

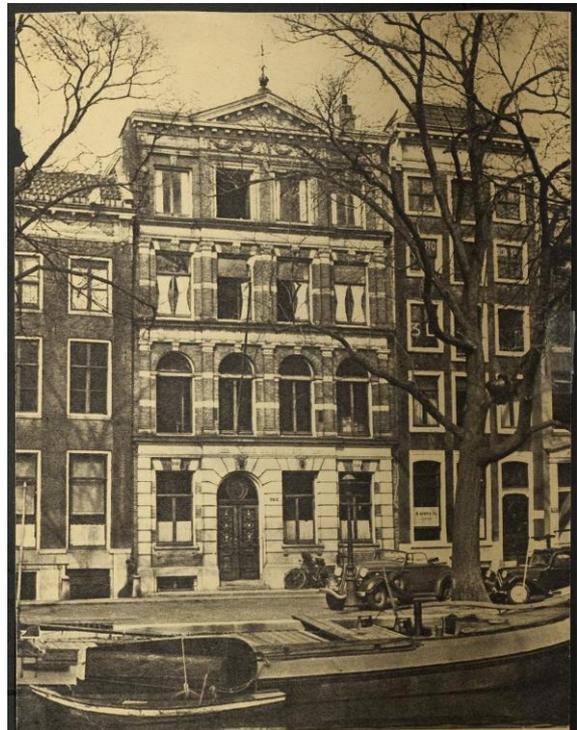
VU Amsterdam objects and their stories

140 years of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam

1885-1890 Main building, Keizersgracht 162 Amsterdam

For a long time, university life revolved around the building at [Keizersgracht 162](#) and the surrounding premises. Before the relocation to the campus at De Boelelaan in 1966, the premises were used for classes, administration, the University Library, the Faculty of Arts (now the Faculty of Humanities), the Faculty of Theology (now the Faculty of Religion and Theology) and the Faculty of Law.

The Board of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, the '[Vereeniging voor Hooger Onderwijs op Gereformeerden Grondslag](#)' [Association for Higher Education on Reformed Principles], started this process in December 1883 by buying the [1615 building](#) for 41,000 guilders. After a thorough renovation, the building housed its initial classes on 1 February 1884. A new façade was erected, which henceforth displayed the text 'Vrije Universiteit' and 'Anno 1884'. Further confirmation of its use as a university building was provided by a wooden emblem with the VU Amsterdam seal, the '[Virgin in the Garden](#)', placed over the entrance. The topmost floor lodged students in the old [Hospitium](#). Plenty of space was available back then, as there were only a few students at VU Amsterdam during its early days (5 in 1880 and 125 around 1900). However, as the university saw strong growth at the start of the 20th century, the previously acquired premises at [No 164](#) were integrated with No 162 in 1923. Internal renovation resulted in a shared attic, among other things. The next purchase was [No 166](#) in 1930. At the time, VU Amsterdam was home to around 500 students (in comparison with 2,200 students at the municipal university, which would become the University of Amsterdam). The historical buildings became increasingly cramped, while the student numbers were nearly too much for the narrow staircases. An impression of the building interior can be gleaned from a [1935 VU Amsterdam film](#) (starting 34:10).



Photograph of Keizersgracht 162, around 1940
Photocollection Protestant Heritage | HDC, Vrije
Universiteit Amsterdam

Founded in 1930, the Faculty of Sciences had a new laboratory built at [De Laiessestraat](#). Further premises across the city were acquired for other new programmes, including at [Koningslaan](#) and [Prins Hendriklaan](#). At the same time, the main building continued to be expanded: the premises at [No 160](#) were commissioned in 1954 to increase the size of the library. No 166 underwent a thorough renovation and gained two additional floors in this year as well. Internal corridors connected all of the premises. VU Amsterdam also commissioned the neighbouring premises at [Nos 158](#) and [168](#) from 1962. The university devised a plan to move an increasing number of departments to its new [campus](#) in Buitenveldert from the 1950s as well. It sold its Keizersgracht premises in 1966. The [range of Hospitiums](#) that served as student accommodation migrated to the [Uilenstede](#)

student centre in Amstelveen. It was only in the 1990s that all faculties and departments of Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam would gather south of the ring road.

The VU Amsterdam University Library curates heritage that recalls the old university premises, some of which has found a new fixed location on campus. Most conspicuous is the emblem with the university seal, which was incorporated into the lectern at the stage in the Aula following the relocation.