

by Baedeker: "The depth of water in the *grachten* is about three or three and a half feet, below which is a layer of mud of equal thickness. To prevent malarial exhalations the water in them is constantly renewed by an arm of the North Sea Canal while the mud is removed by dredgers. The chief concentric canals within the city are the *Prinsengracht*, *Keizersgracht* and *Heerengracht* (forty-nine yards wide), flanked with avenues of elms. The finest buildings, including many in the peculiar Dutch-brick style of the seventeenth century, are on the *Keizersgracht* and *Heerengracht*. * * * *

"The houses are all constructed on foundations of piles, a fact which gave rise to the jest of Erasmus of Rotterdam, that he knew a city whose inhabitants dwelt on the tops of trees like rooks. The upper stratum of the natural soil is loam and loose sand, upon which no permanent building can be erected unless a solid substratum be first formed by driving piles (from fourteen to sixty feet in length) into the firmer sand beneath. The operations of the builder below the surface of the ground are frequently as costly as those above it." The Merchants' Exchange (*Koopmansbeurs*), on the north side of the square, known as the *Dam*, may be instanced as substantiating these assertions, for it rests on a foundation of three thousand four hundred and sixty-nine piles, requiring the expenditure of a large sum of money.

The most ancient church in Amsterdam is the Old Church (*Oude-Kerk*), standing in the northern part of the city between *Warmoesstraat* and the *Oude-zijds-Voorburgwal* (old side city rampart).

The Gothic edifice, erected about the year 1300, and later enlarged, is two hundred and ninety-four feet long and two hundred and thirteen wide. The steeple (in which there is a large chime of silvery-toned bells on which tunes are played by automatic machinery on the striking of the clock) is two hundred and forty feet high from the ground. The lofty arched wooden ceiling of the auditorium is supported by forty-two columns. A high window, on the right side of the main doorway, displays in colored glass the armorial insignia of all the burgomasters of the city holding office between the years 1578 and 1767. The rich emblazonments of the Adoration of the Magi, the Annunciation, the Visitation, and the Death of the Virgin, in the windows of the Our Lady's Choir (*Lieve Vrouwen-Choor*), and the Cross-bow Shooters' Choir (*W. boogschutters-Choor*) are exquisite in execution. The mortuary monuments and mural tablets in different parts of the spacious building set forth in Latin epitaphs the famous exploits of a number of eminent navigators and soldiers whose remains are there entombed.

The New Church (*Nieuwe-Kerk*), dating the laying of its first foundation in the year 1408 and the beginning of the erection of its original walls in the year 1414, stands between the *Dam* and the *Nieuwe-zijds-Voorburgwal* (the new