

Spring 1989

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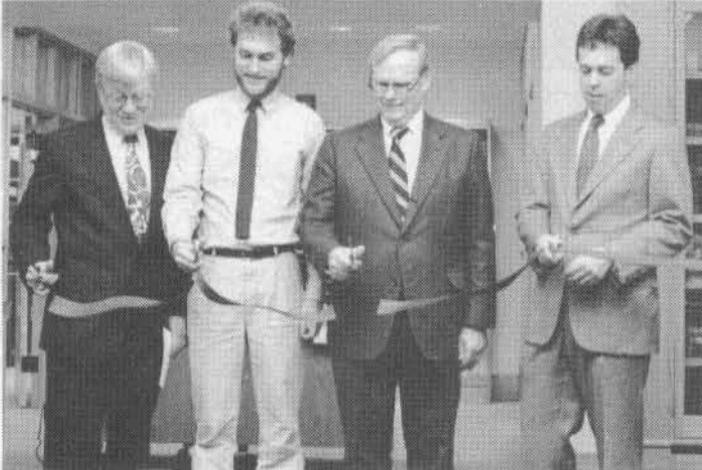
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The Joint Archives Quarterly

Spring 1989

Volume 1 Number 1



Western Seminary President Marvin Hoff, Mayor Phil Tanis, Hope College President John Jacobson and Historical Trust President Clay Stauffer at the dedication of the Joint Archives.

The preservation of our heritage has entered a new phase with the establishment of the Joint Archives of Holland. Early photographs, letters and other one of a kind documents are now stored in a state of the art facility operated by the Holland Historical Trust, Hope College and Western Theological Seminary in a unique joint venture.

An archive is a place where historically significant documents, records and photographs are stored so that they can be preserved and made available in one location. In the case of the Joint Archives this means exceptional measures have been taken to ensure the safety of the material entrusted to our care including special climate control and a gas fire suppressant system.

The Joint Archives collects material relating to the history of the Dutch heritage both in the surrounding area and Dutch immigration to the United States as a whole. It is equally committed to acquiring materials that will directly relate to the establishment and multicultural growth of Holland, Michigan, as well as the particular history of each of the three member institutions.

The archives is not only a place for scholars to work. It is also a place where new worlds can be discovered and new insights gleaned from over 1,400 cubic feet of material contained in our collections. Our visitors range from genealogists looking for information on a relative to high school students writing a paper on

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life in Holland that first winter. The history buff is able to find that 1884 photo of Holland's main street here or an early document on the operation of Ottawa County.

How do we do it? With your help of course! It is through our friends, supporters and fellow residents that we are able to continually expand our collections. By what you find in your attics, drawers and with your treasured family belongings we are able to bring exciting new information and insights to light. By your financial support we are able to expand our preservation and collecting so that we can better preserve that legacy.

We commit to you, the beneficiaries of our efforts, that we will do the utmost to provide the best, most professional care of what has been entrusted to us.

From the Archivist

Welcome to the first issue of the Joint Archives Quarterly. Our aim is to keep you abreast of our activities, upcoming events, recent gifts and provide informative articles on the impact archival collections can have on everyday life.

In this issue, in addition to an introduction to our staff, there is an important article on the crisis we face as we watch some of our paper materials turn to dust. In the coming months we hope to touch on a variety of topics including how you might use our materials.

The Joint Archives of Holland has been in full operation for seven months now and we have initiated a number of major projects aimed at making the collections more accessible.

It has been an exciting time for the archives staff. With patron use increasing every month we now have serviced several hundred individuals who have used our collections for research. Scholars from the Netherlands, out of state students, genealogists and local history buffs have been among the many individuals who daily use the resources of the Joint Archives.

Our first, and most important task was to organize the various collections according to a uniform accession system. Along with this we have been busy at work moving materials into acid-free containers to prevent further deterioration of valuable records and manuscripts.



L-R Staff members Rebecca O'Shesky, Archivist Larry Wagenaar, Bill Kronberg, Amy Martin and Krystal Van Wulfen.

Also afoot is publication of a consolidated finding aid to the collections. This will allow the patron to access all materials in each of the three collections by using one guide. This guide will be divided into three distinct sections which will be fully updated to include numerous new collections and hundreds of corrections.

If you have not already done so I encourage you to stop by the archives on the ground floor of the Van Wylen library. As I tell everyone, I will be happy to give you the "nickel tour"!

Larry J. Wagenaar
Archivist

Keeping up with the Staff

Much of the daily activity of the archives goes on behind the scenes. The archives staff is involved in a number of different projects each day which will help increase the accessibility of the collections and will help preserve our materials.

Krystal Van Wulfen, processing intern, and Rebecca O'Shesky, Research assistant, are actively engaged in reorganizing the Western Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives. Before the Seminary materials were moved to the new facility the collection

guide and the collection itself were poorly organized and did not faithfully reflect the true holdings of the collections. Krystal and Reba's work will change that. Building on experience gained in similar work late last year in the Hope and Historical Trust Collections, they will assign new numbering, rebox, label and write new finding aid descriptions for much of the Seminary material.

Amy Martin and Bill Kronberg are involved in preparing newly acquired collections for archival processing by the archivist. Each collection that is received by the archives must be inventoried, cleaned, inspected for damage and relocated into an acid-free environment. Currently Amy is working on an inventory of our biographical collections and Bill is organizing a recently acquired slide collection transferred from a college department to the Hope Collection.

Dr. John Luidens, who was in charge of the Historical Trust and Seminary collections before the formation of the Joint Archives, left the archives at the end of February. We applaud his fine work helping countless researchers. We wish him well as he continues with a personal writing project in the coming months.

One of the major concerns which we have at the archives is the deterioration caused by the silent "bomb" which is a part of every piece of paper manufactured since 1870. In that year a new, inexpensive method to produce paper was introduced. Rather than using cotton in producing paper manufacturers used a wood pulp process.

The problem with pulp paper is that the bond used to keep the paper together is highly acidic. This acid, over the course of years, causes paper to yellow, turn brittle and eventually disintegrate. The cheaper the paper grade - such as paper used in dime store novels and newspapers - the more rapidly the material turns to dust.

In an effort to save the vast amount of historical information contained on the pages of our crumbling newspapers the Joint Archives has been approaching individuals to help us fund a critical project. To microfilm our entire collection of newspapers will cost approximately \$9,000.

Mr. Jack H. De Witt, founder of Big Dutchman in Zeeland and Mr. Gary De Witt of Bil-Mar Foods have generously supported our efforts with gifts totaling \$3,000 toward our goal. So far we have been able to begin microfilming of De Grondwet the most fragile of our papers which was printed in Holland between 1860-1939. The Archives has a run of this paper from 1871-1939.

In the coming weeks we will be arranging for still more filming of our newspapers. Each paper that we can film means that another significant part of our heritage is being permanently preserved. Stories written by our ancestors about what life was like, descriptions of local businesses and reflections on the significant issues of the day are a part of these pages.

If you would like to help us in this critical project please return the donation form in this newsletter to The Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, Holland Michigan 49423.

Preservation Notes

After six months of work, the "stabilization" and reorganization of the Holland Historical Trust, Hope College, and Western Theological Seminary collections is nearing completion.

Stabilization, or replacement of traditional containers with acid-free containers, is essential to the preservation of archival materials. The paper used in most boxes, file-folders, and other paper products contain acid which is responsible for the yellowing and deterioration of documents. Consequently, we made it a priority to stabilize the collection as soon as possible.

As we replaced the old boxes with new acid-free containers, we also re-labeled with new archival labels. The boxes are now numbered in accordance with the collection guide, enabling the staff to find with greater ease an item requested by a patron.

Each of the three collections required various degrees of stabilization, reorganization, and guide revisions. The Holland Historical Trust collection was already housed in acid-free boxes, but the documents were almost inaccessible since they were poorly organized. The Hope College collection required acid-free boxes, file-folders, and labels and also had to be reorganized using a uniformed format.

We encountered the largest hurdle of the project when we began work on the archival materials of Western Theological Seminary. These records, which include general RCA materials, papers of particular synods, classes, churches, and various publications, had to be reorganized in hierarchial order, reboxed, renumbered, and entered into the guide accordingly.

Although the entire project has been time-consuming and at times a bit tedious, the results are proving to be rewarding. The documents are now better preserved, more easily found, and the newly revised and updated guide will be published and made available to the public in July.

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Holland Historical Trust
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Western Theological Seminary
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Sample of New Collections

Holland Historical Trust

- Records of Holland City Bank
- First City Treasurer Ledger
- Civil War Diary
- Civil War Letters
- Ruth Keppel Papers
(available Fall 89)
- Julia Van Raalte Reimold
Papers (available Fall 89)
- Photographs, Post Cards

Hope College

- Board of Trustee Minutes
1866-1929
- Vander Werf Papers
(available Fall 89)
- Critical Issues Symposium
Papers
- Photographs

Western Theological Seminary

- Early Seminary Ledgers
- Local Church Records
- Photographs

We invite you to assist us in our efforts to collect and preserve materials which tell of our heritage. Your gift is greatly needed and will be used for the project which you designate.

\$25 \$50 \$100
 \$_____

Purpose:

- Saving the Newspapers
(Microfilming)
- Preservation Supplies
- Collection Advancement

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____

Zip _____

Mail to: The Joint Archives of Holland
Van Wylen Library
Hope College Campus
Holland, MI 49423