

1-1-2010

The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 19.04: Winter 2010

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Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Bruischat Drost, Julia Irene; Reynolds, Geoffrey D.; and Kliphuis, Fritz L., "The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 19.04: Winter 2010" (2010). *The Joint Archives Quarterly*. Paper 69.

<http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/jaquarterly/69>

Published in: *Joint Archives Quarterly*, Volume 19, Issue 4, Winter January 1, 2010. Copyright © 2010 Hope College, Holland, Michigan.

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The Joint Archives *Quarterly*

Volume 19 Number 4

Winter 2010

A Hodgepodge of Memories: Recollections of Hope College High School

By Julia Irene Bruischat Drost
Hope College High School Class of 1932

On a quiet afternoon, picture yourself rummaging through a box of some old things left to you by a family member for safekeeping. Opening it up, you happen to find an old class ring bearing the well-worn initials H.C.H.S. If you are from Holland, you readily assume that those initials stand for Holland Christian High School. But wait a minute, that treasure you've just found may very well be a relic from a "bygone era," Hope College High School.

Disbelievably you ask, Hope College High School? You've never heard of it? Well, now you will have. Who better to tell you about Hope College High School than someone who was enrolled as a student and graduated from there in 1932? I still harbor fond memories of that school, its curriculum, the instructors, the friendships made, the fun we had. I enjoy reminiscing about it every chance I get.

If you are now, or have ever been, a resident of this West Michigan community, you must know that Hope College has always played an important role in the past and present of this, our fair city. Its citizenry are very proud of this fine institution of learning. Her graduates are scattered far and wide, both here in the United States and numerous countries around the world. To many folks, Hope College *is* Holland, Michigan.

While this story is not about Hope College, I have to review for you a little of its history and some of its historical facts. The first educational institution of the early settlers who came to this region under the leadership Albertus C. Van Raalte was called the Pioneer School. It was established in 1851. Six years later, in 1857 to be exact, it evolved into the Holland Academy. Within the next decade, the colony's educational needs progressed so rapidly, that by the year 1866, a liberal arts college was incorporated. The Academy was then split into three departments: the college, the theological (which later became Western Theological Seminary) and the preparatory or grammar department. For fifty-nine years, this is the way things remained.



The old adage that "time changes everything" proved to be true again in 1925. Due to a new ruling of accreditation, changes were going to be necessary. The college was warned by the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (NCA) that it must become entirely separate from the academy or lose its accreditation. The preparatory grammar department had to become a fully accredited high school, one that could meet all of the standards required at that time. It was going to be tuition-free and given the name of Hope College High School.

(continued on page 2)

From the Director



In this issue of the *Quarterly*, Hope College High School class of 1932 graduate, Julia Bruischat Drost, shares her fond memories of the Holland area high school that many have forgotten: Hope College High School.

Also included in this issue, local historian and Hope College graduate Fritz Kliphuis shares his research with a story and map of the forgotten railroad junction of Cronje, once located on Holland's north side.

Geoffrey D. Reynolds

Hope College High School (continued from page 1)

There are many today, Hope graduates among them, who are not aware that a high school existed right on the campus for thirteen years, from 1925-1938. My granddaughter, who graduated from Hope in 1981, had never heard of the high school until she heard of it from me. In fact, she found it so interesting that she wanted to help me with the research for this paper. She acquired many of the historical facts from the Joint Archives of Holland.

In the spring of 1928, after having completed the eighth grade at Maplewood Elementary School, this fourteen-year-old farm girl had no plans whatsoever of attending high school on the Hope College campus. In fact, it was the farthest thing from my mind until one day in mid-summer, a classmate, Lucille Schaap (you Trinity Church girls will remember her as Mrs. Mike Dobbin), walked over to discuss with me an idea that she was fired up about. Come September, she wanted to enroll in the freshman class at Hope College High School. She was reluctant to start alone and wondered if I, by chance, would consider enrolling, too. Her argument was that it would be a lot nicer doing this with the two of us. I was listening and it sounded okay. I promised I would think about it, but it would have to be my parents' decision, not mine. We agreed then and there, if we found we didn't like it, we would quit and go public.

In the late 1920s, the United States was already in the throes of the Great Depression. A tuition-free high school, or anything free for that matter, was a topic certainly worth your time to listen to. *Tuition-free*

became an important factor in the decision we were about to make. To make a long story short, I got the permission I needed.

Lucille and I enrolled as high school freshmen in September of 1928. Our enthusiasm was riding high. It did not prove to be the high point that both she and I had anticipated, however. We were soon to find out that fourteen-year-old freshmen, like ourselves, were in the minority. The majority of the new students were much older than we were. Due to the Great Depression, many jobless were returning to school to finally get their diploma. We even had a widowed mother with two children returning to finish where she had left off several years earlier.

Nonetheless, it proved to be an interesting class. In elementary school, we were used to having all our classmates from the same neighborhood or a community close by. That was not the case at Hope High. Students came from Zeeland, Grand Haven, Grand Rapids, Kalamazoo, Detroit and lots of tiny little burghs in between. The states of Kentucky, Iowa and New York were also represented. I must not forget to mention a young man and a young lady from Japan—not teenagers—who were also enrolled.

Surprisingly, though, there were just enough of us teenagers to get to know each other well, and we did become a close-knit group. Approximately thirty students enrolled as freshmen that first morning in September, but when we graduated four years later, the class was considerably smaller. Even Lucille Schaap's name was missing. Years after graduation, many of us still kept up a friendly correspondence, sharing all the news about our homes, our hubbies and our kids.



Hope College High School building, ca. 1925

The high school building, as I fondly remember it, was a two-story stucco building facing Columbia Avenue between Eleventh and Twelfth Streets on the Hope

College campus. It was originally a brick structure used as a printing plant for the *De Hope* newspaper, a Dutch religious publication. It also had served as a dormitory and fraternity house. When it was decided that this building was to become the new high school, it was enlarged and revamped, and given a stucco facing. It had eight large classrooms and a large auditorium in what we thought of as the basement. It stood on a little hill, with Van Vleck Hall and Carnegie Gym a short distance to the west.

All through the Great Depression, the high school struggled to remain solvent, but by 1938, it became a financial drain on the college and it was forced to close. The building did remain standing for many years, but finally the cost of its preservation outweighed its historical value. It was demolished in 1981, and the space made way for the new Maas Center.



Dimnent Chapel under construction, ca. 1928

Hope Memorial Chapel (now known as Dimnent Chapel) was already under construction in September of 1928 and, just think, we high schoolers were right there from the start to watch daily the awesome structure become a reality. It dwarfed all the other buildings on campus in size and beauty. The dedication in June 1929 was an event we all looked forward to with great anticipation. At this time, the high school had reached its peak enrollment, with a student body of 103, distributed among all four grades.

Our school day began at 8:00 a.m. with exercises in the chapel. Chapel attendance was mandatory for the high schoolers (it may not have been enforced for the college students). We were assigned seats in the north section, next to the organ. A different student was selected each week and given the task of checking the roll call. Professor W. Curtis Snow was organist and Dr. John B. Nykerk was the leader. He introduced the speaker and special music when, and if, that was on the

day's program. Dr. Nykerk founded both the Hope music department and the Glee Club. He was a lover of classical music, and I can recall him making some humorous remarks about Kate Smith and her title song, "When the Moon Comes Over the Mountain." Kate Smith enjoyed great popularity in those days, and I don't believe he liked her brand of music at all.

Until the changes made necessary by the North Central Association, the college and the preparatory grammar department both had the same faculty and governing council. The only difference to occur was that on certain days, Hope College students, who were preparing to become teachers, taught high school classes as a part of their teaching assignment.

The faculty of the high school at that time consisted of Professor Garrett Vander Borgh, who taught mathematics, algebra, geometry and physics. He was also our principal. I remember him as a tall, kind, understanding gentleman. Professor Edward Wolters taught Latin. I enjoyed his class immensely. We hear today that Latin is a dead language, but under his teaching, it surely did come alive.

Dr. Clarence De Graaf was my all-time favorite instructor. He coached the debating team and directed the school play, presented yearly by members of the Meliphone and Minerva societies. He taught both American and English literature and creative writing. I remember distinctly one incident that happened in his creative writing class. Previously, I mentioned that we had two Japanese students enrolled—a young man, Tsuda Umikechi/Umekechi, and a young lady—no longer



Dr. Clarence De Graaf, ca. 1928

teenagers. I especially remember the young lady—her name was Setsu Matsunobu. She was always sweet and well-mannered, and very, very smart. Her English was next to perfect. On occasion, each class member was asked to read an excerpt from their paper to the class—this day was Setsu's turn. She read, "I was walking home from school holding my books." Here Dr. De Graaf made a correction, "We would not say *holding* my books, rather we should say *carrying* my books." Quietly she replied, "But, wasn't I *holding* them?" "Yes, but holding denotes a stationary position, while carrying involves action": two simple words that

really made a big difference. The difference was explained to her, but was she satisfied?

Adelaide Dykhuizen taught economics. She was a niece of President Edward Dimment. In the archives, we found the confirmation of her teaching appointment for the big salary of \$1,550 for the entire year. Mildred De Pree, a recent Hope graduate at that time, was our German instructor.

We also had the privilege of studying the Bible one day a week with the Reverend Harry Hager. Rev. Hager was a famous Reformed Church in America minister. In Chicago, he became very well known for his radio outreach programs; especially popular was his “America for God” program.

We had a physical education class a couple of days a week with Jack Schouten in Carnegie Gymnasium.



Minerva Society, 1930

The fellows and the girls each had their own society: Minerva for girls and Meliphone for the boys. Each society met once a month in an upstairs classroom. The dues were 25 cents a month. The sessions were always opened with devotions and closed with the benediction, with every member having to take a turn to conduct them.

Once a year, the two societies presented a play under the direction of Dr. De Graaf. I guess it’s only natural that the two plays I remember best are the ones I had a part in: “The Boomer” in my junior year and “My Irish Cinderella” when I was a senior. About “My Irish Cinderella,” the reporter for the newspaper summed it up this way: “Overlooking a few defects, we can truthfully say that the production was excellent and that the cast, together with their director, Dr. Clarence De Graaf, deserve much praise.” It goes without saying

that rehearsals were times of pleasant camaraderie and lots of fun.

Speaking of fun, we had our share of that, too! The Dykhuizens hosted an all-school party for the high schoolers at their gorgeous home every summer. Their home was on Black Lake, a perfect spot for swimming, row boating, tennis, softball, croquet, and even just soaking up the sun. It was always topped off with a delicious dinner at dusk. Adelaide and Geraldine Dykhuizen, twin sisters, were gracious hostesses. Dr. Edward Dimment was usually present, too.

We kids took a lively interest in things happening in and around campus. We trekked out to Black River in the fall to add whatever support we could to the Frosh and Sophs in their annual tug-of-war. More times than not, it was so cold and rainy. The fellows all looked so miserably tired and beaten. You had to feel sorry for them—we wished they would just call it a draw—but they were determined, though, and kept right on tugging.

Monday, June 13, 1932, was graduation day with exercises in Winants Chapel. William Everett Welmers was class valedictorian. He was a son of the Reverend Thomas E. Welmers, professor of Greek at Hope College. Dr. Winfield Burggraaff delivered the commencement address to us graduates. Our diplomas were blue, tied with an orange ribbon—Hope College colors.

Thus, June 13, 1932, marked the end of four wonderful years. In case you are one who had never heard of Hope College High School, I sincerely hope that I’ve presented you with an interesting picture of it. It truly was a unique experience. Where else could one have had such a true college experience without going to college?



*Current photo of
Julia Bruischat Drost*

CRONJE JUNCTION

By Fritz L. Kliphuis

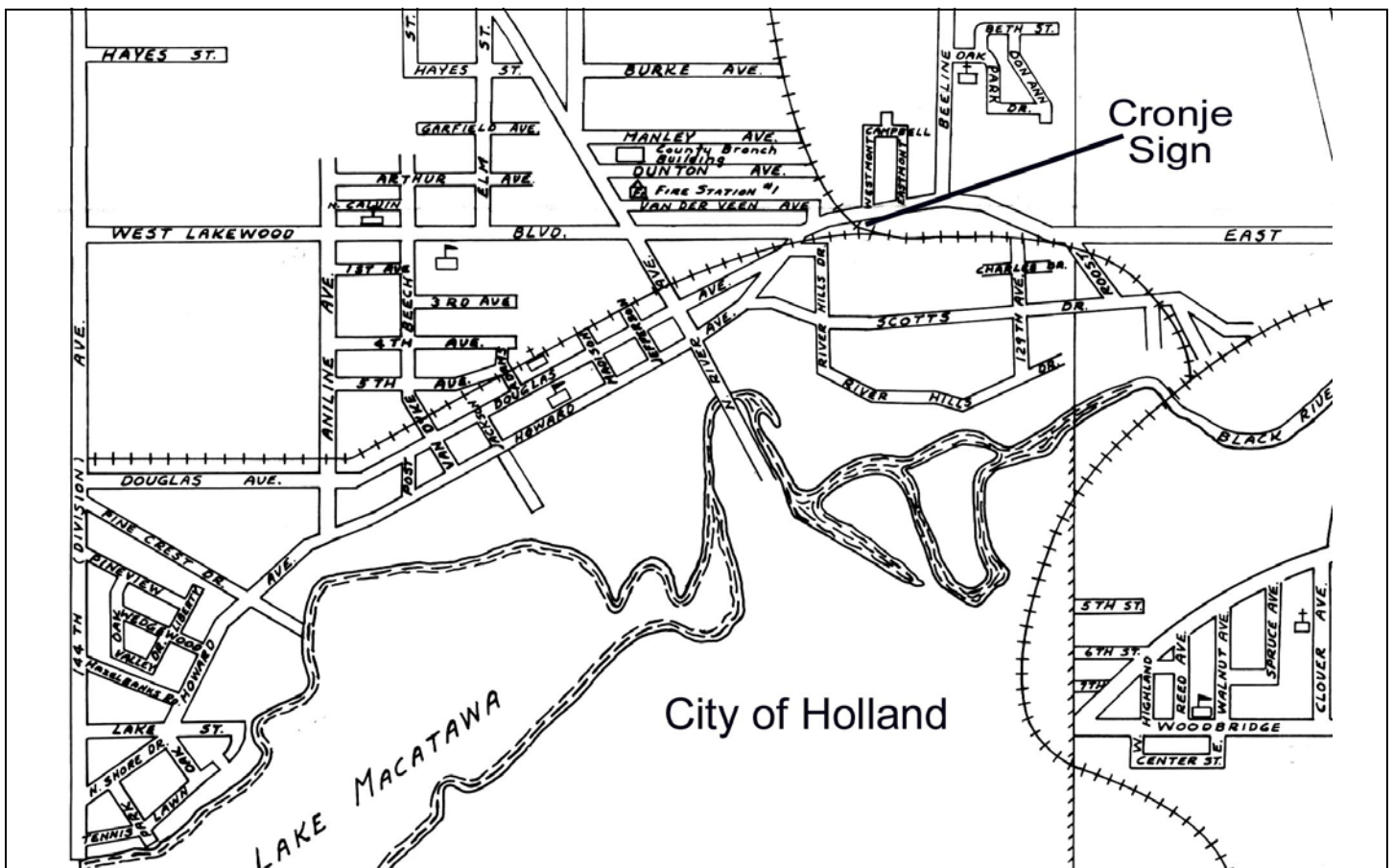


A railroad junction, also called Resort Junction or Macatawa Junction, was located in Section 20 of Holland Township. It appears on a 1908 map of Black Lake on the west side of the tracks. This junction was located near

where the Pere Marquette Railroad tracks cross over Lakewood Boulevard and the main line starts to go north toward Grand Haven.

Here, there once was a railroad sign (shown in this 1974 photo) facing east and west on the south side of Lakewood Boulevard (on the east side of the tracks) with the name "Cronje" on it. The tracks shown in the photo were located just west of the Macatawa Bank branch at 20 W. Lakewood Boulevard (the telephone pole on the left side in the photo above would be located just west of the bank building today). On the west side of the tracks now stands a WESCO gas station (at 14 W. Lakewood Boulevard). In back, behind the last telephone pole in this photo, now stands the "Soccer Stop & More" complex. The sign was taken down many years ago.

This junction north of Holland was named after the famous General Piet Arnoldus Cronje, who was considered a hero to the Dutch of the Boer War of South Africa in 1899. He surrendered to the British at Paardeburg on Feb. 27, 1900. He died on Feb. 4, 1911 (age about 75).



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Hope College High School students, 1929