Winter 2020

The Joint Archives Quarterly, Volume 29.04: Winter 2020

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Tuesday, June 10, 1941, dawned bright and warm at Hope College. There must have been a buzz running through the campus, as preparations for convocation and graduation got underway. Ninety-five nervous seniors would graduate from Hope in 1941 and begin their post-grad lives. The world into which they were entering felt anything but safe and stable. Just under two years earlier, Britain and France declared war on Germany after the latter invaded Poland. Much of the world was at war in June 1941, but the United States still remained out of the fighting. Two weeks before the special convocation, a German U-boat sunk the neutral American cargo ship SS Robin Moor, causing an international incident. Newspapers like the Holland Sentinel reported extensively on the sinking of the Robin Moor, contemplating America going to war. Seniors anxiously awaited not just their personal future, but the future of the country and, for that matter, the world at large.

A country very much caught in the crosshairs of World War II was the Netherlands. Despite the country’s commitment to neutrality, Germany invaded on May 10, 1940, with the ultimate goal of reaching France. The Dutch army fought back, meeting the Germans in battle at The Hague, at Breda, at Rotterdam, and in several other major cities. Although the passionate resistance made Dutch people across the world proud, it was no match for the overwhelming air and land force of the Germans. German weapons were far more technologically advanced—weapons of mass destruction. After five days of heavy fighting, the Dutch surrendered and the German occupation began.[1]

As the situation in the Netherlands became increasingly dire and the position of the Germans more dominant, the Dutch royal family, led by Queen Wilhelmina, had a decision to make. Would they stay in their now war-ravaged country, or protect themselves and the future of Dutch royalty and flee? After receiving word of a potential German kidnapping plot against the queen, the decision got much easier. On May 13, Queen Wilhelmina, the rest of the royal family, and most of the Dutch government boarded the British warship Hereward, bound for London. The royal family’s final glimpse of their country—German planes began to bomb the harbor, killing many of the British soldiers who stayed behind to help the Dutch people defend their homeland.[2]

While most of the Dutch people who fled on Hereward stayed in London for the duration of the war—including Queen Wilhelmina, who proved to be an important symbol of Nazi resistance—some were forced to flee even further from the fighting. Princess Juliana, the thirty-one year old daughter of Wilhelmina and her husband Prince Henry, could not stay in Europe. As the sole child and thus only direct heir, Juliana’s safety ensured the sustainability of the Dutch Crown. A month after leaving the Netherlands, Juliana and her daughters Beatrix and Irene moved to Ottawa, Canada. Juliana’s husband, Prince Bernhard, remained in London to assist with the war effort. Thirty-five hundred miles away from home, Juliana began a new life as a war refugee.

Across the world, Dutch emigrants grieved the loss of their home country. President of Hope College Wynand

(continued on page 2)
In this issue of the newsletter you will be treated to another finely researched and written article by Joint Archives’ research assistant Aine O’Connor. Her latest article concerns the first visit from members of the Royal Family of the Netherlands, Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard, to Hope College in June 1941. Hope College was one of three institutions of higher learning to receive the Princess when she and her two daughters were in exile in Ottawa, Canada, while German forces occupied her homeland. O’Connor’s article will fill in the details for you. Enjoy.

Geoffrey D. Reynolds

Princess Juliana Comes to Holland (continued from page 1)

Wichers reached out to Dr. Alexander Loudon, United States ambassador to the Netherlands, inquiring whether Princess Juliana would be willing to accept an honorary degree from Hope College. This first interaction took place in the fall of 1940, just months after Juliana and her daughters fled to Canada. According to Hope's Alumni Bulletin, “[Wichers'] request was graciously received. Complications in world politics, growing out of the war, together with the many invitations from other colleges and universities asking the Princess to their campuses to accept degrees, however, soon made the probability of her coming to Hope seem very remote.” Since moving to Canada, Juliana had received hundreds of “requests” from colleges and universities in the United States. Everyone wanted her to come, this powerful symbol of resistance to a war that crept ever closer to affecting the lives of everyday Americans. The Bulletin questioned, “She could not possibly accept all the invitations. Should she, therefore, accept none?”

Just when the possibility of Dutch royalty coming to Michigan seemed to be slipping out of view, Queen Wilhelmina stepped in from her exile in London. After some “diplomatic correspondence,” the Queen allowed Juliana “to accept a degree from an outstanding Dutch college, from a representative women’s college, and from a representative university in the United States.” Loudon chose Hope as the “outstanding Dutch college,” and the college began making plans for Princess Juliana to visit and receive an Honorary Doctorate of Laws at a convocation in June 1941. The princess’s visit corresponded with the college’s 75th anniversary of its founding, a truly hopeful occasion.

Final preparations for the royal visit began with a surprise for Juliana and a headache for Michiganders. On June 8—just one day before Juliana was due to arrive in Michigan—Prince Bernhard, Juliana’s husband and a respected naval officer, surprised her by arriving in Canada “on a British flying-boat from London.” Apparently, “Bernhard found her in the pantry Sunday morning preparing breakfast.” Before the reunion, Bernhard and Juliana had not laid eyes on each other for over a year. One can only imagine the joy that both felt upon seeing the other again. However, less joyful were the organizers of Juliana’s trip to Michigan. They now had to add on additional security and planning for two royals rather than just one, and they had less than a day to make the necessary arrangements. Furthermore, Bernhard’s hasty arrival had not allowed him time to purchase new clothing for the trip, and he had not been able to pack much for the plane. The quick turnaround forced member of the Netherlands consulate William G. Bryant into the role of personal shopper, “obtaining evening shirts, ties, and collars for his royal visitor.” Despite the hassle, excitement rose in Holland when they discovered the plan for two royals to visit their city.

Juliana’s imminent visit also triggered discussions on how, exactly, the city of Holland planned to welcome the Dutch queen. In a time where war loomed and loyalty to country was paramount, what did the balance of Dutch pride and American patriotism look like? Mayor of Holland Henry Geerlings insisted that American flags be flown during Juliana’s visit, stating, “In these days of world-wide turmoil, with subversive forces and influences striving to discredit and destroy the ideals and institutions symbolized by our country’s flag, all loyal Americans should answer this challenge by displaying and paying tribute to that flag as the emblem of our rights and liberties.” In addition to the American flags, president of Hope Dr. Wynand Wichers “asked Holland citizens to wear an orange flower or an orange ribbon or display Dutch flags together with American flags.” This combination, of orange, the traditional representative color of the Dutch people, and the red, white, and blue, which is shared by both the American and Dutch flags must have been electricifying. Hope could be found in this grand display of love of ancestry and love of country.

Juliana and Bernhard arrived in Detroit via Canadian Pacific train on June 9, and were welcomed warmly at the train station by Dr. Alexander Loudon and Bryant, the pants-buyer. After “a brief stop at a downtown hotel,” Juliana and Bernhard traveled on to Holland, escorted by Detroit and Michigan state police. One can’t
help but enjoy the vindictive pleasure the Holland Sentinel took in explaining that the organizers of the visit did not allot time for the royals to stop in paltry Grand Rapids, despite the bigger city “trying desperately to get the royal guests to stop.” Less humorous was Juliana’s insistence that the police use no sirens during the journey from Detroit to Holland. While Bernhard “took a fancy” to the American sirens and begged Juliana to allow them to be sounded, she refused, saying they reminded her of the air raid sirens that plagued her country during the German invasion. Even before she arrived in Holland, Juliana starkly reminded Hollanders of the war raging just outside the eyes of the United States.

The princess and her prince arrived in Holland with much fanfare. Schools and businesses were closed so everyone could catch a glimpse of real-life royalty. Older generations—many of whom had parents or grandparents who had emigrated from The Netherlands—rejoiced at seeing a future queen who still felt, in some small way, like theirs. They remembered celebrating, just eight years earlier, in a different world, the 400th anniversary of the birth of William of Orange. Then, Hollanders had feted “the Great Liberator,” who “gave his life and large fortune for the sake of a great principle.” Now, here in their street, his some-number-of-great-granddaughter waved and shook their hands. It must have been a surreal experience to see Juliana pass by in a simple, open car with just a few (silent) police escorts. Before long, Juliana and Bernhard arrived at the Warm Friend tavern and were whisked away to rest.

On June 10, 1941, eager students, faculty, and community members began to fill Hope Memorial Chapel—not to be called Dimnent Memorial Chapel until 1959—around 10:15 AM for the eleven o’clock service. They had to be there early, to ensure everyone neatly seated themselves before the princess entered at exactly eleven. She wore a smart teal dress, simple black robes and hat, and a solemn manner fitting to the serious occasion. She processed in, along with Bernhard, President Wynand Wichers, and Edgar Romig, a Reformed minister, to the organ playing “God Of Our Fathers.” After a prayer calling for “the springs of Hope” to come to the world, the ceremony began with a speech from Wynand Wichers. The man who had spearheaded bringing Juliana to campus did not spend much time in front of the crowd, restricting his remarks to a brief narrative of the story of Van Raalte and “Dutch pioneers” before moving on to praising Juliana, who “has faced the suffering of the year with heroic faith and courage.” Wichers ended his remarks with an invocation of hope, stating his anticipation of a time “when a just and righteous peace shall have been made, and the people of the Netherlands shall again begin the reconstruction of their homes, repair the ruin of their cities, and take up the torch of light and liberty.” After this statement, Wichers passed the microphone to Edgar Romig, who would present the Honorary Degree of Laws to Juliana. Romig dedicated his time to speaking of Juliana’s many accomplishments. She attended the University of Leyden—the first Princess of Orange to do so—and, according to Romig “with all classes she was genuinely popular,” and her professors were impressed with her enthusiasm and intelligence.

The time came to present the honorary degree. Juliana was only the second woman to receive an honorary degree from Hope College. Hope College awarded the degree to the princess first for her notable achievements in the world of learning, rewarded by the venerable University of Leyden with the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters. Second, Hope recognized Juliana’s “heroic acceptance of the needs of the hour, necessitating her going away from her homeland.” Finally, she was honored for “her genuine interest in the life and culture of the Netherlands settlements in Michigan… with particular thought of her deep interest on our own seat of learning in this city.” After Romig finished, he officially gave Juliana an Honorary Degree of Laws, and she stood in front of the podium. The people of Hope sitting in the chapel took a collective breath.
She began by thanking them, explaining that she saw the honor not just for her, but “as well on all the people of the Netherlands.” Juliana also expressed her joy at being in Holland with her husband, a place where she felt “almost as if I were at home.” When Hope reached out to Juliana awarding her an honorary degree, she felt her “heart beating fast.” Juliana told the audience, “Hope is like a ray of sunshine in the dark days we are passing through. The name of your college expresses what lives in the hearts of my people, and of everyone who believes that freedom and justice cannot vanish from the earth.”

Here followed the only moment when Juliana directly commented on the war during her time in Holland. She said to her captive crowd, “In Europe the foundations of society are crumbling and the most brutal conqueror the world has ever known is trying to force upon nations a modern slavery. The present habitation and life are threatened but a new world will arise, and, I say this in the darkness of the hour, a permanent union of goodwill among nations shall be in the outcome of the present struggle.” With this statement ringing in their ears, the people heard Juliana’s final words: “I would like to end these few words in my own language which is so familiar to you: Lang levee n bloeie Hope College (Long live and prosper Hope College).”

Thunderous applause rang out at the end of Juliana’s speech. She perfectly honored the college and the city, while also never forgetting her people trapped in her homeland in the thick of war. Nothing else could compare, and the convocation ended soon after with a playing of “De Zegenbede,” a traditional hymn of the Netherlands. Per the Holland Sentinel, Juliana and Bernhard were “obviously moved” by the song, “a benediction which must have been a bitter reminder of the peace and serenity of the Netherlands so lately shattered by Hitler’s blitzkrieg.” The Netherlands never left Juliana’s mind; she represented a proud people who had been taken by an evil man.

Once the pomp of the convocation ended, it was time for interviews. Reporters from all over Michigan and the country flocked to Holland, hoping to catch a sound bite from the princess. As a refugee, she could not comment directly on the war, and reporters generally steered away from those questions. One did ask Juliana “if she planned to return to her homeland after the war… she shrugged her shoulders and replied ‘Well.’” A rare moment of public despair for the princess, and the statement caused enough controversy that the newspapers later published a clarifying statement from the princess’ entourage saying that she “had hope that she might be able to return to the Netherlands after the war is over.” Juliana talked most about her daughters, and also happily answered questions sharing her joy over seeing Bernhard after a year of separation. Juliana’s openness and warmth surprised and heartened many of the reporters. A Dutch newspaper writer who had traveled to Holland for the occasion explained, shocked, that the people of the Netherlands were simply “in awe” of their royal members. He continued, “It never occurred to me that the princess would grant such a press conference and I haven’t yet got over my surprise at walking into that room and seeing some of you women sitting with her on a sofa asking her intimate questions about her home and children. And she seemed really to be enjoying it, too.”

Too quickly, the interviews finished and the princess’ time in Holland began to wind down. That evening, they attended a reception at the president’s home, where guests were encouraged to shake the hands of the royals but not “engage in conversation… so as not to cause undue fatigue.” The next morning, Juliana and Bernhard visited the Netherlands Museum, where three little girls the same age as their daughters gifted the little princesses wooden shoes. Finally, the two royals drove around Hope’s campus one last time before heading away from Holland, off to more convocations and to meet with Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the White House.

Throughout her brief stay in Holland, Juliana had been nothing but complimentary of the little town full of Dutch pride. She saved her most poignant words for her last day in Holland, telling a reporter, “My stay in Holland has made me very happy. The Dutch atmosphere, which is so homelike for me, the simplicity and dignity of the convocation and the warmth, friendliness and hospitality of the people have meant a great deal to me.” With that, Holland waved goodbye to
“their” princess, never to forget that their little town had hosted royalty.

Juliana’s visit to Holland in 1941 is a remarkable local historical moment. It allows modern-day Hollanders to peek into their city, a city bursting with patriotism and pride for its ancestry. Almost exactly six months after Juliana’s visit, Holland went to war with the rest of the United States after the attack on Pearl Harbor. Perhaps some thought of Princess Juliana, such a powerful symbol of the horrors of war. She remained in Canada for the war’s duration, and returned to the Netherlands in 1945 with Queen Wilhelmina and Bernhard. Just seven years after she waved goodbye to Holland, Michigan, Princess Juliana became Queen Juliana, ready to lead the people she had loved from afar for so long into a new and uncertain era. As queen, she visited the little city again in 1952. But something special happened in 1941, when the world fought against each other, there seemed to be no hope anywhere, and a princess far from her people found a place that felt almost like home. Hope springs eternal, indeed.

Works Cited

H88-0082.1. Royal Family of the Netherlands. Joint Archives of Holland, Holland, MI.


Notes

Aine O’Connor is a senior History and English double major at Hope College. She plans to attend grad school for library and information science after graduation, with the ultimate goal of becoming an academic librarian.

Correction: In the Fall 2019 issue of the Joint Archives Quarterly, this image of Esther Snow and the Women’s Glee Club was incorrectly dated. The correct year is 1949.

MAY

Built about 1876, May (or May Station), was a watering station on the Michigan Lake Shore Railroad, ten minutes on the schedule southeast of the Holland station. It was located in Allegan County on 146th Avenue in northern Fillmore Township where the tracks crossed a branch of the Black River. A post office was established at the site on September 25, 1895, with Laurence Dykhuis as the first postmaster. It was probably named for Frederick H. May who was instrumental in building the railroad in that part of the state. A general store was opened nearby. About 1900, trains no longer stopped at May and the post office was discontinued November 14, 1902. The site of May later became part of the City of Holland’s Industrial Park. All remnants of May have now disappeared.

The 1939 Hixson Atlas (below) shows May to be located in Fillmore Township ¼ of a section north of 146th Ave. on 50th Street (this street is the dividing line between Sections 1 and 2).
Princess Juliana and Prince Bernhard meet well-wishers at a reception in Holland, 1941
Saturday March 21, 2020
This event supports MSRA’s exploration, documentation, and interpretation of Lake Michigan shipwrecks

**Eastland: Chicago’s Deadliest Day**
Documentary producer, Harvey Moshman of Chicago, presents highlights of his latest film about the capsizing of the Eastland in 1915.

**New Views of Old Steamships**
John Janzen returns to share his amazing high definition footage of three steamships previously found by MSRA: Akeley, Michigan, & Hennepin.

**Expedition Unknown: The Vanished Airliner**
MSRA’s Craig Rich recaps the last five years of work on NWA Flight 2501 and Valerie van Heest provides a behind the scenes look as she, her husband Jack, Jeff Vos and Todd White appear with Josh Gates, the host of TV’s popular show “Expedition Unknown” searching for the lost DC-4.

**Collision Course**
Technical diver John Janzen and first-time wreck finder Bernie Hellstrom tell the story of the loss and discovery of the schooners Peshtigo and St. Andrews that collided and sank in 1878 of Beaver Island.

**Plus** Honor those lost on the 80th anniversary year since the Armistice Storm of 1940 that killed 64 sailors.

In partnership with the Joint Archives of Holland