references to Lake Macatawa or the humble beginnings of Holland (the city in Michigan, silly!) History buffs will cheer at the in depth analysis of the tumultuous lives of these settlers. And comedians, such as myself, will love the long funny Dutch words. A+ Mr. Douma. Sequel anytime soon? Cuz I know a guy...

In 1848, the second year of the new Dutch kolonie in West Michigan's Ottawa County, a much-needed brick manufacturing industry was begun in the rich clay fields between Groningen and Zeeland. From humble beginnings that included digging barefoot in the clay, the company created by Dutch immigrant Jan Hendrik Veneklasen and his son Berend flourished for more than seventy-five years and contributed to a unique architectural legacy. While Veneklasen Brick Co. (later Zeeland Brick Co.) remained in the family, success demanded that it expand beyond the Zeeland area. Strengthened by the purchase of clay pits elsewhere in West Michigan and benefiting from the arrival of railroad lines, Veneklasen eventually became one of the largest brick companies in the state. Veneklasen's bricks were used in commercial, industrial, and public settings, but their residential application has drawn the most attention. Mixing traditional Dutch patterns and constantly changing American housing styles, local brick masons left behind a prime example of nineteenth-century Dutch-American material culture. Drawing from untapped primary sources, Michael Douma's work traces the history of the Veneklasen family, the development of the Veneklasen company, and the impact of its products on local construction. The first-ever book-length analysis of West Michigan Dutch contributions to architecture, Veneklasen Brick also addresses issues of conservation and preservation. The volume contains numerous illustrations, graphs, maps, and a comprehensive listing of nineteenth-century brick houses in southern Ottawa and northern Allegan counties.

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assistant professor of history at James Madison University in Harrisonburg, VA.