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The Joint Archives of Holland Celebrates 25 Years of Service

By Geoffrey D. Reynolds

This year marks the twenty-fifth year since the founding of the Joint Archives of Holland (JAH) as a cooperative program at Hope College. Since then, the staff, comprised of dozens of students, dedicated volunteers, a secretary, and professionally trained archivists, have collected, processed, preserved and given access to thousands of feet of archival resources to countless researchers around the world. Prior to the 1988 founding of the JAH, over three decades of archival work by volunteers and part-time staff had been done at Hope College, Western Theological Seminary, the Netherlands Museum and City of Holland, to pave the way for its creation.



Janet Mulder, 1955

In 1952, Hope College President Irwin J. Lubbers appointed Janet Mulder (1895-1985) part-time archivist and library assistant for Hope College to organize an increasing amount of archival records for the Hope College Alumni Association. This project was officially known as the Alumni Archives Project and funded by alumni of Hope College. Mulder, a

class of 1916 Hope College graduate, spent the previous 33 years teaching English at Holland High School. While there was no formal archival space devoted to the storage of archival materials at that time, Mulder utilized space in the alumni office to store her work. In 1955, she was appointed an Alumni Assistant in that office to help with the workload. Mulder became the full-time college archivist in 1963 with the construction of Van Zoeren Library, which included a dedicated archives space for "a repository for documents and other materials of historical value." She continued as the archivist until retiring in June 1968. Unfortunately, at

the time of her retirement, the funding for this position also ended. Thankfully, a young professor at Hope College, Elton Bruins, volunteered his time to keep Mulder's work alive.

Dr. Elton J. Bruins, a Hope College class of 1950 graduate, was a full-time assistant professor in the religion department. Since his time as a student, Bruins had been enthralled with Holland area history and took photographs of historic places, events and people with his Brownie camera. While working with archival records and when speaking to department



Elton Bruins, ca. 1968

personnel, Bruins emphasized the need for preservation of institutional records, such as minutes, office correspondence, reports, accounts, speeches and writings. But his interest in history did not stop with Hope College. In 1968, Bruins spent the summer at the Netherlands Museum office, located on the third floor of city hall. There, he and Dr. Gerrit J. ten Zythoff, an assistant professor of history at Ohio State University who shared Bruins's interest in history, sorted, translated, cataloged and shelved the archival materials relating to the local history of the area. A newspaper article written about the pair's work also mentioned that Bruins was the archivist for Western Theological Seminary. His work there began during the summer of 1967 after being appointed the archivist by the seminary's president Herman J. Ridder. From that work, the first catalog for the collection was published as "The Manuscript and Archival Holdings of Beardslee Library, Western Theological Seminary, Holland, Michigan." Second and third editions were published in 1970 and

(continued on page 2)

From the Director



This month marks the 25th year that the Joint Archives of Holland has been in existence. In the last two dozen years, we have made great strides in collecting, organizing and making accessible archival materials that serve the research needs of an information hungry clientele.

I have taken this opportunity to tell you more about our firm foundation which began sixty-one years ago with Janet Mulder and was continued by Dr. Elton J. Bruins and others. The clientele that we serve is largely made up of Hope College students conducting research on a wide variety of topics as part of their coursework. This coursework stresses the use of primary documents found right here. Two of these students have recorded their research experience at the Joint Archives for this issue. In the future, students like these, and those to follow, will require the same quality of materials and professional service that have been our highest goal as a staff, but in different formats and delivery methods. The staff of the Joint Archives looks forward to the next twenty-five years as challenging and energizing as we continue to collect, organize, and make archival materials accessible to researchers.

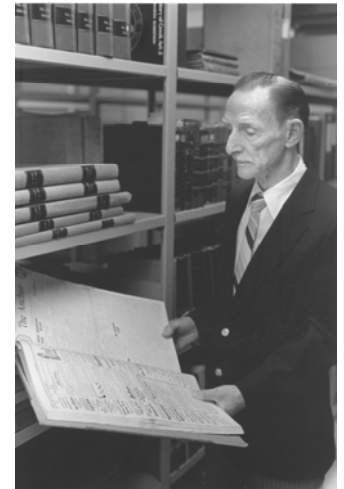
Geoffrey D. Reynolds

Joint Archives Celebrates 25 Years (continued from page 1)

1978. Not mentioned were the archival records and papers kept at the Netherlands Museum, which was founded in 1937 and financially supported by the City of Holland. This important collection, archived over the years by Bruins, Barbara Lampen and Dr. John P. Luidens, included speeches given during the semi-centennial celebration of Holland in 1897, and the papers of early local historians Peter T. Moerdyk and Gerrit Van Schelven. Even at this early stage, Bruins most likely was thinking about how to join the separate archival collections under one roof for researchers to use more effectively. In 1968, he authored the first catalog, "A Guide to the Archives of the Netherlands Museum," detailing the archival resources located in the museum's collection. A second and third edition were published in 1971 and 1978.

In 1969, the Archives Council of Hope College was organized by Bruins, with the assistance of Director of Libraries Edward Whittaker, to ensure the proper care of the college's historical records. On March 20, 1970, Dean for Academic Affairs Morrette Rider approved the group as an official agency of the college charged with "the collection, preservation, and administration of the official records of Hope College and the development of

standards for the making, care, and administration of archives at Hope." Not wasting any time with their new responsibilities, the group, made up of a dean, the archivist, the director of libraries, a representative from the Office of College Relations, two members of the faculty and the registrar, moved to have Van Zoeren Library cataloging librarian and assistant professor of library science, Andrew Vander Zee (1910-2006), appointed to the part-time position of archivist. Vander Zee spent the first year of his new appointment searching out and finding archival records throughout campus. Examples included finding dust-covered boxes of records in the attic of Graves Hall from the presidential administrations of Dr. Edward Dimment and Dr. Wynand Wichers, and a sea of disorganized records from the administration of Dr. Irwin Lubbers in a vault on campus. After investigating possible locations for records, Vander Zee returned to the archives room in the Van Zoeren Library to organize, box, and shelve the archival



Andrew Vander Zee, 1988

records. In 1972, he created a 45-page catalog, "Guide to the Archives of Hope College," to assist researchers. This was the first exclusive catalog of archival records for the college. (Dr. Herbert Brinks had included the holdings of Hope College and other repositories in his publication, "Guide to the Dutch-American Historical Collections of Western Michigan," in 1967.) A second edition of Vander Zee's title was published in 1983. He also indexed the *Anchor* newspaper and *Alumni News* magazine and urged faculty to assign projects to students that included a visit to the archives. The archives was open to the public during weekday mornings. Today, many of those student researchers' assignments are housed in the Joint Archives of Holland and are used by current students and other researchers.

In 1976, a proposal to join the three separate archival collections was drafted by Western Theological Seminary librarian Rev. Norman Kansfield, Bruins, and Willard Wichers, director of the Netherlands Museum, and distributed to the president of Hope College, the mayor of Holland, and the president of Western Theological Seminary. This document was titled "Holland Archives and Historical Collections—Hope College, Netherlands Museum, Western Theological Seminary: A Proposal for Unified Collections." This was the first document to include the reference of the formation of a joint archives. By July 1977, Mayor Lou

Hallacy had brought together several local representatives interested in forming a joint archival repository in the Holland area with a goal of sharing the information these collections held, while the three custodial institutions of the records retained ownership. This proposal included the hiring of a professionally trained archivist to administer the program and a clerical staff member to assist the archivist in a flood-proof, fire-proof, and easily accessible and atmospherically-pleasing repository. An archives authority, made up of representatives from the three institutions, would provide oversight of the program. At this meeting there was a reference to such a repository in a privately funded addition to the Herrick Public Library, but this plan never materialized due to a lack of funds. The plan was put on hold for three more years.

In 1980, the proposed program was ready for implementation within the second floor of the soon-to-be vacant Beardslee Library at Western Theological Seminary. This plan arose due to the construction of the Cook Center for Theological Research, which would free up room for the proposed joint archival plan. With a budget of \$48,000 per year, the three institutions were to divide that cost three ways. Unfortunately, the plan did not materialize due to staffing costs, financing, and space availability. The plan was again put on hold for an additional seven years.



Larry Wagenaar assisting a researcher in the Joint Archives reading room, 1990

Finally, in 1987, a 5,000 square foot space on the ground floor of Hope College's new Van Wylen Library was chosen as the location for the repository. The committee responsible for this third proposal was made up of Dean for the Arts and Humanities Elton Bruins, Holland Historical Trust Director Reid Van Sluys, Hope College Library Director David Jensen, Provost Jack Nyenhuis, Western Theological Seminary Librarian Paul Smith, and Netherlands Museum Director Emeritus Willard

Wichers. The only change to the original plan was the creation of the Joint Archives Council to provide oversight for the program. Membership on this council included three representatives from the Holland Historical Trust, three from Hope College, and three from Western Theological Seminary. Hope College served as the fiscal agent for this new and unique program, which had each of three members pay an annual dues fee of \$5,000, as well as a fee based the amount of space their collection occupied. All three institutions had the ability to withdraw from the arrangement with a one year notice to the council. The first year budget was set at \$30,000. In January 1988, the plan had been approved by the governing bodies of all three institutions and plans were made to move ahead with the creation of the Joint Archives Program (later Joint Archives of Holland).

In the fall of 1987, the Joint Archives Council, made up of representatives Jessie Dalman, Reid Van Sluys and Willard Wichers from the Holland Historical Trust; Jon Huiskens, Elton Bruins and David Jensen from Hope College; and Donald Bruggink, Norman Donkersloot and Paul Smith from Western Theological Seminary, held its first meeting and elected Bruins chairperson and Jensen secretary.



Larry Wagenaar, 1997

In the summer of 1988, after moving the archival records of the college to the new archives in the Van Wylen Library, Andrew Vander Zee retired from his position as part-time archivist and his replacement, Larry J. Wagenaar, the first professional archivist for the new program, began his work. Wagenaar, a 1987 Hope College graduate who had recently completed his coursework towards a master's degree in history from Kent State University, was a natural fit for the position because of his knowledge of research within Dutch-American history and the desire to collect and share it with other researchers.

Once Wagenaar arrived, he moved the archival collections from the museum and seminary archival areas to the new archival space and began outreach efforts to persons holding valuable archival collections. He also hired two part-time student workers and began publicizing the archives to local civic and church groups, institutions of higher learning, and archival repositories. By October 3, 1988, the Joint Archives of Holland was

open to researchers weekday afternoons from 1-4:30 p.m. and until 9 p.m. on Thursday evenings. During the first month, thirty research requests were answered by Wagenaar and his small staff, which also included Dr. John Luidens. On November 18, Dr. Robert Swierenga, professor of history at Kent State University and prominent scholar in the field of Dutch immigration studies and social-economic theory, gave a lecture at the formal dedication of the archives.

Almost immediately, archival records and personal papers began flooding into the new repository. In early October, the papers of former Hope College president Dr. Calvin Vander Werf were received from his widow, Rachel. By 1989, the "Joint Archives Guide to the Collections" publication was completed and being distributed at a nominal fee to researchers outside of the archives for use in locating important research collections. This publication served as the catalog to the three collections until the early 1990s at which time the collections became available on the college's library catalog system.



Craig Wright, 1990

Funded under a National Historic Publications and Records Commission (NHPRC) grant in 1990, Craig Wright was added to the professional staff to serve as the Collections Manager. During his two and a half years with the archives, Wright, who received a master's degree in information and library science from the University of Michigan, helped grow the archival collections,

make them more accessible, and triple the amount of researchers. He left in early 1993 to take a position on the archival staff at the Clarke Historical Library at Central Michigan University. His replacement, Jenifer Smith (later Holman), joined the archives staff in the spring of 1993. Smith also received her master's degree in information and library science from the University of Michigan. In July 1994, the archives became a department of Hope College and Wagenaar and Smith became members of the college faculty with rank as assistant professors. This change gave the archives financial stability and the two archivists more contact with college faculty and students. The Joint Archives Council also changed its name to Joint Archives Advisory Council to better reflect its diminishing role in the oversight of the archives, as well as becoming a college committee. The archivist then reported to the provost of the college and the two outside



Jenifer Holman, 1993

organizations moved to a contract approach for the collecting, processing, storage and access of collections that fit within the scope of their traditional collecting policies.

An annual oral history project began the summer of 1991 to continue the work begun by Elton Bruins in 1977. This project thrived until 2003 when the list of viable project topics was exhausted. However, special projects are still initiated when the demand warrants. The typed transcriptions and some digital recordings of these projects, including those prior to 1991, are available for research on the Joint Archives website.

Lori Trethewey, the department's first secretary, was hired in January 1996 and has been instrumental in the success of the archives to date. Jenifer Holman left her position as collections archivist in July of that year to take a position at Viterbo University in Wisconsin.

Holman was replaced by Geoffrey D. Reynolds in January 1997. Reynolds earned his Master in Library and Information Science degree from Wayne State University.



Geoffrey Reynolds, 1999

In 1998 the archives celebrated its first ten years of work and recorded almost two hundred research requests per month, which was the highest research request count to date. Today, many of those initial inquiries are handled by information placed on our website, which was launched in April 1997.

In July 2001, Wagenaar left as director of the archives to become the executive director of the Historical Society of Michigan. Reynolds was promoted to director and continues to serve in this position today. That year also brought a major change in the archival holdings of the archives. In July, the Holland Historical Trust Board of Trustees announced its plans to remove its archival collection and place it in an archival space at the Holland Museum. In February 2003, the move was complete, leaving only the college and seminary archival collections at the archives. Since then, emphasis has shifted to helping faculty, staff and students at Hope

College with research projects, as well as hosting many researchers using Reformed Church in America missionary collections and records of local congregations.

In October 2004, the archives and the A. C. Van Raalte Institute both relocated to the newly renovated Henri and Eleonore Theil Research Center at 9 East 10th Street. The move to a free-standing, two-level building on the Hope College



campus gave greater visibility to researchers and visitors. The move also gave the archives more storage for archival collections and a workroom for processing, and

provided the Institute convenient access to the archival collections used in their research on Dutch-American history.

Today, six decades after Janet Mulder began her work, and in the wake of Elton Bruins's years of tireless work, hundreds of feet of archival materials are cared for by the archives staff, and countless research requests per year are answered. Hundreds of photographic images have been made available to online researchers via the college's Van Wylen Library Special Collections site. Oral histories taped years ago are now being converted to digital format for listening online. Collections of papers and college publications, like the *Anchor* newspaper and *Milestone* yearbook, have been digitized for use by researchers and alumni throughout the world. Future projects include the complete digitization of select archival collections, currently only available by visiting the Joint Archives, to be accessed anywhere in the world. Many Hope College students and interns from other universities continue to enjoy the experience and training they receive while working or interning at the archives as they prepare for careers in history, librarianship and archival administration. The future for the Joint Archives of Holland looks bright and busy, and we are poised to enjoy every moment.

Missionary Correspondence Research Reveals New Information

by Madalyn Northuis

Last summer I was fortunate to be one of three Hope College history majors selected to work on the history department's Chinese Christian Studies Project. Throughout the course of the summer, my



colleagues and I worked closely with professors Marc Baer, Jonathan Hagood and Gloria Tseng, and archives director Geoffrey Reynolds. This project was created to explore the relationship between faith and scholarship, provide students with an opportunity to conduct archival research, and utilize the rich Chinese missionary collections deposited at the Joint Archives of Holland.

After spending two weeks familiarizing myself with the contents of several of the Chinese missionary collections, I picked up the guide to Tena Holkeboer's collection, which was donated to the archives in 2012. As a researcher, I was immediately drawn to the fact that over two-thirds of her small collection was composed of letters. Holkeboer, a Hope College alumna (class of 1920) wrote these letters to her family members while she was in the Chinese mission field from 1920 to 1948.

Over the next six weeks, I sat at the tables in the Joint Archives reading room and systematically worked my way through the hundreds of handwritten letters. I also devoted time to reading several short biographical pieces, which appeared in Christian magazines, books, and the *Joint Archives Quarterly* newsletter. After reading several of these secondary sources, I realized that the woman I had come to know by reading her personal correspondence was vastly different from the woman depicted by the authors of the short biographical pieces. While I viewed Holkeboer as a Christian woman struggling to establish herself in the Reformed Church in America's (RCA) male-dominated Chinese missionary field, these authors chose to portray her as a devoted servant of Christ who did not question the RCA's orders. However, I soon realized that our interpretations of Holkeboer differed because I was one of the first researchers to have the luxury of viewing her personal papers and the only historian to have the opportunity to compose a substantial research paper based on those documents.

Every year, patrons donate collections to the Joint Archives of Holland. Unfortunately, the majority of the

collections deposited at the Joint Archives have never been used. But, like Holkeboer's collection, they all contain material that will allow amateur and professional historians to reevaluate a person, organization, institution, or event, and rewrite history.

Missionary Papers Research and Dr. John Otte

by Rebekah Llorens

This past summer I participated in the Chinese Christian Studies Project through Hope College's history department. This project consisted of a team of three professors and three students that worked to organize the personal papers of three different Hope graduates that became missionaries to China with the Reformed Church in America (RCA) before the Second World War. Over the course of the summer, each student worked with a professor-mentor on their particular case study and interacted with the other students and professors to gain insight and feedback from their experiences. As we dove more deeply into our work, we became invested in each other's well-being as well as each other's project. The professors provided us students with articles about what it meant to be a *Christian* historian, from both the intellectual angle and the Christian angle. By guiding us in this way, the professors helped foster a caring academic community that worked powerfully together to achieve its goals. With the help of the staff of the Joint Archives of Holland, our group made connections in history and faith that we appreciated personally, but also tried to convey in our writing.



Before I began my project, I needed to look through the summaries of missionaries in the Joint Archives to pick my research subject. I settled on Dr. John A. Otte, the first medical missionary of the RCA sent to China. Once I started the research work, I got to dig through Otte's personal papers. I am not from Holland, so I did not know much about the Joint Archives of Holland and the amount of information it had about people from Holland and the RCA. Sifting through Otte's papers, I found a wealth of information carefully preserved. I got to interact with primary sources relevant to the important topic of the impact of missions in China! In my own home town, I know that I would not have access to such a great store of resources and information. Not only did Otte's papers contain enough to understand his life and

personality, but Geoff and Lori at the archives both knew how to find extra sources and how to dig deeper for the different kinds of information I needed. I dove deep into Otte's papers, but I also got to access his wife Frances Phelps Otte's papers, and these provided me with a different, personal look at his ministry. Without a doubt, work in the archives opened doors for me to get to know a subject that, while perhaps not publicly known, did have an impact that I could study and deem important.

A significant eye-opener about the power and potential of the Joint Archives, for me, was our research group's trip to Wheaton College in Wheaton, Illinois, to use their archives in the Billy Graham Center. Again, the only archive experience that I had up to that point was in the Joint Archives, so I was excited to compare atmospheres and procedures. My research there consisted of searching for extra sources to add credibility to my research in Holland. One difference that I found early on was the overwhelming amount of files. While the Joint Archives is not as big as the Billy Graham Center Archives, I realized that it was comforting to know what I could or could not find in the Joint Archives. The focused content of the Joint Archives made the search for a specific field a straightforward process. In the Billy Graham Center, I struggled at times to navigate its large archival system and narrow my search to what I needed. In addition, the smaller size of the Joint Archives made it feel like home. The scale of the Billy Graham Center felt overwhelming sometimes, and the atmosphere, while perhaps more "academic," felt less comfortable than the Joint Archives. I would undoubtedly consider the opportunity to visit Wheaton's archives a meaningful one and incredibly helpful to my research, but I was happy to return to the setting of the Joint Archives.

In total, the Joint Archives has allowed me to take a small, entry step into the overwhelming world of primary source research. I had never read from such unique documents for the purpose of research, and the idea did scare me at the beginning! The Joint Archives gave me a comfortable, homey atmosphere in which to learn how to respect sources, dig deeper to find what I needed, and cross-reference for the most thorough and accurate information. If I had needed to start in a bigger archive for my first time, I don't know how I would have wrestled with the large amount of information. In a larger archive, extra help would be vague; and I would need to spend more time trying to find sources. I view the Joint Archives of Holland as a great bridge between my love of history and my ability to work well in history research. Without the atmosphere, resources, and material that it had, I would not have had the same successful experience that I had last summer.

Collections Now Open

H06-1607. Bary, Woldemar A. (1887-1979).

Papers, 1920-2013. 0.50 linear ft.

This collection contains the personal records of Woldemar A. Bary (1887-1979). The son of an American engineer, Woldemar was raised in Moscow, Russia. As a young man, he was involved in the White Army resistance during the Russian Revolution and was eventually forced to flee to the United States. Woldemar worked for many years as the vice-president of Sikorsky Aircraft Corporation and was married twice. He was survived by his second wife, Valentina, who lived with close family friends the DeYoungs, in Holland, Michigan, until her death in 2002. Included in this collection are articles, correspondence, and documents related to Sikorsky, both in original Russian and some translations. Also included are photos and one photo album of Woldemar's family and friends at Sikorsky, as well as the personal stories of Valentina and her sister-in-law, Tatiana, on their escape from Russia during the Revolution.

H12-1818. Stegenga Groenevelt, Marian Ruth (1917-1996).

Papers, 1934-1938, 1996. 0.25 linear ft.

Hope College class of 1938 graduate. The collection includes biographical information, a 1946 letter written to Richard Groenevelt of Grand Rapids from Albert van Dyk of the Netherlands (Dutch), Marian Ruth Stegenga's Hope College scrapbook that includes photographs, college pamphlets, newspaper clippings, organization information, sorority invitations, a green ribbon worn by freshmen women, sports schedules, programs for musical performances, 1934-1938, and a felt pillow embroidered with "H" "Marian R. Stegenga 1938." The pillow is housed separately in the Hope College Objects Collection.

H13-1846. Jellema, Rod.

Papers, 1890-1896. 0.25 linear ft.

Collection includes correspondence from Lillie Dobben (1876-) (later Mrs. Perry Boersma in 1898) of East Saugatuck, Michigan, to her sister Gertrude Dobben Jellema in Roseland, Illinois, and family members, 1890-1896. Papers related to this family are also located at Heritage Hall at Calvin College in Grand Rapids, Michigan (<http://www.calvin.edu/hh/>). Of note are the papers of Professor William Harry Jellema, grandson to the original Dobbens and a nephew to Lillie Dobben.

H12-0259.50. Wilson, John "Jack" (1934-2010).

Papers, 1959-2005. 6.00 linear ft.

John "Jack" Wilson (1934-2010) was born and raised in Glenwood, Minnesota. Wilson first served in the U.S. Naval Reserve in the South Pacific. Later, he obtained his doctorate degree in art history from the University of Iowa and taught at Hope College from 1971 to 1999. Among his most important contributions to Hope was his involvement in the development of the DePree Art Center and Gallery.

The collection includes biographical materials, handwritten notes and notecards, some pertaining to his various classes and some to his research on art and criminology, as well as a large slide (transparency) and photograph collection.

H12-1813. Van Kolken, Paul.

Papers, 1876-2012. 0.25 linear ft.

Paul Van Kolken is local historian and writer. He attended Hope College and received a journalism degree from Michigan State University. He spent his professional life working with the Associated Press in cities like Detroit, Grand Rapids and Albany, New York. He finished his career with the *Holland Sentinel* and WHTC radio in Holland, Michigan. His fascination with Centennial Park started as a child. The collection includes newspaper articles, website printouts and notes used to create the presentation "Centennial Park: Cultural Center Point," which was presented to the Holland Area Historical Society on June 12, 2012.

W12-1394. Strabbing, Albert H. (1856-1954).

Papers, 1893-1954. 0.25 linear ft.

Albert H. Strabbing was born in Graafschap (Allegan County), Michigan, on September 20, 1856. He graduated from Hope College in 1880, then attended Western Theological Seminary and graduated in 1889. He was licensed and ordained by the Classis of Holland, Michigan in 1889. He served as a pastor in the Reformed Church in America (RCA) at Hamilton, Michigan (1889-1893); Fynart (East Saugatuck), Michigan (1889-1893); Third Reformed, Kalamazoo, Michigan (1893-1897); Marion, New York (1897-1899); North Holland, Michigan (1899-1904); Hamilton, Michigan (1904-1909); Sheboygan, Wisconsin (1909-1915); Ebenezer Reformed, Holland, Michigan (1915-1922); and East Overisel, Bentheim, Michigan (1922-1926). Strabbing passed away on October 3, 1954, in Zeeland, Michigan. The collection includes biographical information, his letters of call from RCA churches, and undated sermons.

W13-1403. Royce, Hendrine E. Hospers (1888-1971).

Papers, 1913-1926. 0.25 linear ft.

Hendrine E. Hospers born on December 23, 1888, in East Williamson, New York, to Rev. and Mrs. Gerrit Hospers. She was a class of 1913 graduate of Hope College. She served as a Reformed Church in America (RCA) missionary to Japan from 1913-1926. She worked for the East Orange, New Jersey, Orphan Society. She passed away in Jacksonville, Florida, on June 16, 1971. The collection includes biographical information and two photograph albums that document her time in Japan and the people and places she encountered.

The Joint Archives of Holland



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Dedication of the Joint Archives of Holland on November 18, 1988. Left to right: Western Theological Seminary President Marvin Hoff, Holland Mayor Philip Tanis, Hope College President John H. Jacobson, and Holland Historical Trust Board President Clay Stauffer