

Summer 1995

## The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 06.02: Summer 1995

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# The Joint Archives Quarterly

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Summer 1995

## Macatawa's Yellow Brick Road

By Kristin Clark  
Research Assistant

Macatawa Park has attracted many people to its scenic resort setting throughout the years, including L. Frank Baum, author of the famous Wizard of Oz. Frank Baum paid his first visit to the Macatawa area in 1899. He was favorably impressed with the beauty of the area and the people of the community to the extent that he had his own cottage constructed on the shore of Lake Michigan in 1902, following the publication of Father Goose, His Book. Baum named his cottage the "Sign of the Goose" and furnished it almost entirely with goose paraphernalia. The furnishings included a stained glass window featuring a goose, a frieze of green geese in the living room, and even specially ordered brass nail-heads shaped as geese were used in the upholstery.

The Baum family vacationed at Macatawa regularly until 1909. During the summers that they spent at the "Sign of the Goose", the Baum family became thoroughly immersed in Macatawan society. They were involved with many local organizations such as the Cottagers Association and the Yacht Club.

Baum's ties with the people of Macatawa provided him with a large quantity of material to write about. In 1907, he published a work titled Tamawaca Folks under the pseudonym John Estes Cook. Tamawaca Folks was a thinly disguised, fictional novel which recorded the events that occurred



*The 'Sign of the Goose', c. 1910*

in Macatawa and the people that were involved. Macatawa was slightly scandalized by this literary work, since it contained details of an economic battle between characters that were easily identified by the summer residents.

Frank Baum was a very successful author and popular with nearly everyone, but children were perhaps his biggest fans. Residents of Macatawa recall that Baum was frequently found entertaining children at the "Sign of the Goose". Children could not resist his fascinating cottage and the fanciful tales that he would weave about a magical land called Oz. In fact, Baum's stories held a very special meaning for one young girl at Macatawa named Dorothy. Dorothy Hall is believed by many to have been the inspiration for the legendary heroine in the Wizard of Oz. Dorothy's grandparents were friends of the Baum's and the two families were often together. Consequently, young Dorothy spent a good deal of time in Baum's care. He would

*(Continued on page 3)*

Photo Courtesy of Donald Van Reken, S. Todd, Jr. Collection

## From the Director

Over the past several months, Jenifer and I have been feverishly preparing for the Michigan Archival Association meeting which the Joint Archives hosted in June. Getting prepared for a significant professional meeting and the opportunity to showcase the Joint Archives was both an exciting and challenging experience.

The effort we spent on getting ready for our fellow archivists, however, pales in comparison to the community effort we will need to properly host the Holland Sesquicentennial Celebration in 1997.

Currently a core committee of community leaders is gathering regularly to get the ball rolling and commence the plans. A great deal of work lies ahead and we hope that Holland's 150th anniversary will garner both regional and national interest in addition to being a fun series of events for our whole community.

The Joint Archives of Holland is already making plans to host two gatherings during the Sesquicentennial year. The first is the biennial meeting of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS). In 1997, we hope to blend the Dutch interest with a broader understanding of the ethnic diversity in Holland today.

Following the AADAS conference, we also hope to host a state-wide historical group, showcasing the historical strengths of our city.

Now is the time for the Holland community to start thinking about the coming celebration. The people and events that will make this event outstanding need to be in place by early next year. I encourage you to begin sharing your ideas on what would help to make our Sesquicentennial event a shining spot in our history!

**Larry J. Wagenaar**



*Semi-Centennial Arch, 8th Street, Holland, 1897*

## Oral History Focus: Tulip Time

Each year the Joint Archives of Holland administers the Hope College Oral History Project which focuses on an aspect of local or college history. After several years of documenting various ethnic communities, this year we are tracking down memories of Tulip Time.

Hope College senior Jason Upchurch is the student coordinator of this year's project and has interviewed over twenty people who have been associated with the festival. Ranging from principal participants in the annual event to people who have served as part-time volunteers, Upchurch is attempting to cover as many historical aspects and personal memories about Tulip Time as he can. These interviews cover everything from memories of Lida Rogers planting the first tulips to the latest efforts to make the festival appeal to an even broader audience.

As Tulip Time remains the fifth largest festival in the United States, its history is one of great importance for the people of Holland. The Joint Archives of Holland strives to capture this rich history from the perspective of those who know it best.

*If you have memories of Tulip Time which you would like to share with us, please call the archives at (616) 395-7798.*



*Lovers' Lane, Macatawa, Michigan, c.1900*

*(Macatawa, continued from page 1)*

sometimes remark that if he ever had a daughter, he would name her Dorothy. Baum would sit with Dorothy in the rocking chair shaped like a goose and recite stories about Oz, making it a practice to substitute the word “you” for “Dorothy” which made the little girl feel as if she truly had been carried to the land of Oz by a tornado.

Other features found in the Wizard of Oz are thought to be borrowed from Macatawa Park as well. Munchkinland was modeled after a group of cottages called Perry’s Circle and the yellow brick road was inspired by the paths that led to them. During the summers that Frank Baum spent at Macatawa, these paths were yellow.

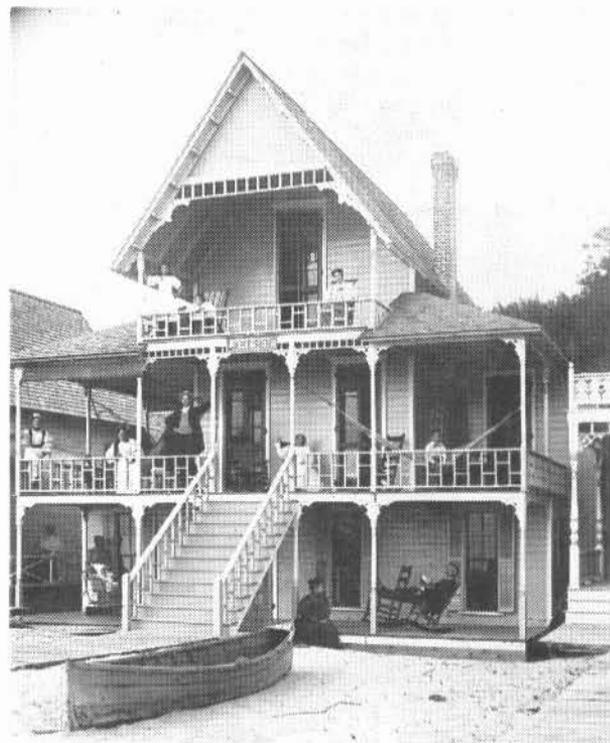
The “Sign of the Goose” was sold in 1910 when the Baum family moved to Palm Springs, California, in order to be near the Hollywood film colony. The cottage passed through the hands of various owners for several years until Stanton Todd, Sr. purchased it in 1917. The name of the cottage was changed to “Tamawaca” and used by the Todd family until a fire destroyed it in 1927. The remnants of the cottage were eventually washed into Lake Michigan.

In spite of the fact that his cottage no longer stands, Frank Baum has not been forgotten by the residents of Macatawa. At one time, an annual festival was held in Holland celebrating the Wizard of Oz. The festival sponsored events such as charac-

ter look-a-like contests, a parade, and several arts and crafts exhibitions. At least one member of the cast of the 1939 film version of the story made an appearance at the festival. Meinhardt Raabe, who played the part of the Munchkin coroner, visited on the fiftieth anniversary of the movie, in 1989.

Macatawa Park occupies a unique position in history as the inspiration for a portion of the setting of the Wizard of Oz and possibly the main character. This position is made even more exceptional by the timeless nature of the Wizard of Oz. It is a story that continues to be passed down through the generations, retaining the ability to enchant audiences just as much today as it did nearly a century ago. Macatawa Park is certain to live on through the Wizard of Oz and be remembered not only as a spectacular lakeshore resort, but also for its contribution to Frank Baum’s celebrated fable.

**Kristin Clark, a summer research assistant at the Joint Archives, is a Junior at Hope College.**



*Lakeside Cottage of F.G. Perkins, Macatawa Park, 1898*

## Four Years That Flew By

While in my senior year at Grandville High School, I began to look at which college I wanted to attend in the fall. After weeding through the masses of college promotional items that came to my mailbox, I decided on Hope College due to my affiliation with the Reformed Church in America (RCA), and sent in my application. Mrs. Elaine Bruins, who was working in the Admissions Office at that time, noticed my interest in Reformed Church history and sent a copy of my application to her husband, then professor of religion, Elton Bruins. As many of you are aware, he also shares a love of RCA history. I was pleasantly surprised by a letter from him inviting me to stop by his office when I visited campus, at which time he would show me the archives. This event, now over four years old, changed my life.

Due to my introduction to the archives through Elton Bruins, I was able to get a job at the Joint Archives in August of 1991. Never did I dream that four years later I would still be here. This fall will be my final semester at Hope, and the student teaching that will take place during it does not allow

me enough time to work in the archives. So, I wanted to take a moment to publicly say farewell. After working full-time during Christmas breaks, spring breaks, and throughout the summers, as well as part-time during semesters, I have come to know this place very well. Many people tell me that I "can find anything in the archives." Others have expressed how much they will miss me -- this too is very kind. What many people do not realize is how much *I* will miss everyone. I have had the privilege over the past four years to work with many wonderful people, including my supervisors, the other student workers, and all the great volunteers. I will also miss so many of the patrons who came through our doors, phoned, or wrote letters. Nothing has given me greater pleasure than when we were able to provide researchers with the information they needed.

However, as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end. So it is with my employment at the archives. The past four years have been a good experience for me, and many of you have been an important part of it.

**Chad A. Boorsma**  
**Head Research Assistant**

*We thank Chad for his four years of dedicated service and wish him the best of luck in the future. -- the editors.*



*Raising the steeple at Western Theological Seminary during construction of their new building, 1954. In the background is Dimnent Memorial Chapel*

## *In the News*

### **New Collections Processed**

Several important collections have been processed this summer and are now available for research. One of the largest collections is over 60.00 linear ft. of the Records of the Holland City Clerk. These records (1867-1987) include a complete set of proceedings of the Common Council from 1867-1956, early election returns, files of the city manager from the 1950s, and proceedings for the Hospital Board, Police and Fire Board, Park and Cemetery Board, and Library Board, among others. Scrapbooks are also included which give a great overview of Holland news from 1911-1976.

The Papers of Mildred Schuppert, new to the collections of Western Theological Seminary, are also open to research. Miss Schuppert, Hope College class of 1931 and librarian at Western Theological Seminary for more than 20 years, was a leader in the library as well as the larger Holland Community. Her papers reflect her deep dedication to her profession as well as to the Reformed Church in America. An original draft of her Digest and Index of the General Synod of the Reformed Church in America is included in the collection, as well as her extensive correspondence with area ministers, Hope College professors and administrators, and her family.

Local writer Paul De Kruif's Papers, newly processed, are an important addition to the Holland Historical Trust Collection at the Joint Archives. DeKruif received international acclaim for his biological thriller, Microbe Hunters, which has been translated into 18 languages and sold more than 1 million copies. He collaborated with Sinclair Lewis on the novel Arrowsmith.

In 1937, De Kruif was chosen by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to be secretary of the Commission for Infantile Paralysis. For more than 20 years, De



*Mildred Schuppert*

Kruif was a contributing editor to the Reader's Digest.

The collection includes articles and newspaper clippings about De Kruif and his work, a first draft and background material for Microbe Hunters, and an extensive collection of his books, translated into many different languages.

The archives is also pleased to announce that the Records of the West Michigan Furniture Company are now open to researchers. Founded in 1889, the West Michigan Furniture Company was a maker of fine bedroom and dining room furniture until its demise in 1984. Included in the collection are detailed financial records which not only provide facts about the company's financial situation, but a lesson in turn-of-the-century bookkeeping. Furniture catalogs chronicle the design history of the company, which began making quality reproductions of 19th century designs before turning to modern furniture designs which used exotic woods and veneers.

13. On The Beach, Macatawa, Mich.



Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives

*Those Lazy Days of Summer at Macatawa, c.1900*

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