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The Joint Archives Quarterly

Volume 5 Number 1

The Lost Art of Correspondence

In today's high-tech world, when we need to contact a family member or a friend we usually grab the nearest phone and immediately speak to that person. For those with a computer and a modem, electronic mail has become another quick mode of communication. But what about writing letters? After arranging hundreds of letters written over 50 years by the Reimold family I'm learning that quicker communication is not always better. Correspondence is truly an art — and if the twenty-something generation is any indication of the future — a dying art.

Julia and O.S. Reimold wrote to each other often while they were apart. Due to his textbook publishing career in New York, her love for Holland, and their farm (The Maples), they were apart nearly half of each year. Their letters have recorded events which would have been lost had they opted to use the telephone.

The Reimolds' letters are filled with details from their daily routines and pronouncements of their deepest felt thoughts and feelings. The following excerpt, for example, tells of the work involved with opening The Maples each summer:

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A Search for Roots

The television program "Roots," which was first produced in the 1970s as a TV miniseries, started a new movement throughout the country. It seemed to create an overwhelming desire to find out where we had come from. Who were our ancestors and when did they live? Why did they come? A whole new crop of family historians, or genealogists, came out of the woodwork and began to tap in-

(Continued on page 2)



The Reimold Family: Orlando S. Reimold, Julia Van Raalte Reimold, Philip Reimold, Orlando S. Reimold II.

From the Director

Often when I speak to groups who visit the archives, such as a recent opportunity to share our work with the Leadership Holland group, the opportunity comes to describe exactly what the archives is all about. When that happens the first words out of my mouth are that we are in the business of preserving and telling stories.

Our recent and distant past — our history — is not an accumulation of dates and facts. All too often you can look out on an audience of children and see their eyes glaze over or the class get noisier when you begin reciting names, dates and places. There is no doubt that these things are important for relating context but the key is getting down to the story that they have to tell.

The archives is full of stories. In this month's quarterly Jenifer Smith, our Collections Manager, has highlighted a few sources for telling the stories of women in our community. Often, when we discuss the establishment, growth and success of Holland we just look at the men who led this small settlement like Van Raalte, Cappon and Diekema. But just as significant are the contributions made by these notable women.

In addition to the archival materials available here, Marie Zingle has recently authored a history of the Womens Literary Club which touches on many of these leaders. I would encourage you to pick up a copy of this book or stop by the archives and take some time to learn from the materials we have here.

If you should have any questions about collections please give us a call at 394-7798.

Larry J. Wagenaar
Director



A Search for Roots

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to historical resources which had been mainly used by scholars until then.

When you begin your family history the best place to start is right at home. Take some time to interview your family elders and get their stories down! In all of your research you will not find a richer resource than your own parents and great-grandparents.

The next step might be to dig out your own family papers or archives. Bible records, diaries, and family letters can tell you who was born when and where. In the course of digging you might find yourself pleasantly delayed by some of the stories you encounter there!

After you have culled all you can from relatives and printed sources in the family the next step might be to see what your local library has to offer. In Holland the Herrick Public Library has a good collection of family history materials due in large part to an active local genealogical society. At the library you could possibly look at a family tree already prepared for your family by someone else or delve into the local history books. If your ancestors were Dutch you will find compiled lists of Hollanders that show up in the 1850-70 census and those that came over on ships from 1820-80 at the Joint Archives.

Other sources you could consult would be city, county, church, and cemetery records. Of these some are available at the archives (such as Reformed Church records or compiled lists from area cemeteries).

Family history can be very exciting and many who visit us are always ready to share an interesting tidbit about their heritage. "You know old uncle Joe was a bit loony..." or "I discovered I was related to so and so..."

There are a number of books that can get you started such as *Searching for Your Ancestors* by Gilbert Doane and James Bell which takes you through the process. Both Herrick Public Library and the Joint Archives have these types of books available.

Is there a part of history you would like to learn about? Do you enjoy writing? The Joint Archives is looking for contributors to the **Quarterly**. If you would like to help please give us a call at 394-7798 or stop by the archives in the Van Wylen Library at 10th and College. It could get you started on something exciting.

Volunteers Needed!

The Joint Archives of Holland is excited to have a number of volunteers who help out with everything from identification of historical photographs to organizing new collections for researchers. If you enjoy working with historical materials and would like to make a regular commitment to be a part of our "extended" staff please give director Larry Wagenaar a call at 394-7798.

The Archives is located on the lower level of the Van Wylen library at 10th and College.

Hours

1-5 Monday-Saturday
Mornings by Appointment

The Archives will be closed Saturdays
December 13 through January 8.

The Lost Art of Correspondence

(Continued from page 1)

The Maples Aug 27, 1921

Dear O.S.

...I had big plans but only mopped the kitchen & swished off the car...It isn't very hard to do but there's so much else I should do. Letters, mending, getting Philip in some shape for something as regards clothes, & a lot of old duds to be sorted and sent away...Julia¹

Mrs. Reimold's letters also include details about the friends she visited in Holland and some local gossip.

Perhaps more interesting than their daily routine are the descriptions of Julia and O.S. Reimold's courtship. As the former Julia Van Raalte wrote O.S. Reimold a short time before she sailed to Hong Kong to marry him:

[July, 1902?]

My own beloved lover,

And what will you wager that I will not be looking over this letter with you, sitting right in the best place in the world — your knee, my dearie...My heart is so full of rejoicing when I think how in about seven weeks I'll see you who are all the world to me...Julia²

The Reimolds had a very happy marriage, raised two sons, and together faced both good and bad times for more than 50 years. Their letters also document the struggles and challenges

they faced at the death of their eldest son, Philip, who took his own life in the summer of 1940:

The Maples 7-9-40

Dear O.S.

...I know only one thing & that is I failed Philip when he cried out holiday time & many times before, all because I was too convinced of his masterfulness, which after all as too masterful maybe in that he too long kept his burdens to himself. Now I do wish there's been oil, so he could, unburdened, quit his work...Julia³

The Reimolds' correspondence gives us continuity with the past. Their desire to communicate with each other through letters has enabled us to get a glimpse of what it was like to live during a different era. Without collections like that of the Reimold family, the history of "average" people will be largely incomplete.

I strongly encourage your family to continue writing (and saving) letters, so that future generations can read about how we lived our lives in the 1990s and beyond.

Jenifer A. Smith
Collections Manager

1. Julia Reimold, in *Reimold Family Papers*, Box 2, T88-0166a.
2. Julia Reimold, in *Reimold Family Papers*, Box 1, T88-0166a.
3. Julia Reimold, in *Reimold Family Papers*, Box 2, T88-0166a.

A Look at Women In Holland's History

By examining the many collections at the Joint Archives which highlight women and women's organizations one can clearly see the intellectual, social and political ways in which these individuals and groups have shaped Holland's history.

In this issue we will briefly revisit some of the early female graduates of Hope College and their lasting contributions.

A little under a hundred years ago, Julia Van Raalte was the sole female graduate of the Hope College Class of 1895. This statistic can be misleading, though, because Hope College was right on track with many other selective colleges and universities in terms of admitting women.

In fact, women had been graduating from Hope since Frances Phelps and Sarah Gertrude "Trude" Alcott in 1882. Although their numbers were small, the intellectual achievements of these women cannot be heralded enough as, far from studying home economics and short-hand, they studied: "...[r]hetoric, [a]esthetics, mathematics [including calculus], ancient and modern history, mental and moral philosophy...[b]otany, astronomy, physiology...English, French, German, Latin and Greek."¹

These pioneering women helped pave the way for the equality in education that we sometimes take for granted today.



Early women graduates of Hope College. Back Row (left to right) Sara G. Alcott and Frances Phelps. Front Row (left to right) Lizzie Phelps, Mary E. Alcott.

1. Frances Otte Phelps, "My Classmate Trude — A Tribute," *Alumni Magazine*, December 1948, 15.

Hope College Homecoming Parade 1960; the Queen and her Court, Hope College.



Hope College Collection of the Joint Archives

The Joint Archives of Holland

HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER

Holland Historical Trust • Hope College • Western Theological Seminary

Hope College Campus • Holland, MI 49423

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**The Lost Art
Of Correspondence**

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