

Spring 1999

# The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 09.03: Spring 1999

Hope College

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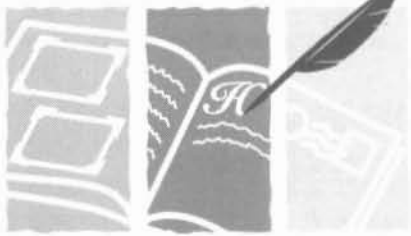
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# The Joint Archives *Quarterly*

Volume 9 Number 3

Spring 1999

## *Native American Heritage*

*This past semester, Joint Archives director Larry Wagenaar taught Michigan History at Hope College. The following story, originally part of a regular column in the Holland Sentinel, was based on topics covered in the course.*

Michigan has a long and rich history. For tens of thousands of years this land on which we now live was home to peoples we collectively call Native Americans. This generic reference and other ones like it (Indian, American Indian, Indigenous Peoples, and others) do not do justice to their rich cultural heritage or the depth and breadth of their history.

Contemporary Native Americans of Michigan, made up of the Ojibwa (Chippewa), Odawa (Ottawa), and Potawatomi nations, have historical roots which are often lost in our focus on the relative infancy of European influence in North America. Two or even four centuries is but a blip on a time line which stretches back 30 millennia, a time in which the face of our continent has changed in unbelievable ways.

Many scholars believe that wandering bands of Diukta who lived in present day Siberia, crossed the Bering Strait when it was either a dry land bridge or covered by glaciers some 30,000 years ago. Other anthropologists are beginning to suggest a multitude of origins for early Native peoples such as Europe, Asia, and Polynesia, based on closer scrutiny of archaeological finds. The earliest carbon date for people living in the upper Midwest dates to about 10,000 years ago. Paleo-Indians, as they are called, used throwing spears sporting a simple flint chip to kill large animals that were large and relatively easy to stalk and kill.

No matter what their origin, as the glaciers retreated between 15,000 and 10,000 years ago and large game (such as Mastodons) disappeared, the Paleo-Indians became more settled, reliant on small game, nuts, berries and the like. It was a period dominated by small groups of hunters. This



adaptation ushered in what anthropologists call the Archaic Period, some 8,000 BC.

Archaic Indians developed new technologies to meet the demands of daily life. Totally dependent for survival on their ability to extract from their surroundings food, clothing, and shelter, archaeologists have found advanced implements such as the atlatl, a weighted stick which propelled a spear over greater distances. Cold hammered copper and finely ground stone tools were also a hallmark of this era. Development of a common language known as Algonquian made communication possible between peoples from the Great Lakes to the Atlantic. The Archaic period lasted from 8,000 BC to 1,000 BC.

The emergence of the Woodland culture around 1,000 BC and the impressive mounds which can still be seen today in parts of Michigan, Illinois, and Ohio, coincided with the introduction of agriculture. This development, one of only four areas on the planet to develop agriculture on its own, had a profound impact on Indian life and their semi-nomadic lifestyle.

*(Continued on page 3)*

## From the Director

This semester at Hope College, I've had the opportunity to delve into the richness of Michigan's history by teaching a new course to a number of Hope students each Thursday evening. We gather together in the reading room of the Joint Archives to talk about everything from Native American history and traditions to the impact of the automobile and its impact on American life. It's been both fun and challenging to locate photographs and archival materials to augment my lectures and our class discussion.

What has impressed me most as I've prepared for teaching the course, and while working with my students, is how rich our state's history really is. Michigan had a dramatic impact in the evolution of the United States—everything from the passing of the Northwest Ordinance to the key industrial role that Michigan played in the twentieth century.



The story that I've been able to share with my students would not be possible without the resources that are found in our state's archives. We have a number of outstanding archival repositories including the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, the Reuther Labor Archives in Detroit, and the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University. The Joint Archives has been privileged to be ranked among these institutions as a key repository in preserving our state's heritage.

It's good to see how we fit into the broader fabric of Michigan's history. My article in this issue is a compilation of information related to the important Native American tradition which lasted much longer here than our relatively brief settlement since 1847. If you'd like to learn more about Native Americans, please stop by the Joint Archives and visit us!

Larry J. Wagenaar

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### **Past Proceedings Still Available**

Limited quantities of the following AADAS proceedings  
are still available from the Joint Archives of Holland for  
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Mounds played a significant role in Indian culture. Those built by Woodland Indians were exceptionally intricate and still impress scholars, engineers, and mathematicians with their complexity. Early Woodland peoples, the Adena and Hopewell, used mounds to bury their dead and were often plundered by Europeans for their unique artifacts. Mounds such as these were raided and destroyed as nearby as the Hamilton area at the turn of the century as Indian land gave way to present day farms. The Hopewell peoples, which centered in Ohio but influenced the entire upper Midwest, developed highly advanced art and traded as far afield as the Rocky Mountains and the Eastern Seaboard.

The late Woodland people (500-1500 AD), known to us as Mississippian, emerged as agriculture entered a new phase of expansion. The big player was the introduction of maize, or corn, which called for a new way of doing things.

Management of a corn based agriculture and economy not only absorbed the attention of the Mississippian Indians but required a more complex social structure. Few twentieth century Americans are aware that near present-day St. Louis, a highly developed city named Cahokia, was home to 60,000 people, rivaling similar cities in Europe.

Although Mississippian culture was already in decline when the Europeans arrived, early explorers documented what they saw at Cahokia and in other Native American settlements. These early contacts, however, were soon forgotten and a different view emerged to meet the needs of the new arrivals.

European contact brought a host of diseases for which Indians had no natural immunity and it decimated Native peoples. Estimates of pre-Columbian Native Americans range from 3 to 12 million. By 1900 only 350,000 remained.

Why is this massive time frame and rich history often forgotten, glossed over, or dispensed with as a brief pre-history tale? Part of our forgetfulness of Indian heritage and history is influenced by our own cultural past.

Those Europeans who followed the initial explorers were content to label Indians as savages and uncivilized--but reality could hardly be farther from the truth. Nineteenth century archaeologists, even those who wrote for the Holland and Zeeland papers, needed to attribute the ornate artifacts and complex mounds to a race of extinct giants rather than realize these elements were part of the rich heritage of Native peoples. It was also necessary to do this to justify their view of Indians as an inferior race and the terrible treatment which

followed including forced relocation, property seizure, and worse.

### **Odawa, Ojibwa, and Potawatomi Indians**

The Indians of the late Woodland Indian period, which ended around the time of first European contact on the east coast, were the ancestors of the tribes we now know as Odawa (Ottawa), Potawatomi, and Ojibwa (Chippewa, Anishinabek). Together the three tribes are known as the People of the Three Fires.

The lifeway of the Three Fires people included the great importance of the clan, an extended family group of related individuals. Clan names were inspired by animals such as bear, elk and deer, and the complex interrelation of people within the clan influenced all aspects of life. This family life played a part in everything from the naming of a newborn child to the great respect given to elders.

There was a close association with the world around them and an appreciation of the cyclical nature of life. The Circle of Life, also celebrated in other cultures, is a common theme in Indian life still today. Cyclical patterns include time (dawn, morning, noon, sundown, night), seasons, and life itself (birth, childhood, youth, adult, old age) and can be seen in the art and culture of Native Americans throughout their history.

For Great Lakes people, birch was used in so many ways from baskets and roof tiles to the building of birchbark canoes. It was a major technology improvement and was quickly adopted by the first European settlers, such as the voyageurs.

Food gathering and cultivation was as important then as it is now except without the centralized shopping center and industrial farms. Three Fires Indians traveled to a variety of natural stores in a variety of places.

With sugar as a major seasoning, maple sugar harvesting was a focus of the early springtime. A small portion was offered to the Great Spirit or Manitou during a special feast of celebration. This period was followed by summer agriculture that included corn cultivation, a major food-source breakthrough in the Woodland period. Cultivation was complemented by gathering of nuts, berries and other naturally available foods. Gathering of wild rice in the late summer also provided a food that could be stored and used later.

Fishing, hunting and trapping were year-round pursuits. Throughout all of these, a respect for the presence of the

Great Spirit in all things guided their use of resources: Bear, for example, was not killed until a special ceremony was held and an apology given as the animal holds a special place of reverence.



The Native Americans which lived in Holland were Odawas (Ottawas), led by Chief Waukazoo. After being greeted by missionary George Smith, these were the people the Dutch first encountered when they decided on settling on the banks of Black Lake in 1847.

The semi-nomadic lifestyle of the Black Lake Indians, typical of all Great Lakes peoples, led to a variety of cultural clashes between the Dutch Calvinists and the Catholic and Manitou oriented life of the Indian.

For starters, when Dutch residents came across corn, or implements left in and around the Indian family's summer homes, they assumed that these materials had been abandoned and were free for the taking. Hardship for the settlers in these early years also played a part in their scavenging. Finally, sentiments common among European settlers placed little value on Indian culture and likely played a part as well here.

It was not long before Rev. Smith, who ran the Old Wing Mission, began to hear rumblings of the problems. Working with Van Raalte to moderate the concerns, the Indians decided to move to the Lelanau Peninsula, near Northport. Descendants of Waukazoo's clan still live in the area today and a street is named after him.

There is little to substantiate that there was any type of open conflict between the Dutch and the Indians, only continued frustration and the piling up of small conflicts. Religious intolerance, a hallmark of why van Raalte and his followers came to America, may have played a part as well.

This is only a tip of the iceberg, and that from someone who is not Native American heritage and can only appreciate its richness and depth as a visitor. I hope that you will take the time to learn more about the expansive history of Michigan's Indians and all that it can teach us about the past in the place we call home.

If you would like to know more, please visit the Joint Archives of Holland or contact one of the Native American tribes in Michigan for more information. There also is a wonderful exhibit at the Grand Rapids Public Museum on the Anishanabek people in Michigan that is worth a special visit.

## In Holland during Tulip Time?

Stop in and see

### *The Story of Holland*

at the Knickerbocker Theatre

Steamer Puritan at G. & R. Dock,  
Holland, Mich.



**May 6 - 15**

(except Sunday)

Shows every half hour 10:00 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Admission - \$3.00

(Children under 12 - \$1.50; 5 and under free)



## From the Collections Archivist

A brief description of new collections ready for use in the Hope College and Holland Museum collections:

**William C. Vandenberg, Sr. (H91-1128)**  
Papers, 1904-1971. 9.00 linear ft.

The papers of William C. Vandenberg cover his time as a Michigan state senator and his term as lieutenant governor, as well as his involvement in the community of Holland. There is a considerable amount of political correspondence which includes local businesses through his involvement in the Holland Chamber of Commerce.

Much of the correspondence relates to particular legislation. The fact that Vandenberg's responses were attached to the letters is particularly helpful in revealing Vandenberg's stance on political issues of the time.



*William C. Vandenberg, Sr.*

HOPE COLLEGE - JOINT ARCHIVES

The material is divided into three main series: Personal, Business, and Political. The Personal series (2.00 linear ft.) contains biographical material, personal correspondence with many well known individuals, both local and national. Correspondents include Earnest Brooks, W. A. Butler, G. J. Diekema, E. D. Dimment, George Getz, and Willard Wichers. It also contains photographs of Vandenberg and others.

The Business series (1.00 linear ft.) includes correspondence with many local businesses, records from the various companies with which he was associated, with a particular focus on his involvement with the reopening of the Sugar Beet Factory in 1933. Correspondents include Benjamin Hanchett, Holland Furnace Company, and Parke Davis and Company.

The Political series (6.00 linear ft.) is subdivided into local, state senate, lieutenant governor, and his unsuccessful campaign for governor in 1952. This is the largest of the three categories and includes large amounts of correspondence with political figures. The local subsection details his involvement in local politics, but also reveals his connections with many national political personalities throughout his lifetime. Correspondents include Gerald R. Ford, Jr., Rep. Bartel Jonkman, Rep. Carl Mapes, Sen. Arthur Vandenberg, Gov. Harry F. Kelly, Gov. Kim Sigler, Gov. G. Mennen Williams, and Sen. Homer Ferguson.

There are three corporation record books from the Wolverine Advertising Company and the Vandenberg Brothers Oil Company.

**City of Saugatuck (H97-1304)**  
Records, 1848-1985. 14.50 linear ft.

The City of Saugatuck Collection holds many various city records dating from 1848 to 1985. The records include tax rolls, city council minutes and proceedings, clerk's office account books, population censuses, treasurer's records, city ordinances, land descriptions, records of birth and death, assessment records, election records, village plans, and a film titled "All American Cities: Saugatuck-Douglas, Michigan," 1977.

**Parks and Recreation Department. (T92-1296)**  
Records, 1930-1992. 3.00 linear ft.

The City of Holland Parks and Recreation Department collection includes the plans of the three cemeteries under the jurisdiction of the department. Pilgrim Home Cemetery was established in 1847 and officially named in 1889. Plans from this cemetery date from 1930-1992.

Fairlawn Cemetery was established in 1877 by the Holland Township Cemetery Association. It was operated until May 15, 1934, when it was deeded to the City of Holland and became a part of Pilgrim Home Cemetery. In 1940, the city bought the fairgrounds to the east of what used to be Fairlawn. This became known as Pilgrim Home Memorial Park and contains a Memorial Entrance gate, Administration Building and a chapel. Plans from this section cemetery date from 1933-1945.

Graafschap Cemetery has a very unique history, but most of it has been passed down through stories rather than records. It was established in 1849. Most of its records were destroyed in a fire at the house of the sexton but do include plans dating from 1930-1978.

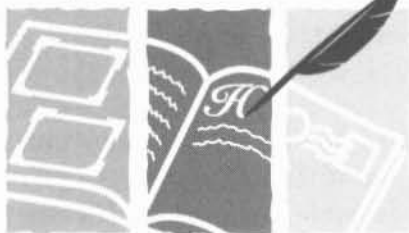


HOPE COLLEGE COLLECTION OF THE JOINT ARCHIVES

*L-R: Blair Moody, Gov. G. Mennen Williams, Lt. Gov. William Vandenberg, Sen. Charles Blondy, 1951*

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# The Joint Archives of Holland



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