

Summer 1990

# The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 02.02: Summer 1990

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# The Joint Archives Quarterly

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Summer 1990

## First Settlement Not Holland

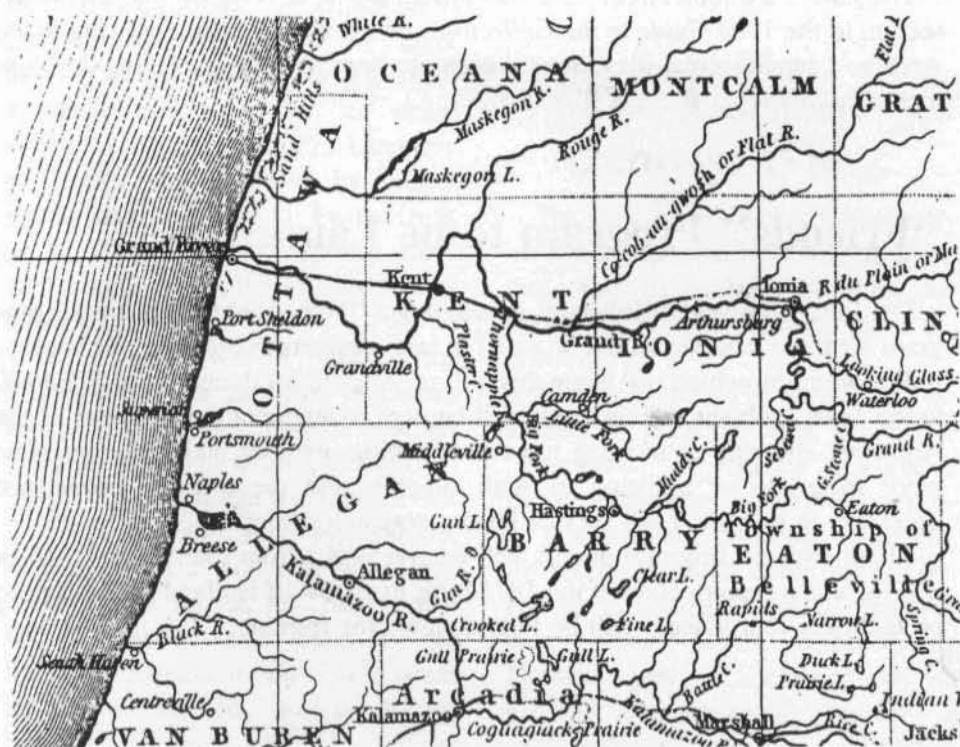
It is a little known fact that the town of Holland was not the first settlement which was to grow up on the banks of Black Lake (Macatawa). During the land boom of the 1830s, when Singapore and Port Sheldon were platted, so were the towns of Portsmouth, Macatawa (not where it is today), and Superior.

Drawing on maps of these villages which are held at the Joint Archives it is interesting to note where these towns were to be located. Portsmouth was slated to be built on the site of present day Ottawa Beach — a shack from this abandoned enterprise was still standing when Van Raalte arrived. Macatawa — the first one — was to be located where “Beechwood” is on the current near north side around Parke Davis and Meijers.

Port Sheldon was the only one of these enterprises to really get off the ground, mortgaged for \$100,000 and sported a hotel which thrived for a number of years. The entire enterprise was sold at auction for \$1,000 some years later.

William O. Van Eyck writes in an edition of the *Sentinel* “The land panic and the breaking of the wildcat banks in 1838-39 bankrupted many of these flamboyant paper cities almost instantly. Portsmouth was not even begun; and its site was, in 1890, replatted as Ottawa Beach. Macatawa was bought in 1854 by

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1839 map showing the property of Portsmouth and the Village of Superior

### IN THIS ISSUE

- Georgian Bay Lines collection opens at Joint Archives.
- “Friends of the Archives” program seeks help to preserve history.
- Preserving Your Heirlooms
- *Sentinel* and *City News* now available.

## Major Grant Awarded To Joint Archives

The Joint Archives of Holland has been awarded nearly \$50,000 from the National Historical Publications and Records Division at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. This money will be primarily used for the hiring of an assistant archivist who will help the Joint Archives make its collections even more accessible to the public.

The award represents a significant commitment on the part of the NHPRC and National Archives to Holland’s state of the art archival facility.

The Joint Archives of Holland opened in the fall of 1988 and over 1,000 researchers have used materials in the facility. Even more have visited to see the archival exhibits, request information over the phone and conduct research by mail from long distances. The Archives serves as a history research center for Holland and the surrounding area as well as scholars of immigration, Dutch

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# The Joint Archives Quarterly

## From the Archivist

What an exciting time! The Archives is engaged in hiring a new professional, we are working on a wide variety of public education programs, research in the collections is at an all-time high and we are getting ready to release our first major supplement to our collection guide.

Support from the National Archives has highlighted the importance of our repository on a national scale and the important work we have before us in making the ethnic and historical collections housed here as fully accessible as possible.

In the coming months we will be working to better inform the public about the history of the Holland area through a historical column in the *Holland Sentinel*. It will appear every other week in the Sunday edition and is entitled "From the Archives." I encourage you to contact me if you have specific questions which come out of the column or if you feel a particular area of history needs to be addressed.

Recently the *Sentinel* moved its microfilm copies going back into the last century to the Joint Archives for researchers to use. This is a major step that will allow us to retire the deteriorating paper copies which we have been using. Please join me in thanking Clay Stauffer and the rest of the *Sentinel* for making this move. It will be a great asset to researchers.

I hope that you enjoy the waning days of summer.

Larry J. Wagenaar  
Archivist

Photos used in this issue are from the Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.

## Guide to the Collections Supplement

When the Archives staff produced the *Guide to the Collections* last year we were unable to include the large volume of historical records and materials which are part of what we call "vertical files." These are primarily smaller collections of material (usually a file folder or so) related to a particular subject, person or event.

Often these collections are the first line of attack when researching a given topic. They are different from the regular collection as they are usually not large groupings of papers collected by one person or agency (such as the records of the Georgian Bay Lines or the letters of A.C. Van Raalte).

The supplement will include the Archives' photographic, pamphlet, biographical, and clippings collections.

Beginning in September or early October the supplement will be available, for a minor charge, at the Joint Archives or by mail. It will also be part of the automated system for instant access.

## Archives Used in Renovation, Video Projects

What else is the Archives up to? To begin with the Joint Archives has been involved in the production of the city's new video "Historic Holland: A Pact With the Past." By supplying photographs to this valuable production, the public will gain a perspective on how Holland's history impacts what it is doing today in the preservation of historic buildings.

Various buildings downtown are undergoing historic renovation with the owners working to preserve parts of the historic facades (and in some cases interiors). In many of these cases photos from the Joint Archives were used to evaluate the original construction style.

The staff at the Joint Archives is also involved with developing a supplemental section to the 1989 *Guide to the Collections* which will give full indexing to the Archive's supplemental files. See the separate story about this exciting development.

## "Friends" Program to be Launched

The Joint Archives of Holland is developing a "Friends of the Archives" program for those who would like to assist us in our efforts to preserve our history.

The program, which will begin this fall, is designed for donations of \$25-\$100 to the Joint Archives. These funds will be used to augment the activities of the Archives, allowing us to bring more programming, exhibits and make available more materials by assisting us with supplies and the technical assistance necessary to provide a full service history research center.

Along with the program donors will receive a gift from the Archives which will include a reproduction of the 1875 birds eye view of Holland. This map, to be faithfully reproduced, will be fully suitable for framing.

# The Joint Archives Quarterly

## First Settlement

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M.D. Howard, who built a sawmill there...Mr. Howard replatted Macatawa in 1871, and called it Howard's Addition."

Superior, which did become a settlement, was located in present day Waukazoo Woods. The point near Marigold Lodge is still occasionally referred to as "Point Superior."

"The story of the town of Superior, although this city also was overwhelmed during the panic, is different. Here the plat was followed with great improvements;...the first white settlement in our township, with all the adjuncts of civilization — at least ten years before the arrival of the Hollanders in 1847," Van Eyck explains.

Black Lake was Tuscarora on the earliest maps. In 1836 the Black River Harbor Association began construction in Superior and cut roads to Grand Haven, via Port Sheldon, and south to the Kalamazoo River. The road was known to the American settlers as the Superior Road and was later used by the Hollanders. Van Eyck goes on to say "Next, the company constructed seven or eight houses, a dock and shipyard, a store, a blacksmith shop and a steam sawmill and planning mill. A tannery was built and operated by Henry Knox; and, as Henry D. Post assures us, a salt water ship carpenter from Nantucket, Mass., built a schooner at Superior..."

There even was a post office established under the name Tuscarora and may have been the first post office established in Ottawa County.

By 1839 the village was down to fur families, the mill was idle and the schooner could not exit the lake. Henry Knox moved to Chicago and resumed tanning and others left the fledgling settlement. By 1847, when the Dutch arrived, a few of the buildings were still standing. Holland pioneer John Binnekant bought one of

them in 1848 and had it moved to Holland.

After it had been used for lumbering the land Superior stood on was sold to Hope College (1867), using funds donated by James Suydam of New York. It was even called the Suydam farm and later, simply the "College Farm." The land was sold to private developers in 1904 and replatted as Waukazoo.

This rather obscure chapter in the history of our area is often forgotten but in many ways it represents the first real activity by Europeans or Americans in the Black River valley. It is a fascinating story that spawned more famous ghost towns such as Singapore and the lesser known ones such as Portsmouth and Superior.

There was a distinct possibility that Van Raalte would have moved on to Wisconsin or beyond if he had run into a thriving settlement here. And that would have changed our story quite a bit.

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Sources: Collections of the Joint Archives and an article written by William O Van Eyck.

## The Assistant Archivist Will...

The majority activity of the recently awarded grant will be to hire an assistant archivist to help the Joint Archives make its collections more accessible.

The assistant archivist will be involved in creating what are called "registers." A register is a rather detailed inventory of what is contained in a particular collection of papers. For example, the 10 cubic feet of Gerrit Van Schelven papers, a man who was a major figure in preserving Holland's past, will be described with a brief one-paragraph abstract, a detailed history of the man, a description of the nature of the papers (is it

correspondence, speeches or printed materials) and an inventory of each archival box. Registers are important in helping a patron locate the historical information he/she is looking for.

The assistant archivist will also work on some of the "processing" needs of the collection. When new material comes into the archives we cannot save everything. The processing archivist, in conjunction with the director, will decide which materials will be retained for posterity.

Finally the assistant archivist will help implement a piece of software we have had for some time. This software will allow us to catalog our holdings in a way that will integrate it with a national library holdings computer, thereby letting those outside of the Holland community know about the rich immigration and ethnic collections we have.

The assistant archivist will begin his/her duties on October 1. Qualifications for the job include a masters degree in History or Library Science along with the completion of a recognized archival training program or experience, familiarity with standard library cataloging and strong writing skills.

Don't be surprised if you see a new face along side Larry Wagenaar and the rest of the staff when you next stop by the Archives.

## Major Grant

(Continued from page 1)

ethnicity in the United States and regional history in the United States and abroad.

The grant monies will be used to improve the research tools which are used to locate materials in the Archives, handle a growing volume of material being received and improve on the computerized catalog of the collections.

# The Joint Archives Quarterly

## Fading Memories Part 3 of preserving your heirlooms

Last week you thought of that little old Bible your grandmother gave you, wondering where that little bugger ran off to. A dim memory seems to say that it was in a little cardboard box left over from a grocery store along with several old file folders. But that was forty years ago...

As you troop upstairs into the attic and dig into the piles of stored memories it finally turns up. The box, stored near a crack in the rafters, bears signs that a mouse or two set up a bed and breakfast. As you open the box, which barely can take the strain, you look inside to see the file folders have disintegrated around the Bible. The book itself has taken on a rusty look and the page ends — as well as both covers — are covered with a white and green substance. As you move to open the cover it comes off in your hands and the page ends break off as you turn them.

This Bible is primarily the victim of the storage container in which it was located as well as the location. As it was a Bible of 1750 vintage the paper on which it was printed was some of the most stable an archivist can deal with. The box and wrapping, however, doomed it to an early death. Coupled with the location of the storage, in a temperature and humidity extreme attic and a little infestation by insects and animals this precious heirloom was irreversibly damaged.

Last month I discussed the proper *location* for storage of heirlooms (both object and paper items). In this issue of the *Quarterly* we will take a look at the *type of container* you should use.

Ideally you would look to an acid-free box for storage of precious heirlooms, the type used in the museum and archives of the United

States. While these can be obtained, they tend to cost 1½ to 2 times the cost of other boxes. Regular boxes, such as the one in our story, are made of an acidic paper. This acid can actually "migrate" from the box into the materials stored inside the box, thereby accelerating the deterioration of your heirlooms simply by placing it in the "protective" container.

Sturdy office storage boxes, although still acidic, will be less of a risk than cheap, grocery store leftovers.

Another precaution to take is the type of file folders or other wrapping materials you use. Conventional file folders and newspapers, which look great when you put them in, are highly acidic. They will damage your heirlooms and we suggest you do not use them. Acid-free folders and tissue paper are most recommended. If this is not available a good quality paper or cotton is recommended.

But where do I get these you might ask? Well, I am afraid you won't find acid-free containers at the local office supply stores. You can, however, obtain them by giving us a call or stopping by the Joint Archives. I will be happy to help you locate where these can be ordered and, in some cases, we might be able to furnish them. We routinely help area organizations in the storage of their historically significant documents.

I strongly encourage area organizations such as churches and schools to contact the Joint Archives for advice on storage media.

If you have any questions on how to preserve your heirlooms don't hesitate to call the Joint Archives of Holland at 394-7798.

## Museum Rehab Under Way

Work has begun on Phase 1 of the "New Museum Project" in the old Holland post office on the corner of 10th and River in downtown Holland. The post office, the use of which has been given to the Holland Historical

Trust by the City of Holland, will be retrofitted to accommodate the approximately 9,000 artifacts that make up the collection of the current Netherlands Museum. The new museum is slated to open in the fall of 1991.

Just as the Joint Archives provides safety for and access to much of Holland's documentary heritage, the spacious new museum will insure better care of its material (object) heritage. At the same time, the public will have greater access to the collection through changing exhibits and programs. Paper-based materials from the Trust's collection at the Joint Archives will also be used in the displays at the new museum to complement the large object collection as well as be the major source for background information.

Currently, the cramped quarters of the Netherlands Museum permit only one fifth of the collection to be exhibited. In charge of the objects stored there and coordinating the effort to design exhibits in the new museum is Cobie van L. Maas, the Trust's new Collection Manager. She is excited about the "treasures" she is uncovering. "We have some wonderful and unique artifacts that have been donated to the museum over the years." Twenty volunteers are assisting her in an inventory of the collection and in background research in anticipation of the new exhibits.

Ann Kiewel, Director of Development for the Trust, reports that \$1.65 million has been raised towards the goal of \$2 million for this project. "We are working hard to raise the last \$300,000 and wind up what has been a highly successful campaign."

For information about the campaign or the museum's volunteer opportunities call the Trust offices at 394-1362.

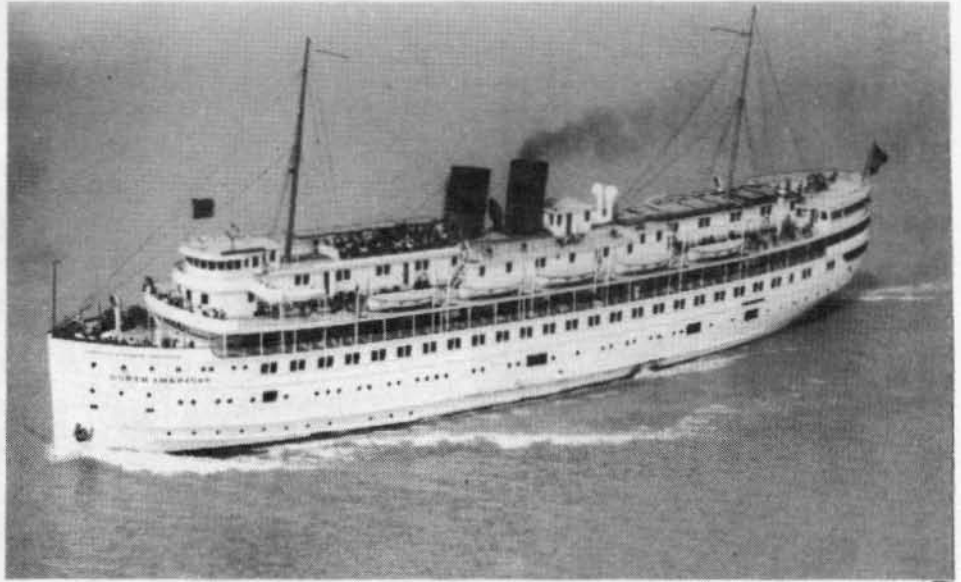
The Holland Historical Trust is a member institution (along with Hope College and Western Theological Seminary) of the Joint Archives of Holland.

# The Joint Archives Quarterly

## Georgian Bay Lines Collection Opened

The Joint Archives is pleased to announce the opening of the Georgian Bay Lines collection. This collection documents the activities of the steamer ships North American, South American and Alabama.

Most of the material consists of ships' logs which document, on a daily basis, the activities of the ships as they traversed the Great Lakes. Also included are photographs, some promotional materials and other related items. "It is a rich collection documenting the ongoing operation of a Great Lakes passenger ship line. It will supply an in-depth look at its operations and financial dealings as well as information regarding the passengers and conditions at the



Georgian Bay Lines ship the North American

various ports of call," said archivist Larry Wagenaar.

Researchers with an interest in the

collection are encouraged to stop by the Joint Archives.

## Sentinel and City News Now Available

Following an agreement between the *Holland Sentinel* and the Joint Archives microfilm of that paper and a full run of the *Holland City News* are now available for researchers to use at the Archives.

This represents a significant step in making this unique and essential research tool more widely available. The two papers, along with a short run of the *Ottawa County Times* (already at the Archives) are the only local newspaper sources of Holland news in English. The *City News* was a weekly publication and the Archives now has film from 1872 to 1975.

Between microfilm of the *Sentinel* already at the Archives and the recent move of film from the paper versions, patrons now have access to the years 1912-1985.

The agreement also provides for full reference service to the *Sentinel* staff in researching historical stories. Reading and copying facilities are available at the Archives.

This valuable set of material has

been named the Holland Sentinel Collection.

## RCA Archivists Meet at Synod

Archivists of the Reformed Church in America met at the church's main governance meeting in Orange City, Iowa to discuss the preservation of church materials. The meeting consisted of librarians and archivists of the RCA Colleges, the RCA archivist from New Brunswick, N.J., and members of the church's historical commission.

The meeting, the first of a series of annual gatherings, was held to discuss cooperative efforts aimed at adequately preserving congregational records and encouraging greater sensitivity in local churches regarding the need to properly preserve their records.

More discussion is expected as RCA repositories in Iowa and the Joint Archives have expressed a willingness to cooperate in the collection, storage and documentation of RCA church materials in their areas.

## Summer Intern Completes Work

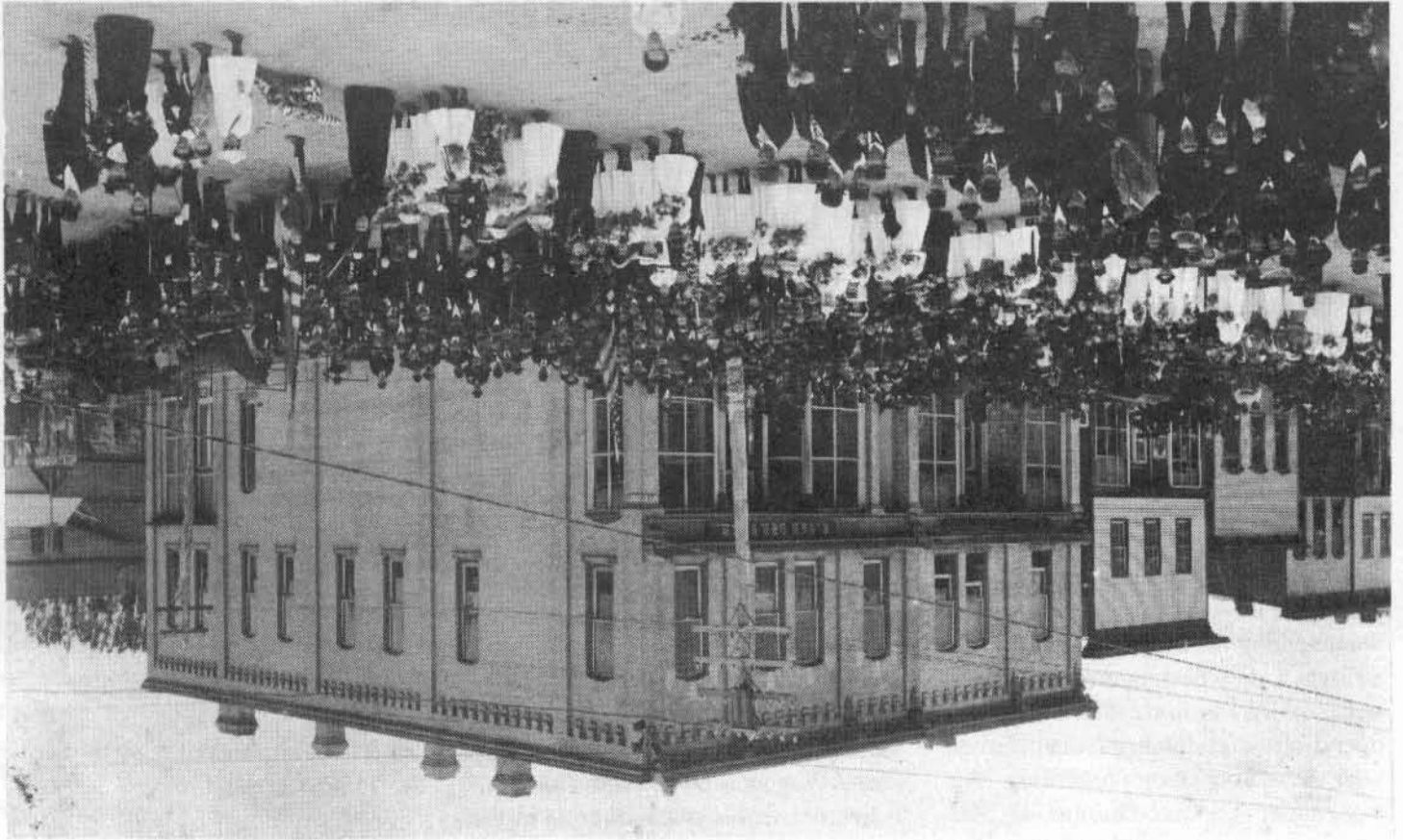
Reba O'Shesky, a part time staff member since the Archives opened, has served as our full-time summer intern. Her work has ranged from modification of our vertical file guides in preparation for the upcoming supplement to assisting patrons in the Archives with their research needs.

Entering her junior year at Hope College this fall with a major in History, Reba plans to pursue a career in that field. She is considering the possibility of further studies to become an archivist.

Many of our patrons have had the opportunity to work with Reba and benefit from her knowledge of the collections which comes from working with the materials for two years. Much of the behind-the-scenes work is done by Reba and other members of the support staff making possible the many services the Joint Archives provides.

Reba will be joined this fall by three other staff members who will be introduced in the next issue.

Memorial Day, 1889, showing the original Vander Veen store now being renovated at 8th Street and River Avenue



## The Joint Archives of Holland

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