

7-9-1986

## Bosman, Nelson Oral History Interview: Holland Furnace Company

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### Recommended Citation

**Repository citation:** Hope College, "Bosman, Nelson Oral History Interview: Holland Furnace Company" (1986). *Holland Furnace Company*. Paper 1.

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**Published in:** 1986 - *Holland Furnace Company (H88-0234)* - *Hope College Living Heritage Oral History Project*, July 9, 1986. Copyright © 1986 Hope College, Holland, MI.

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NELSON BOSMAN

INTERVIEW: 9 JULY 1986

Was Mayor of Holland from 1961 to 1971. Holland native. Grandfather was Isaac Marsilje. He and Herbert Marsilje are cousins.

ON THE KOLLAS AND LANDWEHRS (PRE-1928)

"They (AH and JP) came to Holland and got a hold of my granddad and said, "We don't have a dime." They wanted to know if he'd give them a loan. My granddad told my mom that he was going to put all of his money into the Holland Furnace Company."

Isaac "put all that he had in the company. They (AH and JP) came here with nothing."

Isaac Marsilje owned the house at the corner of 16th St. and Lincoln. He sold it to the Kollas. NB lived at the corner of 15th St. and Lincoln. "We knew the Landwehrs and Kollas like a book."

Katie and Oscar Nystrom lived on 12th -- across from the home now occupied by Dr. Eliot Tanis of Hope College. "The divorce business happened when they were over at Hazelbank." Oscar invented the Air-U-Well fan.

AH Landwehr was president -- "Mr. Landwehr was a fine man." "Mr. Landwehr was a real promoter of the town too." The Masonic Lodge built what is now Centennial Apartments. "Mr. Landwehr was a great pusher for that Lodge. The Piano Company put a lot of stuff into that. But the hotel, the Furnace built to get the salesmen in."

Selma Swift was up there working in the office. But when the Landwehrs and Kollas were out at Hazelbank, she lived in the Landwehr's old house with (her brother) Edgar. The two of them stayed in that home for some time."

JP Kolla was the foundryman -- "A small man very interested in music. He sent the Legion Band to Chicago and the Furnace Company paid for it. This was once they got going."

The Landwehrs and Kollas had "controlling stock" in the company. When the new office was built, the old one was used as a gym. The company had its own basketball team.

"And they never had a union over there. The workers sure were treated well."

"They had a shakedown crew at night, hitting the iron castings to get rid of sand from the molds (the molds were made out of a special sand). You could hear that rapping way down on 15th, the windows rattling."

The 1928 boat accident "brought the end to Mr. Landwehr. It started everything going downhill. Mr. Landwehr lost his mind. It was terrible. Paul was a heller, oh boy. His dad bought him everything."

"If it (the company) would have kept going, it would have been something. But that accident just crippled them. It took two from that family."

#### ON HFC AFTER TED CHEFF:

"Mr. Muhlenbrock and Uncle Tom (Marsilje, Herb's father) were concerned about how much money was being spent on unnecessary things. Stained-glass windows in the lobby and all. They had the most doggy(?) stuff in that lobby. That was unnecessary. Muhlenbrock was very conservative and so was Uncle Tom."

"They were voted off the board. Katie had a lot to do with that. (A lot of ill feeling came out of that.) I remember Uncle Tom was upset about that."

"I think Katie had a lot to do with that (Ted Cheff coming to power). She wanted Ted in there. She liked Ted."

"People all liked him really. I never heard people (at the company) say anything bad about him. This town is great for being jealous of other people."

"He put on a good show. He's a tall guy and good looking." NB insists that PT Cheff is 82 -- says he had to give his correct age when WHTC was applying for a license from the FCC. Ted was on the board of WHTC for 33 years with NB.)

"He was a Kentucky colonel.

"He worked in everything (before becoming president). They wanted him to know all the departments."

"He got the wrong people in there. It was going good when he got there. Mr. Landwehr and Mr. Kolla would never sit still for that -- going into houses and breaking furnaces."

"He had a lonesome life when he sat in the cooler. People just went down on him. He took all the blame for all that went on. But he authorized it, so you've got to take the consequences."

Katie died when he was in jail.

"A guy who was smart, he would keep his head down and be quiet. He (Ted) didn't like anybody with more education than he. But as far as the factory help goes, you won't find anybody who didn't like him -- Ted."

#### MISCELLANEOUS:

-- "They had 2500 people at picnics, and they brought in professional people for the programs. I put up the loudspeakers, so that's how I know."