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Summer 1994

# The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 05.03: Summer 1994

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# The Joint Archives Quarterly

Volume 5 Number 3

Summer 1994

## Native Americans of the Holland Area

by  
Marie Zingle

*Intrigued by how little we seem to know about Holland's first residents, Marie Zingle has brought some of the sources together to tell us the story of local Native Americans:*

The Native Americans of western Michigan included the Potawatomi, Ottawa, and Chippewa (Ojibway) nations, all of whom are classified as belonging to the Algonquin linguistic group. Each nation was made up of several tribes. A chief headed each tribe, which was organized into clans (or bands). The nations/tribes are still arranged in this fashion today.

In 1826, the Treaty of Tippecanoe assigned Michigan's Upper Peninsula as hunting grounds for the Chippewa; the tract between the Straits of Mackinac and the Grand River to the Ottawa; and all lands south of the Grand, including parts of Indiana and Illinois, to the Potawatomi. This agreement continued to be honored even after these nations ceded title of the soil to the U.S. government. In 1897, Simon Pokagon claimed his father, the chief of the Potawatomi, had by the Treaty of 1833, "ceded to the government the title to all the land south of the Grand River, including the present site of Chicago, for about three cents an acre."<sup>1</sup>

Although the Black Lake area was considered Potawatomi territory in 1847 when the Dutch arrived, it was occupied by several tribes of Ottawas. Their village near the south shore of the lake was headquarters of the Macsauble, Waukazoo, Muskaguan, Shinnakiashi, and Pricket tribes.<sup>2</sup>

The Ottawas divided their time between their "village" at Black Lake (now Macatawa), the "sugar camps" where they tapped for maple sugar in Berrien and Cass counties, and the Leelanau Peninsula in the general area from which they had originally migrated.

When the Dutch arrived, they sometimes briefly occupied huts constructed of hewn logs and bark which stood at the Black Lake encampment (now the site of the H.J. Heinz Co.). There was also a frame church (about 10' x 40'), that had

been built by a Catholic mission that had charge of the Indian missionary work along the Grand River. Later this was sold to Rev. Van Raalte to house some of the Dutch immigrants. Nearby was the burial ground, about 100 feet square with a stockade fence.

The Native Americans also did their boat building at this "village," and at times it had the appearance of a primitive shipyard. The real highways of the Great Lakes nations were the many lakes and rivers. The Ottawas of the Black Lake area travelled to their other locations via Lake Michigan.

Ottawas also resided in a clearing at the Old Wing Mission of the Congregational minister, Rev. George N. Smith. This mission was originally located in Fillmore township in Allegan county. Today the Smith home is within Holland's Southside Industrial Park on 40th Street, just east of Waverly Road.

A typed transcript of Smith's diary and copies of his reports to the Bureau of Indian Affairs (then a part of the War Department) are among the collections at the Joint Archives. They are invaluable sources of information regarding the Native Americans of the Black Lake area to whom Smith served as a missionary. Smith's diary covering this period is located at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., but the important year of 1847 is missing. The diary was transcribed from microfilm at the Bentley Historical Library by the late Charles Lorenz, who at one time owned the dwelling at Old Wing, now designated as a State of Michigan Historical Site.<sup>3</sup>

In his diary Rev. Smith does not refer to the Native American encampment near the shore of Black Lake as a "village," but rather as "the landing." Those who died at the mission were buried at the Black Lake cemetery. The diary tells of Smith's everyday activities and reveals his frustration and disappointments in trying to work with the Native Americans who resided in this area only part of the year.

Anna Coatsworth Post, wife of Holland's first postmaster Henry D. Post, wrote many years later about attending a church service that Rev. Smith held in the school house at the mission for the local tribe on New Year's Day, 1849. She

(Continued on page 5)

## From the Director

This issue of the Quarterly features something new for us, an article written by one of the researchers that often visits the Joint Archives. Marie Zingle recently authored a history of the Womens Literary Club and currently serves on the board of the Holland Area Historical Society. She is a familiar face at the archives and we are very pleased that she agreed to write a story on Native Americans in the Holland area.

Our knowledge of the Native Americans in this area is rather sketchy and spread over many sources. As Marie delved deeper into the materials at the archives it became clear that there was more to tell. At the very least we could benefit from an attempt to bring available information together.

We decided that along with her story we should run a few excerpts from the diary and annual reports of Rev. George Smith, who served as a missionary to the Native Americans in the area. I found the reports interesting. It was the diary that caught me off guard.

Times were pretty harsh in those days, pre-natal care was not a part of life, and childbirth methods did not include visits to a hospital. His horror at the loss of his sixth child is almost too much to bear.

Smith's faith in his creator stood fast and carried him and his wife through the "valley of the shadow of death." It is my hope that the strength which they drew from God in times of joy and sorrow is also a part of our daily lives.

Larry J. Wagenaar

## National Exposure for Joint Archives

The activities funded by a grant from the National Historical Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) came to a close on June 30th. The project culminated in the cataloging and reporting of our collections to a national bibliographic utility. This project has greatly enhanced access to the collections.

Collections Manager Jenifer Smith, assisted primarily by former research assistant Ryan Kreider, has been compiling and entering information into what is known as the MARC format (a computer protocol that is used by libraries and archives to catalog information) and uploading this information to the On-Line Computer Library Consortium (OCLC). These records, in turn, are being downloaded into the Hope Library's online catalog. Seven hundred collections have been entered into both the national and Hope databases. Work will continue on this project until all our collections are available on OCLC.

In the past four years the NHPRC has awarded the Joint Archives two separate grants totaling over \$84,000. This support has resulted in the permanent addition of the Collections Manager position and greatly enhanced the public's ability to use the unique materials at the Joint Archives.



Summer 1994 Staff: Seated: Director Larry Wagenaar, Collections Manager Jenifer Smith. Standing: Oral History Coordinators Ryan Harvey and Donna Rottier, and Head Research Assistant Chad Boorsma.

## Holland's Business Leaders

by Ryan Harvey

This summer I have been working on the business oral history project which is funded jointly by the Joint Archives of Holland and the Carl Frost Center for Social Science Research. The purpose of the project is to preserve the memories of industrial leaders in the Holland-Zeeland area through interviews with about twenty top executives from major corporations. Each interview is recorded using the same format with an identical set of questions. The completed interviews are then transcribed and will be available in the Joint Archives for public use.

Of those I interviewed, three main categories seemed to dominate: the entrepreneur, the inherited leader, and the professional executive hired into the firm. Among the entrepreneurs, I found risk-takers -- people who, with courage and stamina, were willing to put everything on the line for a dream. The inherited leader tends to be one who grew up with the family business and understands the importance of tradition and principles in good leadership. Hired to lead a corporation because of their outstanding capabilities and intelligence, the professional executive maintains effective leadership without the enormous personal stakes that entrepreneurs and inherited leaders must face. I find it fascinating to hear the stories these local businessmen tell of leading their companies to multi-million, sometimes billion dollar status.

I encourage everyone interested in the history and growth of Holland's industries to browse through the business oral history collection.

## Fall Hours

(beginning September 12)

Monday-Friday 1-5 PM (Mornings by appointment)  
Saturday 10 AM-2 PM



Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland

Willard Wichers, a member of the Michigan Historical Commission, and a group of students from Waukazoo Elementary School gather at the 1985 dedication of the Waukazoo Woods historical marker.

## A Look at Women in Holland's History

by  
Jenifer A. Smith  
Collections Manager

*This past year I have studied a few of the collections at the Joint Archives that highlight women and women's organizations in Holland. In this last installment we will briefly examine the Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. This organization has contributed many years of service to the greater Holland area.*

The Joint Archives has recently had the good fortune to obtain the scrapbooks of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution. In 1908 seventeen women claiming descent from one or more Revolutionary soldiers established the Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton Chapter in Holland. These women, among them Ruby Garrod, Anna Wheeler, Alice Kramer, Gertrude Yates, Laura McBride, Lilla Harrington, and Myrtle Beach, appointed Ida Sears McLean as their first Regent.

Preserving our nation's history has been a goal of the D.A.R. since its founding in 1890. As one might expect, the D.A.R. is also quite serious about preserving their own chapter's history. According to their constitution, . . . "the historian shall preserve all papers of value to the Chapter and shall keep a scrapbook of items of interest to the Chapter."<sup>6</sup> Their first scrapbook, . . . "a beautiful leather bound historian's book especially made for them by the Dean Hicks Co. of Grand Rapids [was] . . . present[ed] to the chapter [in 1908] by Mrs. G.J. Diekema."<sup>2</sup> These scrapbooks are not only a chronicle of chapter history, but they also include interesting newspaper clippings of area events and national D.A.R. history.

Patriotic, historical, and educational activities such as planting trees in Centennial Park, sponsoring historical essay contests in the Holland schools, and presenting outstanding students with Good Citizen Awards kept members closely involved with the Holland community. Newspaper clippings, meeting programs, and photographs in the scrapbooks also tell of the many other past activities that the D.A.R. enjoyed, including bridge parties, teas, luncheons, and discussions of historical essays written by D.A.R. members. Perhaps the Chapter's biggest achievement was the installation of an official Michigan Historic Site marker (1985) which now marks the 19th century winter home of Ottawa Chief Waukazoo and his followers.

While the D.A.R. preserves and celebrates the past, the Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton Chapter, celebrating their 86th anniversary, continues to thrive.

### Joint Archives Staff Summer 1994

Director  
Collections Manager  
Head Research Assistant  
Summer Oral History/Research Asst.  
Summer Oral History

Larry Wagenaar  
Jenifer Smith  
Chad Boorsma  
Donna Rottier  
Ryan Harvey

#### Volunteers

Sue Brandsen  
Lois Kayes  
Carolyn Nienhuis  
Russ Norden  
Jean Postma  
Randy Vandewater  
Lee Witteveen

<sup>1</sup>Elizabeth Schuyler Hamilton Chapter, N.S.D.A.R., *Constitution*, 6.

<sup>2</sup>Elizabeth Schuyler Chapter, N.S.D.A.R., *Historian's Book*, 1908.

*Now Available!*

## The Photograph Primer

Hot off the press is a new booklet entitled *The Photograph Primer*. Published by the Michigan Archival Association, it is designed to meet the needs of volunteers, paraprofessionals, and private collectors of photographs. This booklet is a useful guide for the beginner wondering how to handle their collections.

*The Photograph Primer* includes chapters on how to store, identify, date, and copy photographs. Each chapter is written in a clear, understandable fashion, well illustrated, and written by a qualified archivist. Information on different types of photograph albums, photo corners that won't damage your pictures, and addresses of archival supply companies is contained in the booklet.

If you want some pointers on how to handle your own photographs or have volunteers and paraprofessionals working in your local historical society or museum, we encourage you to consider this volume. *The Primer* is a sure bet for some basic, straightforward advice.

*The Photograph Primer* is available at the Joint Archives of Holland for \$5. We can also send it to you for an additional \$2.50 shipping/handling charge. Please use the coupon below.

### The Photograph Primer



Compiled by the Michigan Archival Association

**The Photographic Primer** \$5 (Plus \$2.50 shipping)

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Campus, Holland, MI 49423. Save the postage by stopping  
by the Joint Archives for your copy.

## Ethnic Oral History Project Continues

by Donna Rottier

The purpose of oral history is to capture personal memories of events and experiences on audio cassettes and in written transcripts. This method lends a unique individual and contemporary perspective to history. In the past two summers the Hope College Oral History Project has centered on different ethnic groups in Holland, namely post-World War II Dutch immigrants and the Hispanic population. This summer, I have focused on Asian and African-Americans in Holland, two smaller but significant ethnic groups.

At this point, the portion of my project dealing with African-Americans is difficult to write about because the interviews are scheduled for later in the summer. For a

different reason, it is also difficult to write about my experience interviewing Asian-Americans. "Asian-American" is a simple term which hides an incredible diversity. By the end of the summer I will have interviewed Asian-Americans belonging to six different ethnic groups: Cambodian, Chinese,

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"Each person has a personal story to tell of how they left their country -- often compelled to leave because of harsh, inhumane regimes."

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Japanese, Korean, Laotian, and Vietnamese. The individuals interviewed have been living in the United States for anywhere from two to thirty-one years. Each person has a different perspective based on educational and cultural background, religion, family-life, job or career, and age. Each person has a personal story to tell of how their family left their country--often compelled to leave because of harsh, inhumane regimes. Each person can also relate personal experiences of his or her life in Holland.

Capturing the memories of those who have lived in the United States longer is important because they can offer a unique perspective on the changes which have taken place in Holland in the years they have been here. Just as important is securing the memories of people who have come here more recently, as they have more recently experienced adjustments to moving into a new community and new country. These memories will all be preserved in the archives, providing a small representation of what life is like for the many different kinds of people who live here.

*Donna conducted the 1992 Oral History Project which focused on Dutch immigrants who came to the United States after World War II. The Hope College Oral History Project has been conducted annually since 1977.*

## Native Americans (Continued from Page 1)

said there were "Indians and squaws with blankets over their heads--some had bright-eyed papooses fastened to a board which they carefully set against the wall, near a small box-stove. It was a scene never to be forgotten."<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Post's handwritten historical paper can be read at the Joint Archives and it is believed to be the paper that she read at Holland's Semi-Centennial Celebration in August of 1897. According to the *Holland City News*, her paper was entitled "The Exodus of the Indians." It concludes with the story of the departure of the Native Americans with the Smith family when Old Wing Mission was relocated to the Leelanau Peninsula in 1849:

As soon as spring came, they took up their dead and prepared to leave Holland for the northern part of Michigan, on the west side of Traverse Bay. They went in their "*Mackinaw*" boats. Rev. Smith and his family soon prepared to follow them to Grand Traverse [later named Northport]. It seemed then as a great an undertaking as going to China or Japan now. They came and stayed a week with us, waiting for a vessel to come from Chicago to take them to their distant home. A schooner, named *The Merrill*, came after much delay.

When their goods were all on board and the wind was favorable, they prepared to go. Rev. Dr. Wycoff of Albany [NY], was visiting at Rev. Van Raalte's, and he with Dr. and Mrs. Van Raalte, H.D. Post, and myself accompanied them as far as Lake Michigan. Before parting, prayer was offered, and a hymn sung. We bade them farewell and returned to Holland in a small boat, while they proceeded on their journey.<sup>5</sup>

*Mackinaw* boats were flat bottomed boats with a pointed bow and a square stern, used by Native Americans on the upper Great Lakes.

The lives and journey of these peoples is a remarkable one, a glimpse of which can be seen in the collections at the Joint Archives.

*Marie Zingle is a local resident and historian who is a frequent researcher at the Joint Archives of Holland.*

<sup>1</sup>*Holland City News*, August 26, 1897.

<sup>2</sup>Van Schelven, Gerrit. *Holland City News*, September 2, 1898.

<sup>3</sup>George N. Smith Papers. T88-0178, Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.

<sup>4</sup>Post Family Papers. T88-0160, Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland

<sup>5</sup>Post, Ann Coatsworth. Post Family Papers. T88-0160, Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland

*The following is an excerpt of an annual report Rev. George Smith sent to William A. Richmond, Esq., Acting Superintendent of Indian Affairs:*



Our meetings on the Sabbath have been kept up, with few exceptions, until the Indians left a short time since on account of the small-pox in the Dutch colony near us. This colony now numbers about 1,500; what its influence will be on our mission the future must determine; we hope it may be good eventually, but the Indians were not prepared to defend their fields against the large numbers of cattle and hogs the Dutch are bringing in, especially as they have to be absent, and cannot watch them. Considerable damage is already done,..."

Since the 1st of last October, I have employed no interpreter, but have conducted religious worship, schools, etc., in the Indian language myself, and have so far succeeded as to be understood, and I hope it has been profitable to the Indians.... The great obstacle in our way, as in years past, is that the Indians go to the lake shore to spend the summer, away from the school and their farms....

Old Wing Mission, Annual Report, August 31, 1847

*Being a missionary on the frontier was difficult and, much like the Native Americans and Dutch who died from smallpox, Rev. Smith suffered the tragedy of losing a child to the deadly disease:*

April 12, 7 o'clock A.M. Our little son died -how severe the blow, it seems as though I could not bear it - and my wife's grief is uncontrollable. This is the 5th child we have lost in infancy, this one living 12 hours, 2 hours longer than our second child.

We seriously inquire, why does the Lord deal thus with us? Out of ten children 4 only remain, our first, third, and fourth and ninth. I confess I am not worthy of these, no, not one of them - but why are some families all preserved and others cut down in the very dawn of life....

We deposited the remains of our little son to the grave, we buried him on the north side of our son buried 4 years ago - we now have 5 children buried there together. Mr. Harrington and wife, Isaac Fairbanks and wife, Mrs. B. Fairbanks, and Mrs. Martin attended the funeral. I[saac] Fairbanks prayed as we placed him in the earth. I felt, but longed to feel much more confidently as David felt, that though he will not return to me, yet I will go to him, the end of my desire, when I meet all my departed little ones in heaven, and with them praise my God and Savior forever.

Old Wing Mission, Rev. Smith's Diary, 1849.

Summer fun on the beach at Macatawa Park at the turn of the century.



Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland

## The Joint Archives of Holland

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