

# Tropisch Landbouwmuseum

## Abstract

The Tropisch Landbouwmuseum (Museum of Tropical Agriculture) in Deventer was affiliated with the Rijks Hogere Landbouwschool (National Higher Agricultural School) in the same city. The collection of the former museum, which closed in 1968, focused on agriculture-related objects in areas colonised by the Netherlands. After the museum's closure the collection was transferred to the Gerardus van der Leeuw Ethnographic Museum in Groningen.

## History of the museum

The early 20th century saw a growing call in the Netherlands for an agricultural school that focused specifically on teaching 'colonial agriculture', i.e. the cultivation of plants and crops in regions colonised by the Netherlands. Eventually the city of Deventer (province of Overijssel) was chosen as the location for this new Middelbare Koloniale Landbouw School (Secondary School for Colonial Agriculture). At the same time, the idea was conceived to hold a colonial agricultural exhibition in the summer before the opening of the agricultural school in order to build up a collection that could be used for educational purposes. A specially established committee wrote to the various governors of the Dutch colonies asking them to contribute to the exhibition, and private individuals also sent objects to the agricultural school. The objects displayed during this Colonial Agricultural Exhibition in July 1912 were specifically connected to agriculture and related activities. The collected objects were divided into 14 categories, which can be found in the book [\*The Deventer Collection\*](#).

Following the agricultural exhibition, the Vereniging 'Koloniaal Landbouwmuseum' (Association for the Colonial Agricultural Museum) was established in 1913 and began to raise funds for the construction of the desired museum. Building work began in 1914 and the Colonial Agricultural Museum opened its doors on Brinkgrevestraat on 27 May 1915. The West Indian section of the Colonial Museum in Haarlem (a predecessor of the [Wereldmuseum Amsterdam](#)) served as a source of inspiration for the museum hall of the Colonial Agricultural Museum. Larger objects were exhibited on the ground floor, such as a replica of one of the four central gates of Borobudur on Java. The ethnographic collection was displayed in the gallery surrounding the museum hall. The collection policy of the Colonial Agricultural Museum focused entirely on objects related to agriculture: objects were only included in the collection if they had a direct connection with agriculture or were indispensable for giving an impression of the environment in which the agricultural practices took place.

Shortly after the Second World War it was decided to change the museum's name to Indisch Landbouwmuseum; when Indonesia officially gained its independence in 1949 the decision was taken to rename it the Tropisch Landbouwmuseum (Museum of Tropical Agriculture). The museum's name thus underwent a similar evolution to that of the Wereldmuseum Amsterdam in the years following the war. The period was also characterised by various financial difficulties facing the museum. It was briefly considered whether the museum, like the [Volkenkundig Museum Justinus van Nassau](#), could become part of what was then the [Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde](#) in Leiden but no acquisition ever took place. When the museum's only two employees – the director and the concierge – decided to resign from their posts with effect from 1 January 1968 it meant the end for the Museum of Tropical

Agriculture.

In 1972 the municipality of Deventer decided to donate the collection of the former Museum of Tropical Agriculture to the [Volkenkundig Museum “Gerardus van der Leeuw”](#). The latter museum closed in 2003 but the Deventer collection is still managed by the University Museum of Groningen.

[image] \_The building of the Museum of Tropical Agriculture, around 1915. \_ ([Collectie Overijssel](#))

## Provenance research

Collectie Overijssel (the archive of the province of Overijssel, which also manages the Deventer city archive) contains relevant material relating to the Museum of Tropical Agriculture in various archive accesses. The Deventer municipal council archive (1950-1993) contains material on the [rededication of the collection](#), the [museum library](#), [minutes](#) and [annual reports](#). The archives of the association that managed the museum are also kept at Collectie Overijssel. This includes a catalogue of the 1912 Agricultural Exhibition (also available via the [Leiden University Library](#)) and material on the further development of the museum collection. Finally, there is the archive of the [archive of the Middelbare Koloniale Landbouwschool](#), which also contains relevant material about the Museum of Tropical Agriculture.

Specific information about the objects from the former Museum of Tropical Agriculture is part of the collection managed in Groningen. For more information about the former [Gerardus van der Leeuw Museum of Ethnology](#) please consult the relevant research aid.

## Related Aids

- [Museums and collections](#)
- [Scientific research in colonised territories](#)
- [Volkenkundig Museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw'](#)
- [Wageningen University & Research](#)

## Primary sources

Archive:

*NL-DvCO, 1441 Gemeentebestuur van Deventer III (1951-1993) Access 1.852.13  
'Musea', contains various relevant archive material about the former Museum of Tropical Agriculture.*

<https://proxy.archieven.nl/20/1F772453BFEC46B1803F2739D2D1484A>

Archive:

*NL-DvCO, 0985 Vereniging museum voor Tropische Landbouw Archive of the association that managed the former Museum of Tropical Agriculture. The archive includes various catalogues of the museum collection.*

<https://proxy.archieven.nl/20/CE2591A0210B49ABAD70CD97AC12058A>

Archive:

*NL-DvCO, 0504 Middelbare Koloniale Landbouwschool, later Rijks Hogere Landbouwschool te Deventer Archive of the former Middelbare Koloniale Landbouwschool in Deventer. The collection of the Museum of Tropical Agriculture was used to support teaching at the Koloniale Landbouwschool.*

<https://proxy.archieven.nl/20/85648BDC0AD441BF93308E8D802BFEAA>

## Secondary sources

Book:

*Arnoldus, G. De collectie Deventer. Volkenkundig Museum ‘Gerardus van der Leeuw’, Universiteit van Groningen, 2003. Book and catalogue from 2003 (in Dutch) providing extensive background information about the former Museum of Tropical Agriculture in Deventer. It also offers an overview of the museum's collection, which was donated to the Volkenkundig Museum “Gerardus van der Leeuw” in 1972.*

<https://www.rug.nl/society-business/university-museum/collections/ethnological/pdf/tdcatalogus.pdf>, ISBN 9789080083295, WorldCat 66725336

Book:

*Zeijlstra, H. H. Het Koloniaal Landbouw-museum te Deventer. De Bussy, 1915. Booklet (in Dutch) that is a retyped version of an article in the magazine Eigen Haard. The article describes the origins of the Museum of Tropical Agriculture and provides an overview of the collection and what was on display in the museum.*

<https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=MMKB02:100003305>

Catalogue:

*Catalogus der koloniale landbouwtentoonstelling, Deventer 1912 Catalogue of the colonial agricultural exhibition held in 1912, whose collection served as the basis for the later Museum of Tropical Agriculture.*

<http://hdl.handle.net/1887.1/item:3761833>

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## Relevant Data

TO BE FILLED

*first edited by Wiebe Reints as original\_author on 2025-11-19  
last edited by Wiebe Reints as original author on 2026-01-06*