

Spring 1997

The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 08.01: Spring 1997

Jeanne Jacobson

Larry J. Wagenaar

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Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Jacobson, Jeanne and Wagenaar, Larry J., "The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 08.01: Spring 1997" (1997). *The Joint Archives Quarterly*. Paper 23.

<http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/jaquarterly/23>

Published in: *Joint Archives Quarterly*, Volume 8, Issue 1, Spring April 1, 1997. Copyright © 1997 Hope College, Holland, Michigan.

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The Joint Archives Quarterly

Volume 8 Number 1

Spring 1997

ACVR Biography Breaks New Ground

Dr. Jeanne Jačobson

Give me research. After all, the truth of anything at all doesn't lie in someone's account of it. It lies in all the small facts of the time. An advertisement in a paper. The sale of a house. The price of a ring. The real history is written in forms not meant as history. In Wardrobe accounts, in Privy Purse expenses, in personal letters, in estate books. If someone, say, insists that Lady Whoosit never had a child, and you find in the account book the entry: "For the son born to my lady on Michaelmas eve: five yards of blue ribbon, fourpence halfpenny" it's a reasonably fair deduction that my lady had a son on Michaelmas eve.

So speaks one of the characters in Elizabeth Mackintosh's historical mystery, *The Daughter of Time*, (written under the pseudonym, Josephine Tey), in impassioned advocacy of seeking truth through research, rather the reading of history. But just as historians need original documents, the documents need human minds to try to read and understand them, and to consider the questions they suggest. If we encountered the situation described in the excerpt above, we should ask the question, "Why, when the Lady did have a son (as the accountbook entry apparently proves) is there insistence that she did not?" And to seek that answer we would look for other documents, especially letters, written both at the time and later; we would also read histories of the time and later, looking for more information about the Lady and her family and their situation. One document, intriguing because there is an oddity about it, becomes the center of a web that spins out in all directions.

Among the richest and most complex resources for information about Albertus Van Raalte and his family are letters preserved in archives. They represent only a small fraction of letters from, to, and

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Hope College Collection-Joint Archives

Sesquicentennial Conference

The Joint Archives of Holland is pleased to announce that it will be hosting the 11th biennial conference of the Association for the Advancement of Dutch American Studies (AADAS). The conference is entitled, "The Sesquicentennial of Dutch Immigration: 150 Years of Ethnic Heritage," and will focus on the development of Dutch settlements in western Michigan, Iowa, and other places as well as take a look at the personalities of individuals who have played a part over the course of a century and a half of Dutch ethnic immigration in the middle west.

The event will be held in the Maas Center on the campus of Hope College on June 12 and 13. It will feature Dutch scholars from the Netherlands including Hans Krabbendam, George Harinck, Albert Ypma, and Jaap van Marle, as well as American scholars Elton Bruins, Robert Swierenga, Philip Webber, Earl and

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From the Director

In this issue of the Joint Archives *Quarterly*, we're happy to introduce our new Collections Archivist, Mr. Geoffrey Reynolds. A graduate of Wayne State University and their nationally recognized archival science program, he comes to us from Garden City, Michigan, and is a native of Charlevoix. He has worked for the the Charlevoix Historical Society, Henry Ford Health Systems and General Motors Media Archives, and Little Caesar's Enterprises processing Detroit Tigers Baseball Club records. Geoffrey comes to the Joint Archives with a proven track record of processing archival collections, providing excellent public reference, and handling the various collection needs that we have at the Archives.

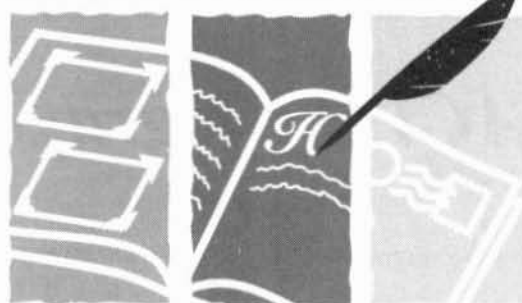
As you have probably noticed, we've gone more months than usual without issuing an edition of the *Quarterly*. We found that Sesquicentennial activities, the large number of researchers, a temporary reduction in professional staff, and special projects put significant demands on the professional, secretarial, student and volunteer staff of the Joint Archives of Holland. We apologize for the delay in getting this issue of the Joint Archives *Quarterly* into your hands.

The past several months, however, have been very exciting ones for the Archives. During the month of October we exceeded 250 research patrons in our Reading Room, when we normally average closer to 90-100 researchers per month. We helped to publish the new Van Raalte biography, *A. C. Van Raalte: Dutch Leader and American Patriot*, developed the new Sesquicentennial Calendar in conjunction with Lisa Souters and the Commission, and got our teeth into the major Oral History project "150 Stories for 150 Years." It has been an exciting opportunity to make a contribution to the Sesquicentennial and provide an enduring legacy.

Finally, we would like to introduce our new logo to you in this issue of the *Quarterly*. With assistance from the Image Group here in Holland, we've developed a logo which represents the various types of material stored at the Joint Archives and brings them together along with our institutional members' names. Up to this time, the Joint Archives has not had a logo, aside from our distinctive typeface - we hope you like it!

Larry J. Wagenaar

The Joint Archives of Holland



HISTORY RESEARCH CENTER
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New Relationship With Amway

Over the past year, the Joint Archives has been developing a relationship with one of the largest and most successful corporations in the United States. The Amway Corporation, which is located in Ada, Michigan, and whose founders include Mr. Richard DeVos, and Mr. Jay Van Andel, have chosen to work with the Joint Archives of Holland in a cooperative historical preservation effort.

The new relationship between Amway and the Joint Archives/Hope College includes placement of a publicly available research collection featuring selected materials which will be housed at the Joint Archives facility for public access to the rich historical story of the Amway Corporation. In addition, Joint Archives Director Larry Wagenaar will be assisting the Amway Corporation in putting together an Amway Corporate Archives at one of their Ada facilities.

The Amway materials will join other nationally significant collections at the Joint Archives including the Robert Schuller/Crystal Cathedral and Guy Vander Jagt papers.

We look forward to this new and exciting relationship which will preserve the rich historical story of one of America's premier corporations.

150 Stories for 150 Years



Staff and volunteers of the Joint Archives of Holland have been busy typing transcripts from the Sesquicentennial Oral History Project *150 Stories for 150 Years*. Volunteers have been conducting interviews with a wide variety of Holland citizens and have been producing tapes of their conversations at a prodigious rate.

At press time, the volunteers for the Sesquicentennial Oral History Project and Joint Archives staff have completed 63 interviews, and just over ten of these have been completely transcribed and will soon be available for research use.

These transcripts provide a lasting resource documenting our lives and times in the last half of the twentieth century and will be used by scholars, students and the public for generations to come.

If you have suggestions for individuals who should be considered for an oral history interview, please call the Joint Archives of Holland at 395-7798. We hope to complete the Sesquicentennial Oral History Project by the end of 1997 and complete the transcription of all the interviews by the end of the following year.

For more information, contact the Joint Archives.

Conference (continued from page 1)

Cornelia Kennedy, Suzanne Sinke, Jack Elenbaas, Margriet Lacy, Sander de Haan, Larry Wagenaar and others.

Topics will include an in-depth look at Albertus C. Van Raalte, exploration of Cornelius Vander Meulen, (the leader of group which settled Zeeland, Michigan), the troublesome relationship between Hendrik Scholte and A. C. Van Raalte, discussions of the Pella and northwest Iowa Dutch settlements, a look at gendered relationship and the Dutch ethnic experience, Dutch soldiers in the Civil War, among other topics.

Registration for the conference is \$25 for individuals and \$35 for couples. Information for registration can be obtained by calling the Joint Archives at 616-395-7798 or writing to us at the Joint Archives of Holland, Hope College, P.O. Box 9000, Holland, MI 49422-9000.

Van Raalte (continued from page 1)

about Albertus and Christina Van Raalte and their children that would be of great interest if they had been preserved. The originals of letters which were resources for the recently published *Albertus C. Van Raalte: Dutch Leader and American Patriot* are held in different archival collections in Michigan, and in New Jersey and the Netherlands as well. Many are written in Dutch, and often translations into English made at different times differ substantially.

In examining an original letter or an exact copy, readers have a challenging task, even if the language is familiar to them. They must decode messages which are handwritten, often in haste, and sometimes with unusual misspellings; and interpret passages which include unfamiliar idioms and references to people and events well known to the letter's writer and recipient, but unfamiliar today. For researchers, the challenge is thrilling, though friends may find it difficult to understand their excitement at finding puzzling or conflicting passages, and their elation when a puzzle has been satisfyingly solved.

The Civil War period produced a treasure trove of letters. During those years, many young and not-so-young men, "we have 459 men from 18 to 45 years," Albertus Van Raalte wrote, left their homes for the first time. Holland soldiers' earliest letters are often accounts of dazzling experiences in cities hitherto unknown, such as Niles, Michigan, where, one soldier

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Van Raalte (continued from page 3).

recalled, "we were enthusiastically received, the girls showering us with kisses, flowers and food." In his memoirs, U. S. Grant, commander of the Union armies and later President of the United States, commented on the war's effect on Americans' outlook and language.

Prior to the rebellion the great mass of the people were satisfied to remain near the scenes of their birth. In fact an immense majority of the whole people did not feel secure against coming to want should they move among entire strangers. So much was the country divided into small communities that localized idioms had grown up, so that you could almost tell what section a person was from by hearing him speak. This is all changed now. The war begot a spirit of independence and enterprise. The feeling now is, that a youth must cut loose from his old surroundings to enable him to get up in the world. There is now such a commingling of the people that particular idioms and pronunciations are no longer localized to any great extent

At the time of the Civil War, many northern states had heterogeneous populations which included sizable immigrant groups. In Holland and elsewhere, men "flocked to the colors before some of them could read the call to arms in the language of their adopted country." Two of Albertus and Christina Van Raalte's sons joined the army in 1862 and were discharged after the war ended in 1865. They wrote to their sister Christine in English and to their parents in Dutch but as the war went on, Dutch and English became intermixed. Dirk Van Raalte's comparison of Kentucky victuals with home cooking is a lively example. "De boeren die komen nu dageliks in," he wrote to his mother, "met brood en boter and pies de stretchen like rubber en hard genoeg for een foundation voor een huis."

"The farmers come in daily with bread and butter, and pies that stretch like rubber and are hard enough for the foundation of a house." Here the translation is easy, and the researcher has no difficult puzzle to solve - in fact, has only to note that Dirk Blikman Kikkert Van Raalte, before he was twenty,

was giving evidence of the successful politician he was to become: colorful, forceful expression of views which would be likely to please. (Mothers often do not object to having their cooking preferred, and others' disparaged.) However, that same single paragraph contains three reminders of real puzzles which did arise during the study of Van Raalte documents for his biography.



Western Seminary Collection-Joint Archives

Dirk Van Raalte, c. 1865

The first puzzle relates to a vivid phrase, used in 1947 by Dutch historian Arnold Mulder, about Hollanders who "flocked to the colors." Today, that idiom is probably not universally familiar; the custom of each army unit having its own flag seems unusual, but it was common practice in the Civil War. In 1862 when the "Holland Rangers" arrived in Allegan, the *Allegan Journal* reported the event enthusiastically. "The company carried with them a beautiful silk flag, presented to them by the patriotic Ladies of the Colony an Ensign we are sure the brave Hollanders will carry in triumph over Dixie." In the smoke and terror of battle, companies became scattered, but the men could, in the words, of a Civil War song, "rally round the flag." The puzzle for a researcher occurs in a transcription of one of Ben Van Raalte's letters, where there is a reference to capturing "stands of collars." Capturing colors seems as strange as capturing collars unless the history of the time is understood. Ben's obituary - he died aged 77 on August 22, 1817, exactly fifty-five years after the day

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Van Raalte (continued from page 4)

he enlisted in the Union army - refers to his daring and courage. "At Utoy Creek, Georgia, the regiment lost two color bearers and the regimental colors were left on the field when the Union troops were driven back. Van Raalte, during the night, crept through the confederate lines, secured the colors, which he brought back to the regiment, and carried them until the close of the war."

A second puzzle for the researcher is related to this factual statement: "Two of Albertus and Christina Van Raalte's sons joined the army in 1862 and were discharged after the war ended in 1865." The statement is true. Nevertheless two letters exist which appear to contradict it, and these letters are from no less an authority than Albertus Van Raalte himself.

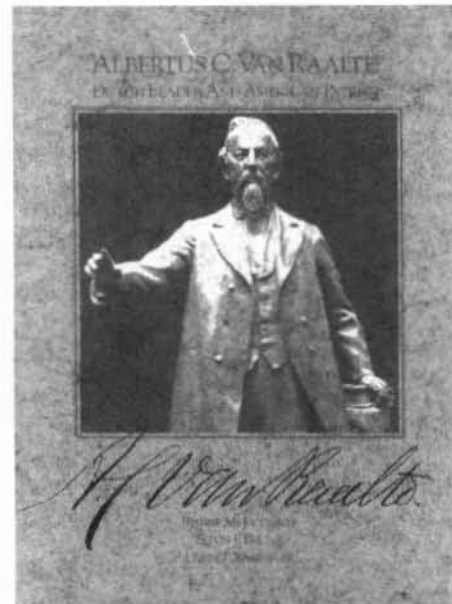
"I am not at all proud of the fact that none of my sons has yet taken up arms against rebellion and treason."

"Dirk has no desire or courage. Benjamin has enlisted. It did cost Mrs. Van Raalte a severe struggle but now she has rest."

These archived letters written, respectively, to Van Raalte's brother-in-law Antonie Brummelkamp in the Netherlands and to Van Raalte's friend and colleague Philip Phelps, would lead to erroneous conclusions if the reader lacked subsequent information about the Van Raalte family during the Civil War period. They illustrate several interesting features of Van Raalte's character and style: he was a prolific letter writer, he wrote from the heart, and he was impulsive. Although they didn't join the army quickly enough to please their father (yet too quickly for their mother's tender heart), Ben Van Raalte enlisted early in the war, aged 22, and Dirk enlisted shortly afterwards, aged 18. Both served bravely; Dirk was seriously wounded and lost his right arm. Albertus Van Raalte would have been chagrined to know that his sons' courage might be doubted in future years simply because his own letters were preserved.

The third puzzle is indicated by the mention of Ben's letters to his younger sister Christine. One of these letters, written in English, has a passage which at first appears pointless or baffling. "The Reb casualties have been heavy in front of Atlanta. A few days ago a lieutenant surrendered and he told us that

he couldn't stand the slaughter any more and that Gen. Hood could stand only two more killings. Gen. Howard experienced one of the killings so that leaves only one. Our boys had to laugh to hear the lieutenant talk." Where is the joke? "Killings" apparently doesn't refer to casualties among the soldiers, but then what does it mean? The archived letter presents the puzzle; history books yield the answer, which is explained in Chapter Eight of the new Van Raalte



New Van Raalte biography

biography, the title of which is an excerpt from one of Ben's letters home: "The poor Rebs who fall into my hands are going to pay for Dirk's arm."

In the horrors of war the jokes are gruesome. Ben and his comrades enjoyed the captured officer's wit: "Hood can stand only two more killings." His remark was especially apt, because the Union troops were fighting under a general who, having "experienced one of the killings" would equal Hood if he had one more. In the Civil War, some officers on both sides continued to fight after losing a leg or an arm, and some were strapped into the saddle after two amputations (as long as the losses were balanced one arm and one leg, on opposite sides). Before Ben and Dirk joined the army, Oliver Howard lost his right arm fighting in Virginia in the spring of 1862, at the bloody Battle of Fair Oaks, fought "amid thick woods

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From the Collections Archivist

With more than a month of experience at the Joint Archives of Holland under my feet I am ever more thankful for being here in Holland. As I sift through unprocessed collections, answer patrons' questions, and work to provide even more access to collections, I often reflect on the satisfaction I receive each day working as an archivist.

As the successor to two fine archivists such as Craig Wright and Jenifer Smith Holman, I know the road ahead is much smoother because of their hard work. I promise to continue that fine tradition and hope to improve the Joint Archives of Holland with each day's work.



With my move from the Detroit area to Holland I have returned to my west coast roots planted long ago in Charlevoix. While the area is similar in beauty and wonderful people, I have made plans to make Holland a permanent home from my wife and future children. I know that my experience in working with several types of archives such as Henry Ford Health Systems, the Detroit Tigers Baseball Club, and the General Motors Media Archives will provide me with the needed experience in working with Holland's many types of archival materials.

I hope to meet you in the coming months so that I may better understand your needs and ideas concerning collections here and their value to you as researchers.

Geoffrey D. Reynolds

Van Raalte (continued from page 5)

and flooded clearings where wounded soldiers had to be propped against fences or stumps to prevent them from drowning in the muck" and the Federal advantage consisted of inflicting six thousand casualties while their own losses were only five thousand. John Bell Hood had a useless left arm resulting from wounds suffered at Gettysburg in July 1863. Two months later he was wounded at Chickamauga and his right leg was amputated. He was a relentless fighter "all lion and no fox," Lee said and his strategy of attacking regardless of the situation or the odds against his forces gained him adulation from the southern press and caused his troops appalling losses.

Praise for the original documents that bring bits of history to life, and the archives that preserve them. Praise also for the histories, written with knowledge and care down through the years, and the historians who present us with a panoramic vision of bygone times and places. Researchers need both.

The Historical Society of Michigan

Established in 1828

Annual Conference

Hosted by the Joint
Archives at the new

Haworth Center

September 19 & 20, 1997

Sesquicentennial Publications and the Joint Archives

Over the past year the Joint Archives has been involved in a number of exciting publications to celebrate the Sesquicentennial. It is our hope that these will help to provide a lasting legacy for the future. Pick up your copy today!



A.C. Van Raalte: Dutch Leader and American Patriot by Jeanne Jacobson, Elton Bruins, and Larry Wagenaar.

The first fully annotated biography of A.C. Van Raalte is a well illustrated, 256 page volume that has been well received by reviewers. The book covers many aspects in the life of the Dutch pastor that led the Dutch to western Michigan, including persecution in the Netherlands, the harrowing journey to America, struggles in the first years, Holland and the Civil War, the great fire of 1871, his wife Christine, and Van Raalte's legacy today.

\$29.95 plus \$5 shipping*

Dutch Immigrant Memoirs and Related Writings.
Selected and Arranged by Henry Lucas with new translations.



Reprinted by the Dutch American Historical Commission and Eerdmans Publishing Co, this 1,118 page volume compiles a rich number of first hand accounts of Dutch immigrants detailing everything from the early days of settlement and the Great Holland Fire to the Dutch migrations to Wisconsin and Iowa. You will spend many hours gripped by those who lived through these exciting times. Additional translations have been added to this new reprinted volume not available in the rare 1955 original.

\$45.00 plus \$5 shipping*



Sesquicentennial Birthday Calendar (perpetual calendar).

Published as an official souvenir of the Sesquicentennial celebration this perpetual calendar is designed as a traditional "birthday calendar" where names of friends and loved ones are entered and hung on the wall. Monthly dates are listed without days of the week so it can be used year after year. Many Dutch homes hang this in the kitchen or bathroom! Includes a detailed timeline of the Dutch settlement, a history of Holland, Michigan, and many historical photographs.

\$12.95 plus \$3 shipping*

Sites of Dutch Influence in Western Michigan: An Illustrated Tour Guide.



A well illustrated auto-tour guide that takes you to many significant sites related to the Dutch settling in western Michigan. Includes easy to follow maps and many photographs.

\$4.00 plus \$2 shipping*

In Christ's Service: The Classis of Holland, Michigan and its Congregations 1847-1997.

Published by the Holland Classis of the Reformed Church in America this well illustrated and bound booklet details the history of each congregation in the Classis from its origination to the present day. Each congregational history features photographs of the church along with a timeline which details current events for the churches, Holland community, and the world. Packed full of information, the booklet also includes detailed histories of the Classis and its Women's Societies. 36 pages.

\$5.95 plus \$3 shipping*

*See back cover for order information. *When ordering multiple publications, pay shipping only on item of highest value.*

Sesquicentennial Publications Order Form

Local Holland residents can find these books at local bookshops or at the Hope-Geneva Bookstore in the DeWitt Center at Hope College. Other Joint Archives Quarterly readers can order them by mail:

Title	Price	Name
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