

Summer 1996

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Jenifer S. Holman

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The Joint Archives Quarterly

Volume 7 Number 3

Summer 1996

Of Missions and Missionaries

As Holland prepares to celebrate its sesquicentennial, some aspects of Holland history easily come to mind: Klompen dancing and the Tulip Time festival, the familiar story of the Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte's Kolonie, and the terrible fire that destroyed over 80% of Holland in 1871. The life and times of Reformed Church missionaries may not come to mind as easily, but Holland, Hope College, and Western Theological Seminary can claim more than a few.

The Reformed Church in America (RCA) has a rich tradition of spreading the Gospel dating back to 1796.¹ Missionaries not only had the great challenge of converting people to Christianity, but also the challenges of learning new languages and different cultures. Following are brief sketches of four RCA missions and some missionaries with Holland connections who made tremendous contributions to the missions in which they served.



Mrs. Harriet Scudder



Dr. John Scudder, n.d.

Arcot Mission (India)

Dr. John Scudder left a thriving medical practice in New York City to become one of the first medical missionaries of the RCA. He served with other missionaries in the Ceylon Mission from 1819-1836 while he and his wife Harriet raised their nine children. In 1853, three of John Scudder's sons: Henry Scudder, William Scudder and Joseph Scudder travelled to the Arcot District and founded the mission there. All nine children were to eventually join the Arcot Mission, making the Scudder family's contribution there quite unparalleled. By 1861, ten missionary families served the Arcot Mission; 9 of these families carried the name Scudder.²

The Arcot Mission was well established when Cornelius A. De Bruin, a 1926 Western Theological Seminary graduate and his wife Frances began their years of service. The Arcot Mission had become one of the most successful missions of the Reformed Church

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From the Director

My thoughts have just turned from saying good-bye to a friend; someone I had been given the opportunity to know through my work at the Archives. She and her husband had given of their time to help us organize materials here at the Archives and the Lord recently took her from us. The pastor's homily at her memorial service reminded me of the limited time each of us has and how, sooner or later, we will all become part of history as we leave the material for the heavenly.

One of the blessings I have had in my life is to be a part of preserving history for the present and the future. Being a part of building a legacy - whether that is a deliberate effort like the Sesquicentennial Oral History Project (described in this issue), stopping by to survey a new cache of photographs, or the routine collecting of area organizational newsletters and clippings for our topical file - it is exciting to know that it will be helpful to others.

The dramatic increase in the numbers of patrons who use the archives is a testament to the importance of archives. Since we moved to a 9-5 schedule in January there has been a 35% increase in the number of people we serve. College students exploring the turbulent '60s, businesses checking out property histories for environmental risk, scholars writing a book: they have all been faces we have seen.

Unfortunately, one of the faces we will not be seeing anymore is that of Collections Archivist Jenifer Smith Holman. Her departure is a great loss to the Joint Archives; we have benefited from her talents and skills for over three years. We bid her well in this new phase of her life.

In the coming sixteen months Holland, Michigan, will be going through a new phase of its history too. The Sesquicentennial, which we have heard about from time to time, is getting into high gear. The Joint Archives of Holland is looking forward to its role by participating in projects which will provide a lasting legacy.

As we all think about how our life and times will be remembered and get excited for the celebrations ahead, it is my hope that you will feel the gentle assurance that was such a part of the service for my friend today.

Larry J. Wagenaar

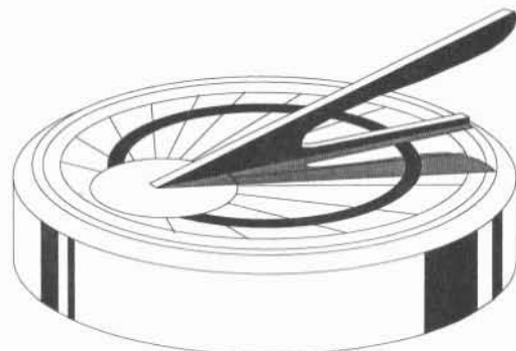
The Joint Archives Says Good-bye

This summer we bid farewell to one of our professional archivists at the Joint Archives of Holland, Jenifer Smith Holman. She is relocating to La Crosse, Wisconsin, with her husband who has accepted a new engineering position. We are saddened by her leaving as she has been a distinct asset to the staff and a key individual in the many enhancements the archives has been able to offer over the past three years.

Jenifer joined our staff in June of 1993, just as the position of Collections Archivist was moving from grant funding from the National Historical Publications Commission to a permanent faculty position. This change was made possible by the impending reorganization of the Joint Archives from a jointly operated entity to a department of Hope College that provides archival services to agencies like the Holland Historical Trust (Holland Museum), Western Theological Seminary, and Crystal Cathedral Ministries.

In her time on the staff she has processed and supervised the processing of over 1,000 linear feet of archival materials; hired, trained and supervised our student and volunteer staff; assisted with reference activities; edited the Joint Archives Quarterly; and helped the director with soliciting and handling new collections. Jenifer has been an outstanding archivist.

Many of our regular customers have had occasion to work with Jenifer and benefited from her extensive knowledge of our collections. Please stop by and help us bid her a fond farewell.



Sesquicentennial Oral Histories

Come join us for a fascinating project!

From summer 1996 through the end of 1997 the Joint Archives of Holland, in conjunction with the Heritage Committee of the Sesquicentennial Commission, will be attempting to record 150 stories; one oral history for each year since Holland was established. The Archives is looking for volunteers to help us conduct these interviews.

On September 26 the Archives will host a workshop discussing oral histories and the Sesquicentennial project to complete 150 interviews. The workshop will start at 7 p.m. in the Joint Archives reading room on the lower level of the Van Wylen Library. Grand Rapids City Historian Gordon Olson, who has served on the Michigan Oral History Council, will join Joint Archives director Larry Wagenaar to conduct the workshop. We expect to be done by 9 p.m.; refreshments will be provided.

Sitting down for a conversation about the past can be a fascinating experience. We will explain the how-tos and give some pointers on oral history at the workshop, provide recording equipment to use, and help link volunteers with potential interviewees. Whether you want to do one interview - and have someone in mind - or you want to help out with several interviews, we hope that you can be a part of this exciting project.

To reserve a spot at the workshop please call the Joint Archives at 395-7798.

Missions (continued from page 1)

from the looks of the many hospitals, schools, and churches that had been built.³ Frances De Bruin describes the excitement of missionary work in the following excerpt from a letter she wrote to a friend in 1936:

*"We have had a very pleasant season...Of course, it is not all entertainment that keeps us busy during this season. We have a convention for the deepening of the Spiritual life, and this year the speaker was an Indian pastor from North India. Then came a conference lasting 4 days, which was very interesting. That gives us a chance to meet missionaries from all over India, and exchange ideas with them."*⁴

Besides furthering their education and learning about new cultures, missionaries also spent a considerable amount of time out in the field. Frances De Bruin wrote many letters describing the difficulties in building communities of Christian believers. Here is an example:

"We are having an interesting time. We are contemplating opening a new village with fifteen families at present, and more expected to come....I had two of my native pastors, supervisor of the village schools and a couple of little boys with me. We had a great time. I went down purposely to see whether they were ready to receive Christianity and Baptism. We have opened villages that were not ready and I vowed never to repeat the mistake. So often they come from material motives such as a desire for better clothing or lands or homes. I asked them why they wanted to come and all of them said: 'to worship the true God, to lead better lives, to know Christ' Only one said 'to receive better clothing. '...I told them both that they need not come. We did not want them that way."⁵

Finding and cultivating a Christian community was not an easy task. Finding people willing to abandon the religion so ingrained with their culture and, as in Arabia, to break the law, was at times not very hopeful.

Arabian Mission

One of Holland's local connections to the Arabian Mission, founded in 1889, is Hope College graduate Jeannette Veldman. Trained as a nurse, Veldman served at Hope Hospital in Amoy, China, until she was forced to leave Amoy in 1951 after the communist takeover. Veldman was reassigned to the Arabian mission as Director of Nursing and In-service Education in 1952. While there, Veldman began a nursing school which served Iraq, Kuwait, Bahrain and Oman. Spreading Christianity worked slowly at the American Mission in Amarah, Iraq, where Veldman was stationed in 1955:

"We do have encouraging bits of evidence that the Holy Spirit is working, and we thank God that He gives us this visible evidence now and then. One young man shows continuous progress in His

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Gospel Boat, Amoy, China

Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives

of my first real information about Japan. Having spent nine years of his childhood in Japan, he had suffered the double ignominy of living as a Korean national and as a son of a Christian minister in Japan before and after World War II. I subsequently learned that the Christian church in Japan was a struggling minuscule minority, that the percentage of Christians among the Japanese population was one of the smallest in the world, and that there was something unique or different about Japanese attitudes toward outsiders. As a sense of my calling to mission in Japan grew, I entertained the hope that in serving here I might make some contribution toward positive changes in the statistics and attitudes." ⁹

Gordon Laman continues to make positive contributions to the Christian community in Japan. He has served there since 1959.

Missions (continued from page 3)

inner Christian life, and has even bravely told other young men of this faith in Christ in large groups as they questioned and accused him of 'doing such a thing.'"⁶

Today, the RCA has kept up its presence in the Middle East and missionaries provide health care, education, and Bible study/worship.

Japan Mission

The RCA mission in Japan was founded in 1859, just one year after a treaty opened the borders to missionaries. Newly arriving missionaries in Japan were greeted by political unrest, a language barrier, and an unfamiliar climate. At that time, thankfully, the Japanese upper classes were enamored with Western culture and desired to learn English at the small mission school. Missionary James Hamilton Ballagh taught them English with a twist as he used the Bible as their textbook.⁷ Even more intriguing is that all this evangelizing went on even though Christianity was banned in Japan until 1873. Government spies kept close watch on the missionaries, but were so impressed with the kindness of the missionaries that many of them converted to Christianity.⁸

The reasons for becoming a missionary are many. In an article about the history of the persecution of Christianity in Japan the Rev. Gordon D. Laman (Hope College class of 1956) writes of how he was called to become a missionary:

"My Korean college roommate was the source

Amoy Mission (China)

Dr. John Otte (Hope College class of 1883) did not have a calling to be a missionary, a situation that greatly disappointed his mother. While at the University of Michigan medical school, his minister, Dr. Peter Moerdyk, suggested that he become a medical missionary.¹⁰ Dr. Otte fulfilled both his and his mother's dreams by sailing to Amoy, China, in 1888 to begin his service as a medical missionary. Otte contributed much to the missionary field; perhaps his most lasting

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HOPE AND WILHELMINA HOSPITALS, AMOY, CHINA

Hope and Wilhelmina Hospitals, Amoy, China

Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland

Record Numbers Visit Archives

Since expanding its hours at the beginning of 1996, the Joint Archives of Holland has seen a more than 30 percent increase in the number of patrons using its historical collections.

The Joint Archives expanded its hours to 9-5 Monday through Friday at the start of the year. Nearly 130 researchers visited the archives in January.

"I'm very excited about the additional services that we are able to provide the Holland community and to researchers who come to visit the Joint Archives, both locally and from across the United States and overseas," said Larry Wagenaar, director of the Joint Archives. "We are committed to providing wide accessibility to the historical resources that are stored at the Joint Archives."

Prior to January 1, the Joint Archives was open from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, although patrons could make an appointment to undertake research in the morning.

As the Sesquicentennial approaches, having longer hours will allow Archives staff to better serve the large array of patrons doing research on different aspects of the Holland community.

Since increasing our hours to 9-5 Monday-Friday, the Joint Archives has seen a 35% increase in the number of researchers visiting the repository each month.

In April, 175 individuals came to the Joint Archives to undertake research including social activities on the Hope campus, an in-depth look at church records, and near daily use of the Holland City News and Holland Sentinel microfilm.

We are excited by this increased usage of our collections and are working to keep up with your reference and research assistance needs.

Search Begins for New Archivist

The Joint Archives of Holland is now seeking a new professional archivist to fill the position of Col-



Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives

A Lazy Summer Day at the Ottawa Beach Hotel

lections Archivist with the Rank of Assistant Professor. We hope to begin interviews in October and have our new archivist on board by January 1997. An MLS from an ALA accredited library school or an MA in History, with a two years archival experience is required. For a full position description contact the Joint Archives.

Archives Takes Appointments

Planning on visiting the archives for in-depth research?

With the departure of one of our archivists there may be times when patrons visiting the Joint Archives of Holland find only limited reference services are available.

Should you be travelling some distance to visit the Joint Archives, an advance appointment is recommended by calling (616) 395-7798.

The Joint Archives is located on the lower level of the Van Wylen Library at 10th St. and College Ave.

Hours

9-5 p.m.
Monday - Friday

In the News

The staff at the Archives has had a busy summer accessioning and processing new collections. Below are just a few of the newsworthy additions.

New Accessions

Luciano Hernandez has donated records of his work with the Ottawa County Commission. These records give insight into the workings of the commission and their relationship to Holland's citizens. They will complement our recent addition of City of Holland records such as City Council minutes and Human Relations Commission minutes.

Well known local historian and author Donald Van Reken has donated his research materials created while he and Randy Vande Water wrote their history of the Holland Furnace Company. Many photographs and company records make up the primary source material that makes this collection so exciting.

Open for Research

Processing has become a back room obsession and we have many new collections open for research as a result of the hard work and dedication of the Joint Archives staff. Records of the **Holland Furni-**

ture Company, organized in 1894, include many furniture catalogs and complement the records of the West Michigan Furniture Company. We encourage anyone with other local furniture company catalogs to bring them into the Archives. These catalogs are crucial records for people researching pieces of furniture.

Another crucial record for research is cemetery records. We now have original records of **Pilgrim Home Cemetery** dating back to 1855. The oldest cemetery in Holland, Pilgrim Home was founded as *Het Kerkhof Van Holland* in 1847. Records include board minutes, lot registries, and maps.

The history of Holland's **Third Reformed Church**, organized in 1867, is well represented by over six linear feet of the church's records and by Dr. Elton Bruins' recently revised history entitled *The Americanization of a Congregation*. Records include consistory minutes, newsletters, church society records (such as Ladies Aid and women's missionary society), and church bulletins.

The **Century Club**, a private social club established in 1897 and still going strong with 100 members today, has been home to many of Holland's most influential men and women. Records include meeting minutes from 1909-1963 as well as a recently published history of the club's past presidents.

If you've ever wondered how banks managed their accounts before computers and ATMs, we now have records available from Holland's oldest banks: **Holland City State Bank, First State Bank, Holland State Bank, First National Bank, and Peoples State Bank**. A long history of mergers connects Holland City State Bank to First National Bank. Peoples State Bank has many photographs and a detailed history of its beginnings. Important financial information about early local businesses is also contained in these records.



Holland Historical Trust Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland

Holland Furnace Co. Float at the Nonesuch Bros. Circus (Janesville, Wis.), July 1914



Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland

John and Frances Phelps Otte

Missions (continued from page 3)

achievement has been the building of Hope and Wilhelmina Hospitals in Amoy. The work was difficult, but like other missionaries both before and after him, it was ultimately rewarding:

"It would be difficult to find a happier sphere of work than that of the Medical Missionary in China. There are many, very many, times of deep anxiety, but in all these God helps. Much is needed for the work that cannot yet be obtained. In God's own time these wants will be fulfilled. For what has been received we praise God, and thank the many friends of the work the world over."¹¹

The Scudder Family, Cornie and Frances De Bruin, Jeannette Veldman, John and Frances Phelps Otte, and Gordon D. Laman all encountered the uncertainty of travelling to a new country, the difficulty of obtaining funds, and building a Christian community, but each was rewarded by the experience. Those spiritual rewards continue to guide new generation of missionaries and their message of faith.

This sampling of stories and information about

the foreign missions of the Reformed Church and some missionaries that have hailed from Holland barely scratch at the surface of the rich collections on missions and missionaries that we have in the Western Theological Seminary Collections at the Joint Archives. Many more tales of perseverance, political intrigue, and deep and abiding faith are just waiting to be discovered.

by Jenifer S. Holman

Endnotes

- ¹ Arie R. Brouwer. *Reformed Church Roots: Thirty-five Formative Events*. (New York: Reformed Church press, 1977) 129.
- ² John James DeBoer. *The Story of the Arcot Mission*. (New York: Reformed Church in America, n.d.) 8-19.
- ³ J. Sam Ponniah. "The Vellore Diocese: Fruit of the RCA Mission," in *The Church Herald* July 23, 1982, 28.
- ⁴ from a letter written by Frances De Bruin dated June 23, 1936. W88-0027. Cornelius De Bruin Papers. Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.
- ⁵ from a letter written by Frances De Bruin dated February 2, 1936. W88-0027. Cornelius De Bruin Papers. Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.
- ⁶ "From Jeannette Veldman," missionary letter dated October 3, 1954. Jeannette Veldman Papers (W89-1012) in the Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.
- ⁷ Kiyoshi Mizugaki. "One Hundred Years of Evangelism in Japan" W92-1049. in the Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.
- ⁸ *Ibid.*
- ⁹ Gordon D. Laman. "Our Nagasaki Legacy: An Examination of the Period of Persecution of Christianity and its Impact on Subsequent Christian Mission in Japan," reprinted from *The Northeast Asia Journal of Theology*, March/September 1982, 94 in Gordon Laman Papers, W88-0069a in the Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.
- ¹⁰ Frances Phelps Otte. "A History of the First Medical Work in Foreign Lands of the Reformed Church in America: Pioneering in Medical Missions." Otte Family Papers (W88-0089) in the Western Theological Seminary Collections of the Joint Archives of Holland.
- ¹¹ John A. Otte. *The Healing Art in China*. (New York: Reformed Church in America. Board of Foreign Missions, n.d.) Otte Family Papers (W88-0089) in the Western Theological Seminary Collection of the Joint Archives of Holland.

Going Away This Winter?

If you would like to receive your fall/winter copies of the Quarterly, please contact Lori at the Joint Archives (395-7798) with your temporary address change.



Summer Campers Brave the Mosquitos at Waukazoo, c. 1900

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