

10-1-2002

The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 12.03: Fall 2002

Matthew P. Nickel

Geoffrey D. Reynolds
Hope College, reynoldsg@hope.edu

Michael Douma

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/jaquarterly>



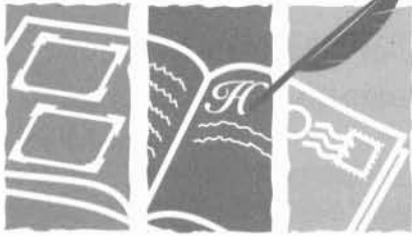
Part of the [Archival Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Repository citation: Nickel, Matthew P.; Reynolds, Geoffrey D.; and Douma, Michael, "The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 12.03: Fall 2002" (2002). *The Joint Archives Quarterly*. Paper 39.
<http://digitalcommons.hope.edu/jaquarterly/39>

Published in: *Joint Archives Quarterly*, Volume 12, Issue 3, Fall October 1, 2002. Copyright © 2002 Hope College, Holland, Michigan.

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the College Publications at Digital Commons @ Hope College. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Joint Archives Quarterly by an authorized administrator of Digital Commons @ Hope College. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@hope.edu.



The Joint Archives *Quarterly*

Volume 12 Number 3

Fall 2002

Still Serving, Still Protecting

by Matthew P. Nickel

On a Wednesday afternoon, seated in the lobby of the Holland Police Department waiting for an interview with Officer Lisa Bancuk, the environment beckoned historical thoughts. Entering the station's lobby, most would not consider the history of such a service without being prompted. A Hope College fraternity brother came to visit his friend. An elderly woman with a strong Dutch accent came to report her grandson's missing mountain bike, and a Hispanic man, who could not speak English, filed a missing persons report through a translator. Still, two sides remain, neither entirely tangible: the history of the Holland Police Department and their compassion for service.

No book exists to tell of the Holland Police Department's long, unique history. Few files are available to clarify such a history. So a living history remains; the stories of men and women who have served Holland. Hence the Joint Archives of Holland's 2002 Summer Oral History Project, which enabled preservation of the Holland Police Department's living history.

With few resources, Captain Robert DeVries gleaned a brief history from interviews and ledgers, compiling in his limited spare time unknown information about the Holland Police Department. "I started doing some digging and found out

we really had minimal to no history [records]," DeVries said. Unfortunately, much of the records once kept were discarded over the years.



Holland Museum/Joint Archives

Holland Police Force, c. 1910

Left to right, standing: Simon Meeuwsen, Peter Steketee, Fred Kieft; seated: Jack Wagner, Chief Fred Kamferbeek, Louis Koeman

According to DeVries' work, the first group to oversee legal conduct in Holland for the Dutch settlers was called the *Volksvergadering*. This legal body, comprised of all permanent residents over the age of 20, handled cases of civil and criminal nature on a weekly basis, while four constables held responsibility for patrol.

Following application for charter in 1867, the city of Holland modified their policing strategy. To enforce city ordinances, a marshal position was created and, in turn, each of the four wards of Holland took responsibility to elect their own constable. Twenty-one times the marshal position changed hands until 1907, when the city established the police department. Five men comprised the initial department, with Fred Kamferbeek as the first chief.

Glancing over the records kept by the Police and Fire Board and the City Clerk files, crime reports not only stand out, but also give an idea

of values. According to a report made by Chief Kamferbeek, 15 arrests were made in January of 1908. Violations included

(Continued on page 3)

From the Director

This past fiscal year (July-June) was especially busy for the Joint Archives of Holland with 1,371 research requests coming to us via e-mail, ground mail, phone calls, and the largest percentage from local residents visiting us in person (31%). The last statistic is quite a testament to the importance of having archival materials available to the local community with the help of a professionally trained archivist, an experienced secretary, 12 volunteers and student research assistants, and being open 40 hours per week.

In this issue we bring you the story of this past summer's annual oral history project, written by the project coordinator, Matthew Nickel. You will learn about the fascinating history of the Holland Police Department and the effect the community has had on it and vice versa through interviews with Lisa Bancuk, Richard Bonge, Burton Borr, Paul DeBoer; Robert DeVries, Dave Guikema, Russell Hopkins, John Kruithoff, Earl "Doc" Scholl, Drew Torres, and Ollie Wierenga. This archival collection is now open and ready for researchers to put to good use.

Every year after the project is completed, I look back and thank Elton Bruins for starting such a project in 1977 and carrying it through until 1990. Since 1991, the archives staff has conducted the project because of its mission of documenting important issues in the Holland community while also giving young men and women the chance to work closely with the history makers of Holland. Next year the topic will be polio and its effect on the Holland community and beyond.

Our other summer research assistant, Michael Douma, took on the task of translating the 1853-1855 account book of local merchant Aldred Plugger. I think you will find it interesting to hear Michael's story about translating a document in a mixture of Dutch and English languages, and how rewarding it can be to bring primary documents into a usable form for our researchers.

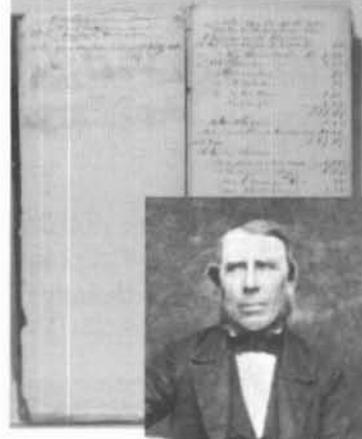
Lastly, if you have any questions concerning the future move of the Holland Historical Trust Collection archival materials (local history materials) to the Holland Museum building in January 2003, please do not hesitate to call us.

Geoffrey D. Reynolds

The Value of Nineteenth Century Business Records

Aldred Plugger, an early entrepreneur in the 19th century Holland community, was an extraordinarily successful businessman. Not only did he run a mercantile shipping business on the Great Lakes, he also owned his own general store and operated a local mill. But when it came to recording his financial transactions and assets, he used a common tool of his time: a hand written ledger book.

Holland Museum/Joint Archives



Western Seminary/Joint Archives

This ledger of about 250 pages contains a wealth of information on 19th century life. Contained within are records of the early shipping industry in Holland, inventory of Plugger's store and mill, and his personal finances. From this material much can be learned. For

example, what types of products were available at a general store and what did they cost? What was being shipped on Lake Michigan and where was it going? And who were the captains and sailors on the ships?

However, in order to be utilized, this information had to be made accessible. In its previous state, it was mostly unreadable. And that is where I came in. I was responsible for reading, translating where needed, and digitizing the handwritten information. This task was frustrating while intriguing at the same time.

The first seventy-two pages were written in what Elton Bruins of the Van Raalte Institute referred to as "Yankee Dutch." An immigrant from the Netherlands, Plugger recorded the finances of his shipping industry using his native tongue and his own peculiar dialect. But it was America in which Plugger was communicating now and English seeped into his vocabulary. Although he readily picked up on many of these foreign words, Plugger was at a loss on how to spell them. As he was writing merely for his own personal record and future use, Plugger wrote (often transliterated) English words as they would be spelled by a Dutchman. Thus, "pine" became "pijn" and "knife" became "nyf."

Nearly all of what I could read of the Dutch, I could translate into English. But it was the handwriting, not the language,

(Continued on page 5)

Still Serving, Still Protecting (continued from page 1)

drunkenness, wife desertion, using indecent language, and disorderly conduct in church. The indecent language citation received a \$25 fine. The number of arrests for the year 1909, according to the same minutes, was 141. In Chief Jack VanHoff's report to the Police and Fire Board, the year total for arrests in 1946 was 1,521.

One vital element of the Holland Police history incurred change; the men and women of the department avoid becoming static. A primary influence on the interviews involved change, which officers remember from their careers. Between different eras, different generations, the culture of any people evolves. What changes officers and retirees recalled most frequently involved technology and changes in methods of enforcement, the evolution of crime, and changes in Holland.

For approximately the first half of the 20th century, a primary duty of the police, before the large influx of business and the introduction of the alarm, included checking businesses in Holland after they closed and by officers working the third shift. Burton Borr and Richard Bonge recalled the "alley beat" as named by patrolmen, they would check door handles through the evening to make certain all were locked and secure. If a patrolman found a door unlocked or a business broken into, they would then go into the store, call the station, and then make certain the store looked all right while someone was sent to lock up.



Holland Museum/Joint Archives

Keith Houting checking security along Eighth Street

Until the mid-forties, officers used call boxes stationed around town to report problems to headquarters, but they were phased out for a system using lights. Lights were strategically placed along 8th Street and also along River Avenue. The lights could be controlled from the police station and, when lit, an officer knew to call the station once he saw the light.

In the fifties, the police used a machine with air tubes that could be run across the road. A timer was triggered by a car going over the tubes and would figure out the speed of the car. Of course this technology seems outdated compared to the radar present in police cars now. Holland's police cars have advanced even further in recent years. Now these vehicles are equipped with video monitoring, computers, and cell phones.



Holland Museum/Joint Archives

Ollie Wierenga, 1946

From the original police coverage of walking the streets or biking, to the '40s and '50s where there were only several cars and motorcycles, until a larger fleet took over in the '70s and '80s, method has always been able to meet the needs of the community. As crime becomes more sophisticated, so does method.

Holland Police officers extend extra effort even before situations call for it. When domestic violence began to become a problem in the late 1960s, officers began a Community Services Unit. The CSU allowed families to easily take advantage of social services in town by officers making referrals to the organizations that could help. As problems occur, Holland Police meet them with creative methods.

Earl "Doc" Scholl described Holland as a small city with big city situations, and many officers confirmed such a statement. So Holland Police took the creative step to bring police methods adequate for both the small town in Holland, and the big city. An example of Holland Police rising to a challenge using creative method is the Street Team. As gangs grew in Holland, the Street Team—plainclothes, unmarked officers whose job is to be the eyes for the department for street level narcotics, violence, and crime—adopted new strategies.

Creative policing took another major step in the nineties with Community Policing, and recently, Team Policing. In the earlier decades of the Holland Police, an officer in the community was the way to police. Without large numbers of motor vehicles or advanced technology, the only way to police was to get into the neighborhoods and know people.

Today, Team Policing is a strategy that seems to model the old methods of Holland's Policing. As Captain Bob DeVries said, "We've made a 180 degree turn." While still using technology and advanced strategies to police sophisticated crime, the department now puts more officers on the street, on foot or on bike, to know communities better. "My style of policing is to go and park the cruiser at the 7-11, get out and talk to people," Officer Drew Torres said. "The effect it has on the community? They know the officer more than just the uniform and the car."

As methods grow more sophisticated, the Holland Police are trying a personal approach—not just getting out and getting to know the citizens, but getting to know their concerns. "When you talk to people and find out it is not gangs, it is not drugs, that is not their main concern," Lisa Bancuk discussed with me. She told me that most concerns are little things that can be solved easily with the right approach. The benefit is even greater though, stronger relationships in the community, a passion for understanding neighbors.

Compassion is not something you can teach or train, nor can it be found reading a book, looking at a squad car, cellblock, or station. The Holland Police Department roots itself deep in humanity, a unique focus. Police work in Holland involves more than just arrests and tickets.



Hope College/Joist Archives

Holland Police Department, c. 1954

The expected nature of the police is that of the changes. Policing in Holland has seen change in method, technology, crime and the city itself, but less often are they given credit for their helping nature. Often a myth evolves that all police officers are hard-nosed, out to get wrongdoers. The other nature of the Holland Police Department not spoken enough of is the compassionate, good nature of the officers.

Despite many changes the men and women remain consistently true to characterize the Holland Police Department's ever-present desire to help people. Officers from the 1940s to the present described the humanity of the police. The persistence of Holland Police Department's compassion remains today as a mentality that refuses to break.

"You always hear, 'Why did you want to become a police officer?'" Drew Torres, part of Holland's Street Team said. "'Well, I want to help and give back to the community.' In most of the cases, that is actually true."

In the interviews, after stories I heard, several men either shed a tear or spoke of taking a break after a call to let the emotions out. Holland's finest are not the finest because of enforcement. They are the finest because with the enforcement, throughout the many years, officers bring empathy to the scene, and extend a hand off duty as well.

In the mid 1940s, Ollie Wierenga and several other men, including John Pierce and Chuck Martin, organized a summer roller-skating party on 22nd Street, blocking the road off to cars at Maple Avenue and Pine Avenue. They organized music and brought in a popcorn machine. Every Tuesday and Thursday through the summer the community skated. The police took heart not to just enforce, but to build community, a quality Holland Police have a reputation for. When Mr. Wierenga finished his story, he recalled, "The greatest joy of that was the next morning some little kid would call up and say thank you."

One of the toughest weeks of Budd Borr's career included two calls involving children. A boy drowned near Windmill Island, and Borr was the officer who recovered the body. "About a week after that a little kid got hit by a car on Washington Avenue and he was laying alongside the curb. I just went up to him. We called the ambulance and stuff like that, but he just went, he died right there in my hands," Borr recalled. "I felt so bad. To this day, I cannot get over that."

Borr remembered many stories that reflected the positive side of the job too. "I would always stop at home at noon to eat, and then I would have a whole bunch of neighbor kids by my motorcycle. They were just fascinated by that," Borr said and smiled. "'Can I get a ride?'" That was the next thing. I used to put them in front of me and take them to the corner and back."

Earl "Doc" Scholl empathized with many citizens. Acquiring the nickname "Doc," not just because he was a licensed Emergency Medical Technician, but he also carried his own

personal medical bag in his squad car and, when off duty, kept it in his personal vehicle.

Doc's most memorable call where he could help involved a medical emergency near Windmill Island in 1978 during Tulip Time. A male tourist suffered a stroke, and after Doc treated him on the scene, the man was rushed to Holland Hospital. After checking hotels and not finding any affordable rooms, Mrs. Lee, the victim's wife, found herself in a tight spot while she waited for her husband's recovery. Doc and his wife stepped in and opened their home. Not only did Mrs. Lee stay, but they also became friends, and both couples visited each other many times over the years.



Courtesy HPD website

*Lisa Bancuk
HPD's first female
sergeant*

On a personal level, the involvement and commitments Holland officers make dispels the myth of hardened local officers. Lisa Bancuk also sets an example of going above the call of duty. She has been involved in many community organizations such as *Girls on the Run*, a program dedicated to teaching girls positive values as they grow. "I think it is good for me to see the good things that people are doing because we deal with juveniles who have done things wrong, so I like to look at the other side and help those people too."

With so much personality the police pour into their work and with all their commitments, I asked Captain Bob DeVries if such commitments were required of officers. "Totally up to that individual," he said. "There is no specifications of what is expected of them in the community when they are off duty."

What could it be that keeps officers so involved in civic life, going beyond the call both on and off the job? Maybe Holland Police are the storybook officers who do well. I asked Paul DeBoer what drives a police officer to be helpful, to go beyond their duty. His response was strong and simple: "I think that is what it is all about, it should be."

The 2002 Oral History Project developed a set of living histories about the Holland Police Department over the years. The ever-important change, attitude to evolve in technology and method with creativity has been emphasized. But what has truly been preserved is the helping nature of compassionate officers, which is what the job is all about.

Nineteenth Century Business Records (continued from page 2)

which caused the greatest difficulties. Perhaps a number of persons were responsible for writing in this ledger. For example, there is a fairly dramatic shift from Dutch to English, and in some places a worker in the store has signed his name to indicate that he had written the inventory. Nevertheless, the writers all had one thing in common—they wrote hurried and untidy fragments of information, often abbreviating or using obsolete language. Ledgers were often meant for only the eyes of the writer who might use them to clarify a dispute or ensure what property he owned. They were unadorned scribbled records. This type of writing caused impediments in proper reading and translating. For example, was the mish-mash of letters spelling out *haver* (Dutch for oats) or should it be read *haven* (Dutch for port)? Context clues were helpful but not always available.

As I learned the characteristics of the handwriting and developed more efficient ways of dealing with all the data, such as using tables, the progress moved at a much quicker rate. The first week saw only sixty pages completed whereas it took two more weeks to complete the remaining one hundred and ninety pages. Some material was purely illegible, at least to my eyes, and was rendered as "unidentified" in the final product. What has been written is now being reviewed by native Dutch speakers at the Van Raalte Institute to verify my work before being made available to researchers at the Joint Archives.

Michael Douma

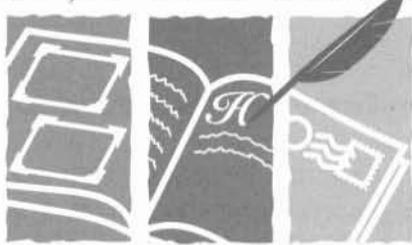
Joint Archives of Holland Hours

Monday through Friday
8:00-12:00 and 1:00-5:00

Special Holiday Hours

We will be closed for Thanksgiving,
November 28 and 29

Due to the closing of Hope College buildings during the Christmas holiday, the Joint Archives will also be closed from December 23 to January 2.



Contact us at (616) 395-7798 • Fax (616) 395-7197 • Email archives@hope.edu • www.hope.edu/jointarchives

Mayors of Holland Biographical Website Coming Soon!

The Joint Archives and the City of Holland will jointly debut a website devoted to the history of Holland's mayors on election day, November 5, 2002. Written and compiled from sources at the Joint Archives of Holland by student research assistant Michael Douma in July, 2002, this site promises to be the standard for information on the 39 mayors of Holland.



Hope College/Joint Archives

*Isaac Cappon
Holland's first mayor*

In his research, Michael discovered that at least nine mayors were born in the Netherlands, eight were born in the Holland area, while seven were from other states. At least six mayors were members of Hope Church, five attended Third Reformed, and nearly all were Protestant. Four mayors fought in World War I and II. Three mayors were physicians, while only two were attorneys; one was even a wagonmaker. Most were Republicans, but not all.

Perhaps it was the small size of the city that caused a few of the mayors of Holland to be related. Kommer Schaddelee and Rokus Kanters were half brothers; the daughter of the first mayor, Isaac Cappon, married William Brusse, the 18th mayor; and James DeYoung, the 16th mayor, married Martha Van Landegend, the daughter of the 4th mayor. Not to be outdone, John VanderSluis lived with his uncle, who was none other than Kommer Schaddelee.

We invite you to go beyond the statistics and themes and read the biographies of each mayor of Holland. You will discover that each man had a personality all his own. Next month, visit www.ci.holland.mi.us/mayors/ and learn more about the mayors of Holland, Michigan.