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Hope College

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The Joint Archives *Quarterly*

Volume 8 Number 2

Late Summer 1997

Trade and Tragedy

As the fall season approaches, so do thoughts of an angry Lake Michigan and its shipwreck victims and survivors. The Holland area has had its share over the years, and three of the more famous incidents include the *Chicora*, *Alpena*, and *Argo*.

Built in 1892 as a 500 passenger, 600 ton freight steamer, *Chicora*, with her 40 x 217-foot stout iron hull, had been labeled as "unsinkable," much like the H.M.S. *Titanic* two decades later. Unfortunately, both met the same unbelievable and tragic end.



Chicora, c. 1895

Forced to leave her winter berth in order to transport an overstock of flour from Milwaukee to St. Joseph, Michigan, the *Chicora* crew and captain Edward C. Stines made ready for the winter journey. After she arrived in Milwaukee on January 20, 1895, Captain Stines ordered the 15,000 barrels of flour loaded and scheduled the *Chicora* to leave at 5:00 a.m. the next day. Unknown to Stines, one of the shipping company owners was watching his barometer and telegraphed a frantic message to stay put as a storm was approaching.

Running to the end of the pier, the telegraph operator waved the urgent message to the crew but she was already two lengths away from the pier. He was probably the last man to see the *Chicora* afloat.

Steaming towards the eastern shore, the *Chicora* met with mounting seas and blowing snow. Most likely trying to outrun the storm with winds of sixty m.p.h. and bitter cold temperatures, the *Chicora* vanished later that night. While many claim to have heard or saw her in distress near South Haven, a definitive wreck site never was established.

Soon after the tragedy, debris and flour barrels began appearing along the shore from Holland to Saugatuck, but none of the twenty-four men aboard ever were recovered.

(Continued on page 4)

Collections Now Accessible on World Wide Web

The Joint Archives of Holland recently merged onto the electronic superhighway in order to better serve its researchers. Electronic researchers will now be able to visit and search the collections of the Archives via the Internet through its new World Wide Web (www) site, located at <http://www.hope.edu/resources/arc/>. Once there, researchers may learn about our days and hours of operation and view our reading room, search the collections, view photographs of our staff members and/or contact them with questions, or read past issues of the *Quarterly*.

(Continued on page 3)

From the Director

The Joint Archives reached a new level of access over the past few months as we ventured out on the World Wide Web and established a Joint Archives of Holland "home page" as part of the Hope College website. The Archives is committed to providing the best possible access to the collection materials which we manage and this new patron tool provides the most user friendly interface we have ever had.

Our web page now includes keyword searchability of our entire collection abstract system; topical, biographical, and pamphlet collections; the *Anchor* index; and our complete photographic collection finding aids. Now, anyone interested in the Joint Archives collections can do an initial search of our various finding aids to see if we might hold information useful in your research. An interface allowing for direct e-mail to Joint Archives staff is also included (see article elsewhere in the *Quarterly*).

This summer we had the unique opportunity to host the Sesquicentennial conference which focused on 19th century Dutch immigration to the United States which signified the beginning of the Holland, Zeeland, and other area communities. The meeting was a great success. Shortly we will be hosting the 123rd State History Conference of the Historical Society of Michigan, the state's oldest cultural institution. The meeting, entitled "Civil War, Shipwrecks, and Dutchmen: A Historical Variety Show," will feature excellent speakers, a storyteller, multi-media presentations, applied history workshops, and a great maritime tour.

The Holland Area Historical Society is combining its kick-off event for the season with the opening of the State History Conference. Dr. Jeanne Jacobson will be presenting "Van Raalte and His Settlers" in the new Haworth Center Ballroom.

We hope that you can come visit us in person during the Historical Society of Michigan's conference on September 19-21, or stop by in cyberspace at www.hope.edu/resources/arc!

Larry J. Wagenaar



Joint Archives of Holland Web Page

Dutch Ethnicity Conference a Success!

Over 150 people converged on Hope College this summer to explore the rich heritage of Dutch immigrants in the Holland/Zeeland area and throughout the Midwest. On June 12 and 13, the Joint Archives hosted the 11th Biennial Conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS).

Four scholars from the Netherlands joined others from across the United States to discuss everything from the conflict between Holland's Van Raalte and Pella Iowa's Scholte, to the fascinating story of Dutch soldiers in the Civil War.

Conference participants were treated to a special tale by renowned storyteller Dr. James Schaap who read his original story, "First Bride," to a full auditorium.

"This conference served as a major contribution to the Sesquicentennial celebration," commented AADAS president Larry Wagenaar. "Our goal this year was to bring together the scholarly study of the Dutch immigration to America with the year-long Sesquicentennial celebration."

Printed proceedings of the conference will be available in late fall for \$10 plus \$4 postage and handling.

Civil War, Shipwrecks and Dutchmen!

Come join us September 19-21 for a Historical Variety Show! The Joint Archives will be hosting the Historical Society of Michigan's Annual History Conference.

Featured speakers include Jeanne Jacobson speaking on the life of Van Raalte, storyteller Larry Massie relating the tale of Native Americans, Robert Swierenga on the history of Holland, John Gibney in period uniform relating the role of Michigan soldiers in the Civil War, and Ken Pott and Kristin Szylvian telling us about shipwrecks in Lake Michigan and the new Underwater Preserve.



D.B.K. Van Raalte, c.1862

Concurrent workshops in applied history will be featured on Saturday afternoon. These will include sessions on care of historic photographs, skills needed for doing Oral History, and exposure to the techniques of first and third person Living History.

A tour of the Holland Museum is planned in the afternoon, and attendees will have an opportunity to tour historic Holland homes.

A special reception is planned for Windmill Island, as well as a Sunday tour of the Michigan Maritime Museum followed by a boat tour on the *Star of Saugatuck*.

Registration is \$65 and includes meals, workshop, and receptions. The Maritime Tour is an additional \$18. For more information call the Joint Archives at (616) 395-7798 or the Historical Society of Michigan at (313) 769-1828.

Photo: Western Seminary Collection-Joint Archives

World Wide Web (continued from 1)

To search the collections, researchers simply have to type a word or name for which they are seeking information and select what type of source they would like to search. For instance, you may search for a photograph, a family history, or information from one of our larger record collections. If we have what you are looking for, you may come in and visit us personally or contact us via regular mail, e-mail, fax, or by phone. Don't worry about the searching sequences, we have placed instructions on the page for your convenience.

With this technology, the Archives will enable its wide range of researchers to quickly search for a resource and contact us with further needs.

Oral History Project Passes 125 Interviews

The Sesquicentennial Oral History Project, *150 Stories for 150 Years*, passed an important milestone at the end of August. Over 125 of the 150 interviews planned for the Sesquicentennial project are now complete.

This summer the project was spearheaded by 1997 Hope graduate Ann Paeth, building on the work of volunteer coordinator Marie Zingle and last year's student coordinator Tracy Bednarick. Paeth followed up on letters to nominees, conducted interviews, supervised and participated in transcription efforts, and handled final editing.

We went into the summer with just over 70 interviews. "Ann's work this summer was remarkable," according to project director Larry Wagenaar. "What is even more amazing to us is the fact that Ann and the staff were able to transcribe over 95 of the 125 interviews. Transcription is much more time consuming than the actual interview and is the most important part of the process as it makes the sessions accessible for research."

Once complete, *150 Stories for 150 Years* will represent one of the most valuable compilations of historical recollections ever collected for the Holland area.

Trade and Tragedy (continued from page 1)

Another famous shipwreck of the Holland area occurred in October of 1880 with the loss of the sidewheel steamer *Alpena* and all of her passengers.



Alpena, c. 1880

Built in 1856, the 645-ton/175-foot sidewheeler of the Goodrich Transportation Company left Grand Haven laden with two car loads of apples and the ill fated passengers. Her destination was Chicago, 108 miles across Lake Michigan, with the barometer falling steadily. Under the experienced hand of Captain Nelson Napier, she raced to beat the storm during the afternoon and early evening of October 15. As night fell on the brightly lighted ship, many passing vessels reported her position and the increasingly larger seas approaching from the southwest. With cyclone-like winds and freezing temperatures that would eventually disable some ninety other vessels, the *Alpena* disappeared sometime during the early morning of October 16th, never to be seen intact again.

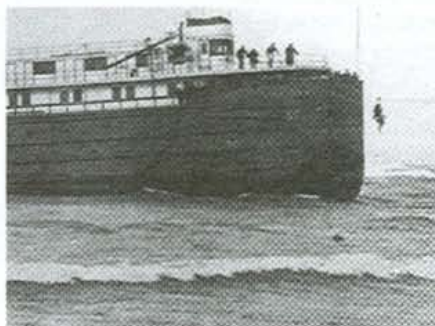
Little evidence of the *Alpena's* demise appeared until three days following the disaster. On the beach north of Holland (which soon after was named for the vessel), the first bodies and flotsam of the calamity arrived ashore. Eventually, seventy miles of west Michigan coastline served as a witness to the storm's rage, with Alpena Beach its mid-point.

Townspople along the long stretch of beach began recovering victims, wood debris, and a grand piano sitting upright in the sand. Some local inhabitants collected cargo and valuables only recently separated from their

owners. The only message left to investigators and loved ones was attached to a piece of interior molding and allegedly written by passenger Frank Connel or Connor. It read, "This is awful. The steamer is breaking up and I am on board from Grand Haven to Chicago." Frank's last name is unclear as the only list of passengers known to exist had gone down with the clerk.

A third vessel, the *Argo*, while not ending in tragedy, did hold the attention of Holland area residents for two months during 1905-06.

Built of steel in 1901 at 1089 gross tons, the Graham and Morton Line steamer was carrying freight and passengers from Chicago to Holland in November of 1905. Eager to make the harbor entrance, Captain Stewart failed to notice the newly formed sandbar just north of the piers. While attempting to dislodge the 173 foot *Argo*, Stewart lost steerage and the vessel ran hard aground into the sandy bottom. Passengers would have to find alternative methods of disembarking the ship.



Argo passengers rescued by breeches buoy, 1905

After watching the vessel struggle with the sandbar for some time, surfman William Woldering summoned his life saving crew to transport the passengers and crew to the beach by surfboat. After failed attempts to safely reach the *Argo* in this fashion, an aerial rescue device known as the breeches buoy, was set up. Utilizing a small cannon, the rescuers were able to launch the weighted end a long line to the vessel. After crew members secured their end to the ship, rescuers then pulled the harness-like seat to the deck of the *Argo*. The passengers were then loaded and transported one-by-one to the shore with the help of the *Argo's* crew.

(Continued on page 5)



Holland Museum Collection-Joint Archives

Argo in ice, 1905

Trade and Tragedy (continued from page 4)

While some were accidentally dipped into the icy waters during the operation, all were transported safely to the beach. But the rescue of the ship did not proceed as smoothly.

Two months later, with the help of two tugs and a newly dug channel through the sandy bottom, the *Argo* was released to the cheers of local inhabitants and relief of her owners. Her steel hull had survived winter winds, waves, and ice to sail again. Eventually she was sold and became the *Racine* in 1910 and sailed on the Great Lakes until 1917. After a short time in New York she was sold again, becoming the *René of Brest* under the French flag.

While the *Argo* survived her ordeal, the *Chicora* and the *Alpena* are joined with approximate one hundred other 19th and 20th century wrecks near Holland. Documented sites available for diving in the proposed Southwest Lake Michigan Underwater Preserve include the 106-foot *Rockaway*, the schooners *Havana* and *City of Green Bay*, and the 231-foot *Ironsides*.

Information on these and other Preserve attractions will be presented in a session by local maritime historians, Ken Pott and Kristen Szylyvian, at the 1997 Annual Meeting of the Historical Society of Michigan at Hope College on Saturday, September 20.

by Geoffrey D. Reynolds

New Microfilm Reader/Printer

In June, the Joint Archives took delivery of a reconditioned Minolta microfilm reader/printer for use in the Archives reading room. "This new machine has much greater capability than our 3M reader/printer, which was manufactured nearly ten years ago," commented Collections Archivist Geoffrey Reynolds. The new Minolta gives the researcher the ability to view an entire newspaper page and very nearly print the entire page on paper.

The new machine also has the ability to view microfiche and 16mm formats as well as the traditional 35mm microfilm which makes up the bulk of the archives collections.

The Joint Archives has a full run of the *Holland City News* on microfilm, as well as significant periods of the *Holland Sentinel*, *De Grondwet*, *De Hollander*, and *De Hope* newspapers in the Holland Museum and Hope College collections. The archives also houses an important collection of Sanborn Fire Insurance maps which document many structures in the community.

The existing 3M reader/printer will continue to be available in the Archives along with the new Minolta machine. Microfilm reader/printer copies are 15 cents each.

From the Collections Archivist

In my ninth month at the Joint Archives of Holland, I'm happy to report that we have made steady progress in our efforts to bring you new collections for your research needs. Here is a sampling of the new collections that are now open:

Michigan Intercollegiate Athletic Association (MIAA) Records (H91-1110) 12.00 linear feet

A large addition to the records of the MIAA is now available to researchers. The Joint Archives serves as host to the official MIAA Archives. This collection documents the activities of the oldest existing college athletic conference in the United States. The



collection dates from 1913-present and includes correspondence, minutes, constitutions and by-laws, reports, manuals, statistics, press kits, programs, photographs, and video cassettes. Also included is the MIAA publication *Fact Finders*. Major topics include administration, sports competition, the centennial anniversary, women's sports, and the National Collegiate Athletic Association (NCAA).

Cornelius Van Oostenbrugge Letters (H96-1274) 0.25 linear feet

With the diligent assistance of Neal and Mary Wagenaar, forty-three letters from Cornelius Van Oostenbrugge (Hope College, Class of 1876) to his family and friends in the Netherlands and throughout America have been translated and are ready for

researchers to use and enjoy. Ranging in dates from 1867 to 1889, these letters relate the experiences of a young Hope College student during the last part of the nineteenth century.

Willard C. Wichers Papers (T89-1089) 120.00 linear feet

As of July 1, an additional fifty linear feet of the Willard C. Wichers papers have been processed and are available to the public for research. The Willard C. Wichers collection provides detailed records of the many activities that Mr. Wichers was involved in from 1937-1993. His activities almost always affected the Holland community in some manner. The Centennial Projects series is particularly strong in its documentation of diplomatic relations between the Netherlands and the United States. Correspondence with the Netherlands embassy in Chicago shows how they kept in contact with the progress of Dutch students who came to Hope College to study after the end of World War II. The correspondence series also sheds light on the propaganda issued by the Netherlands and the strong fear of communism during the crisis in Indonesia after the war. This series is separated by year and then arranged alphabetically by topic. Some pamphlets are included as well as photographs taken at official functions.

Samuel Marinus Zwemer Papers (W88-0128) 1.50 linear feet

In July, the papers of Samuel Marinus Zwemer were made available to the public. Zwemer was a minister of the RCA, missionary to Arabia, India, and Egypt, and professor of missions at Princeton Theological Seminary. His collection ranges from 1867 to 1970 and includes correspondence, biographical information, and photographs of Zwemer and his family taken in America, Arabia, and Egypt. The collection also includes monographs, articles, and many pamphlets on missions, including *The Ship That Sailed and the Keel That Never Kissed the Sea* (Missionary Ship).

Geoffrey D. Reynolds

Final Chance to Order!

Sesquicentennial Publications and the Joint Archives

Over the past year the Joint Archives has been involved in a number of exciting publications to celebrate the Sesquicentennial. It is our hope that these will help to provide a lasting legacy for the future. Pick up your copy today!



A.C. Van Raalte: Dutch Leader and American Patriot by Jeanne Jacobson, Elton Bruins, and Larry Wagenaar

The first fully annotated biography of A.C. Van Raalte is a well illustrated, 256 page volume that has been well received by reviewers. The book covers many aspects in the life of the Dutch pastor who led the Dutch to western Michigan, including persecution in the Netherlands, the harrowing journey to America, struggles in the first years, Holland and the Civil War, the great fire of 1871, his wife Christine, and Van Raalte's legacy today.

\$29.95 plus \$5 shipping*

Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings
Selected and arranged by Henry Lucas with new translations



Reprinted by the Dutch American Historical Commission and Eerdmans Publishing Company, this 1,118 page volume compiles a rich number of first hand accounts of Dutch immigrants detailing everything from the early days of settlement and the Great Holland Fire, to the Dutch migrations to Wisconsin and Iowa. You will spend many hours gripped by those who lived through these exciting times. Additional translations have been added to this new reprinted volume not available in the rare 1955 original.

~~\$45.00 plus \$5 shipping*~~

Special price: \$35.00 plus \$5 shipping*



Sesquicentennial Birthday Calendar
(perpetual calendar).

Published as an official souvenir of the Sesquicentennial celebration, this *perpetual* calendar is designed as a traditional "birthday calendar" where names of friends and loved ones are entered and hung on the wall. Monthly dates are listed without days of the week so it can be used year after year. Many Dutch homes hang this in the kitchen or bathroom! Includes a detailed timeline of the Dutch settlement, a history of Holland, Michigan, and many historical photographs.

~~\$12.95 plus \$3 shipping*~~

Special price: \$9.95 plus \$3 shipping*

Sites of Dutch Influence in Western Michigan: An Illustrated Tour Guide



A well illustrated auto-tour guide that takes you to many significant sites related to the Dutch settling in western Michigan. Includes easy to follow maps and many photographs.

\$4.00 plus \$2 shipping*

In Christ's Service: The Classis of Holland, Michigan and its Congregations 1847-1997

Published by the Holland Classis of the Reformed Church in America, this well illustrated and bound booklet details the history of each congregation in the Classis from its origination to the present day. Each congregational history features photographs of the church along with a timeline which details current events for the churches, Holland community, and the world. Packed full of information, the booklet also includes detailed histories of the Classis and its Women's Societies. 36 pages.

\$5.95 plus \$3 shipping*

See back cover for order information.

*When ordering multiple publications, pay shipping only on item of highest value.

Sesquicentennial Publications Order Form

Local Holland residents can find these books at local bookshops or at the Hope-Geneva Bookstore in the DeWitt Center at Hope College. Other Joint Archives Quarterly readers can order them by mail:

| Title | Price | Name |
|----------------------------|-------|------------------------|
| _____ | _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ | Address _____ |
| _____ | _____ | City _____ State _____ |
| Shipping* | _____ | Zip _____ |
| Tax (6% MI residents only) | _____ | Phone _____ |
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Mail order to: The Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, P.O. Box 9000, Holland, MI 49422

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The Joint Archives of Holland



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