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Moore, Cobie van L Maas Oral History Interview: Sesquicentennial of Holland, "150 Stories for 150 Years"

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Oral History Interview with
Cobie van L. Maas Moore

Conducted March 22, 1997
by Jean Postma

Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
"150 Stories for 150 Years"
Sesquicentennial Oral History Project
Interview with Cobie Moore
March 22, 1997
Interviewer: Jean Postma

JP: Cobie, first just a little bit of background information. We know that you were born in St. Louis, Missouri. I'm wondering how you got to Holland from St. Louis.

CM: Since I had entered the museum field I had been looking for a job that would use both my interest in museums and my interest in European culture. I was raised to appreciate my Dutch heritage on my father's side. I had traveled in Europe and enjoyed it very much. For those reasons, in college I had designed my own special major, European Studies, with a focus on Dutch culture, language, history and so on. So I had been watching the job listings in the professional magazines that came my way. In December, 1989, or January, 1990, I saw a listing for a curator here in Holland at the Holland Historical Trust. I thought wow, I can't pass this up, I have to apply for this. So, I applied and I didn't hear anything for a couple of months or so. I finally called the director at that time, Reid Van Sluis, and as it had happened, the board had decided to hire somebody else. But when that person was offered the position, he turned it down and I was the number two choice. I found out after the fact (laughter) and I didn't know this at that time. I was invited to come up for an interview then. I believe I came up in April.

JP: Of 1990?


JP: Was that your first visit to Holland?
CM: Yes. I had driven through Holland several times in years past because my grandparents had a summer cottage up in Petosky, Michigan. So, we had driven from St. Louis up to Petosky many times, but we had never stopped in Holland, though I had always wanted to. So, this was my first time, really, in Holland. I remember the interview very clearly. It was with Elton Bruins and, I believe, Dale Van Lente, too. Jesse Dalman was supposed to be there but, or maybe Jesse Dalman was there and Dale was supposed to be there, but he wasn’t. Anyway, one of the three on the committee had another commitment. But, I went back home and later found out I had the job. By May I had learned the job was mine if I wanted it. So, I was very happy.

JP: So then when did you come to the museum?

CM: Well, I moved up here right before Memorial Day weekend. I moved into my apartment and I started work the first Monday in June.

JP: I am just wondering what you thought of Holland, both at the time you had your interview and as you became acquainted with it in that first month or so; what were your first impressions of the city?

CM: Well, very favorable. I had been living within the St. Louis city limits, where it can be noisy for an apartment liver and there is trash on the streets and regular...

JP: Big city living.

CM: Yes, just big city living, and I was ready for a change. I was tired of highway commuting, and so on. So, I was very favorably impressed. I just loved Centennial Park and...
JP: I can't remember where your apartment was.

CM: Well, my apartment was on the north side; Kragspough Court, off of Felch, right by the highway. And at that time, it was still undeveloped around there.

JP: Right, still quite country.

CM: Yes. There was a retired farm couple across the street, where New York Carpet World is now. There was a lot of pine trees, where I walked my dog; where Gordon Food Service is now. Just when I moved up, they were just starting to build Jose Babushka. They were just building the Old Kent...

JP: Across the highway.

CM: Yes. That was open field, but slowly being developed. Of course now, it is a busy intersection with malls everywhere. But, I appreciated all the trees and the quiet and so on. I liked it a lot. So, I enjoyed Holland very much. I liked the fact that it had a small town feeling, that it was very clean, that people knew each other, that there was a strong sense of heritage here. A great appreciation for history. I could see that my work was cut out for me at the museum, but I knew it would be made easier because everybody just really likes history around here.

JP: Yes. Values, their roots. That's very interesting. I just wanted to go back to something for a moment. Do you still have relatives in the Netherlands, and had you visited them there before you decided to take up European Culture and History as a life study?

CM: Yes, I've lost track, but I think I've been overseas about nine or ten times now. Not always to the Netherlands, but yes, I visited my relatives when I was a senior in
college. I spent about four months over there living with my Oma, outside Amsterdam, and studying...taking language classes, studying the history, visiting cultural sites and so on.


CM: Yes. So, I guess the first time I traveled I was about eight years old. And those early travels really gave me an appreciation for other cultures. I’m sure that had a lot to do with the fact that I got into museum work.

JP: Were those with your parents?

CM: Yes.

JP: You have a wonderful background for this all to come from, that is very interesting. I was curious about how you felt, given the religious nature of the community, being a bit of an outsider in term of their religion. Has this ever given you any pause for thought?

CM: Not really. I have a great appreciation for religion myself, and I guess when I first moved up here, I found it refreshing to be living in a community that had strong values, that had an appreciation for God, and wasn’t ashamed to show it. It was a nice change from big city living, where so much bad seems to be going on. I heard some things when I moved up. My parents told me about some friends that they knew who had lived in Holland back in the 70s or 80s. They had just felt like outsiders the whole time and eventually moved after living here for about two or three years because they just didn’t feel welcome. I heard that that could happen, that Holland could be a closed community, but I think my job helped me a lot because my
work required that I go and meet people. Almost on a daily basis, people were
donating things to the museum, and of course part of my work was that I would ask
them questions. I would kind of interview them about themselves and the piece, and
that way people were forced to open up to me and I felt like I was getting to know
people. And, I was. When I was out running errands in my free time, I would run
into people and they would open up... "Hi Cobie, do you remember me?" that type of
thing. I think my job helped me a lot to settle into the community.

JP: Yes, that is very interesting, and I think you 're absolutely right. I wonder if you
would care to comment at all on the relationship of the museum to other organizations
in town. I was thinking first of Hope College. Did you get acquainted at all with
people there or did you work at all with Hope College in terms of your job? And if
so, how did that go?

CM: I had a lot of interaction with people at Hope College. Hope certainly enriches the
community by being here and time and time again when you are in a profession like
museums, non-profit, you learn to take advantage of the resources that are available
in your community (laughs). The museum staff would often turn to the professors
and other professionals at Hope for input or kind of tap into that source. Of course, I
used their library a lot for research. Our archival collection is stored over in the
Joint Archives, in the basement of the Hope library. We would talk to some of the
professors, Jack Wilson.

JP: The head of the history department?

CM: The Art department.
JP: I'm not acquainted with everybody at Hope myself.

CM: We turned to Jack Wilson for our 17th Century Art History, Seventeenth Century Dutch art exhibit, to run ideas past him. The interpretation of the exhibit. We turned to other professors, like Judy Hillman, to help with design of exhibit layout and so on. People over in the theater department set our lighting in the galleries when we first got ready to open to the public in December '92. There are other instances, like that Hope let us store some things on their campus when we needed storage space, things like that. And of course, Elton Bruins, who is a former religion professor over there and now director of the A.C. Van Raalte Institute for Historical Studies, was a long time board member of the Trust.

JP: That leads me to another question. You were here at quite a critical time in our development, at the time that we opened the new museum in the old Post Office. That must have been an exciting time for you, and I was wondering, was that process underway when you first came here?

CM: Yes. It had been underway for at least a couple years, I'm sure more than that. When I came on in June '90, the board was very involved in the capital campaign, raising funds for the museum. I don't recall what the original figure was, but it was increased after I came on board and the new director, Ann Kiewel, was hired, it was raised a little bit. I think the final figure was $2.2 million, something like that. But, I came on at a very interesting time. As I said earlier, when I interviewed it was with Reid Van Sluis, the director, he was on board. But, when I came back in May to look for an apartment and I was staying with Grace Antoon, who was Reid's
secretary, she informed me that there was a mutual decision between the board and Reid, that Reid would leave at the end of the summer. It was kind of awkward when I came on in June to know I was working with a lame duck director. And, here to be confronted with lots of questions about how to proceed with the planning for the new museum. It was awkward. And I thought, I was hired as a curator, not as a director and I'll give whatever input I can, but I really don't feel it is my decision. A new director should answer a lot of these questions.

JP: Since I was not here at the time, I don't even know when Ann came to the museum.

CM: Well, when I was hired in June, she had already been on board a couple of weeks, maybe a month, I'm not clear about that, as a part-time contracted development director. Just to help the board with the capital campaign. That is what she did for the rest of the summer. Meanwhile, the board advertised for a new director and Ann applied for that as well, and it was the board's decision that Ann would act as acting director until a new director was hired in the fall. Two candidates were flown in to interview for the director position. I think it was in August because it was hot here, I remember. A gal from the Smithsonian, from Washington D.C. and then a fellow from a small museum, I don't recall now where, either in the Midwest or the East Coast. It came down to those two and Ann. The board's decision was to hire Ann. She became the official director in October, I think. So, I was glad there was finally a director on board and plans could proceed.

JP: But it was a very different situation than that you had been hired into.

CM: Right, but I kind of felt like, well...
JP: The ground was shifting under you.

CM: Yes. But I was not at a loss for what to do in that interim. When I arrived, I found the museum as it was had been maintained for several years. But, it hadn’t been managed as a professional museum should have been. It was just the nature of the thing. Mr. Wichers, who had been the director for many years, the only director of the museum since it was founded in 1939, had his hands in so many other pots around town. He was involved in so many good projects, and he wasn’t a trained museum professional. So, for those reasons, the museum hadn’t been taken to its full potential. A complete inventory had to be done, and I knew that was my first task. As that inventory was being done, the collection should also be re-housed. Everything was crammed into the Netherlands Museum and the clinic building, the back building there, in acidic boxes, just stuffed in. Well, you remember what things looked like. There was no real organization to it all. It wasn’t climate controlled, tags were pinned on and stapled on, just a lot of work needed to be done. That I knew had to be done before people could even begin to think about designing exhibits. How can you design exhibits if you don’t know what you have? Of course to get that inventory up and running, I needed helpers, I couldn’t do it all myself. So, I was busy recruiting and training volunteers to get that work done.

JP: Very busy. One of the questions that I hope you can feel like responding to is: How do you feel the Dutch heritage plays in the community today, and how does this interact with the other cultures present in the community?

CM: That is a very good question. That is a question that the museum staff was constantly
mulling over as we planned exhibits, really. Holland is known as a Dutch town, and of course for tourist reasons, the Dutch history is really focused on to bring in the tourism money. And yet, like all communities, Holland has evolved. It lost a lot of its Dutchness during the second or third generation here. The Dutch immigrants themselves made a conscious effort to become Americans. Van Raalte instructed all the children to go find work outside of the community for Americans.

JP: That is interesting. I didn’t know that, I knew he encouraged them to learn English.

CM: He wanted them to go outside of the community so they could learn English in an American setting, and learn American ways. He encouraged them to become American citizens. There are some characteristics here, or have been in the past, that some people have, I believe, misinterpreted as Dutch. The fact that this is a very conservative community, Dutch people in the Netherlands, are NOT conservative.

JP: (Laughing) Isn’t that interesting.

CM: Amsterdam has always been the mecca for Hippies and drug users. The Dutch government subsidizes drug addicts. That is just one example. But, as I said earlier, this community is very proud of its Dutch heritage, and in a way that makes it still a Dutch community because they want to keep that history alive. But, a lot of Americans, people of Mexican heritage, have moved here. Just while I’ve been here, goodness, Prince and all the other corporations who have been growing so rapidly are recruiting people from throughout the U.S. to move here. Sadly, a lot of the historic buildings around town are being torn down. You can’t find a good example of the Veneklaasen brick home inside the city limits anymore.
JP: Isn't that sad.

CM: And, these Veneklaasen brick homes, which were built from 1870-19... I don't know, past the turn of the century, they were build with elements of Dutch ornamentation and so on. In the Dutch style. Somewhere along the line, the city fathers decided that economic growth was their top priority. I think that priority is still very high. They made industrial parks, and just wanted to bring more business in, and that certainly helped the community, but at the same time it put a lot of historic places around town in danger.

JP: Yes. That is very interesting. I don't know, you've probably seen the new little video as part of the museum exhibit, which has various people talking about how they came to Holland. One of the communities represented is the Vietnamese community. There is another population that came here and are making a strong impact on the local community.

CM: Well, I think what the museum, while I was there, and what the staff is still trying to do is... It is not easy, but in the exhibits we're trying to do a good job in still relating stories about Holland's Dutch beginnings and Dutch past. But trying to still reach out to these immigrant communities - the Asian and the Hispanic communities - to draw them in, too, so they don't feel alienated. Since it's a public museum and it is supported, somewhat, by city funds so, the museum's trying to reach out to everyone.

JP: I think it is a very good change that has come in recent years. I wonder if you have noticed the generation gap in Holland?

CM: Less so than I saw in St. Louis, I think. One of the first things I noticed when I
moved here was how young people were when they got married. That families started younger here. They started having children earlier than they did where I had lived before. There just seemed to be, maybe I didn't interpret this correctly, that people respected their parents and young people respected what their parents had done and wanted to start emulating them just as soon as possible, right out of high school. It seemed to me that there are more family businesses here. Sons and daughters work for their parents more than they do other places.

JP: I personally feel that this is true also. That was one of my first observations. It seems more family oriented in the sense that families stay together and do things together, work as well as play.

CM: Through an outsider like me, I found the winter so long here. With not many choices about what to do. You can rent a video, you can go to the movie theater, but there was so much more in St. Louis. My first couple winters here, I thought, what do people do to entertain themselves during the winter? But I guess I came to the conclusion that they visit with one another. The families get together all the time.

JP: One of my interests, you know, is women in Holland. I am wondering if you have any comments to make on the role of women as you've observed it here in Holland. Any comments that you would like to make on that?

CM: I don't really think Holland is behind the times. When it comes to women being able to do what they want to do, I don't think any doors are closed to them here in Holland. There are plenty of women who are professionals, who are well respected in the community, really doing well in their professions. We've got women on the
City Council, a women who is Superintendent of public schools, Ann Kiewel is director of the museum, there is a woman director of the Art Council, I believe. Jessie Dalman is a local state representative. Things have come a long way from what I see when I am researching in the newspaper. In years past, 1897, 1922, so on, things were very different then. But, as Holland opened up to the rest of society, as it became less closed, these things are inevitable, that women seek for and have greater opportunities. Does that answer your question?

JP: Yes. Well, I feel also that women do have lots of opportunities here in Holland. I guess I see it still as their primary responsibility as home and family even though they may be working full-time at a job some place.

CM: Maybe the men aren’t stepping forward and taking equal share of responsibilities?

(laughter)

JP: I don’t see them having careers, which implies a different arrangement at home.

CM: I think the women who are moving into the community right now, who are moving here for professional reasons to take on management level positions at Prince and so on, and who are looking for full-time baby-sitters to come to their homes and look after their children, they’re bringing a different element, they’re changing, they are bringing a change with them. My husband works at Robertshaw Controls, and just about all the workers in the plant are women doing the factory work. And I believe that’s the way it is in most other factories around town. These women work full-time and yet it is not really skilled labor. Then they go home and they’re expected, like you say, to take charge of all the housekeeping and so on. Holland is known for its
work ethic, and I guess the women have a lot to do with that these days. Whereas in the past, it was the men who were the factory workers.

JP: We have covered a lot of ground here and very interestingly so, I just wondered if there was anything, any area that you felt we hadn’t covered, that you would like to talk about? One of the things I would like to ask, if I may, is about your new career - writing for the newspaper and how that is going?

CM: I am very grateful for it. It enables me to keep my hand in the museum field, just a little bit, in the history field. I am at home now with our little girl, she’ll be three in May. I have been home since ’94, just before Natalie was born. I had hoped to keep working at the museum part-time when Natalie was born, but a position wasn’t available. I guess in hindsight, it’s been good for Natalie that I be with her full-time. But it’s sad that in this day and age, people tend to judge themselves, or identify themselves, by what they do, what their work is, rather than what they’re accomplishing in other avenues and in other directions. I still don’t quite feel satisfied with just being a mother and a housekeeper. I want to keep myself active in the history field so that I can get back into it down the road. This is a small community. There aren’t many things open for a historian like me, working around a child’s schedule. But, I am grateful that the newspaper has offered this to me. This being the sesquicentennial year, they wanted little history pieces in the paper on an almost daily basis. Last fall they asked me if I would be interested in taking over the regular Sunday column, "On the Way to Today," which pulls stories from the Holland City News and the Holland Sentinel from years past, in 25 year intervals. I
said sure, I'd be happy to do that. Then back in January, they asked me if I could also prepare a little column for the front page, Monday through Friday. Something interesting that happened on this day in Holland. Now the Sentinel discovered they don't quite have the funds they thought they did (laughing) for me to do both. So, what I think is a very good compromise, is I am going to take this Sunday column, which I think people are very attached to, used to, and use these years of 1872, 1897, 1922, 1947, and I'm adding 1972, and then another year at random and I'm going to have each one of those years on the front page Sunday through Friday. Those years that I just mentioned were anniversary years when, for the most part, there were celebrations here in Holland. I want to keep letting people know what happened here in those years. So, that's what the arrangement will be through December, through this sesquicentennial year. And before this column, I wrote "All in a Day's Work," a monthly column, something I designed myself, interviewing retired people around town about their professions. Furniture makers, librarians, a nursery man, other people who have lived here almost all of their lives. When I was working in the museum, it was very evident to us that early 20th century occupational history had not been covered well, in the collection or in the Archives too, I think. So, I thought writing this column would help fill in that gap a little bit.

JP: Well, you know I'm devoted to history also, in an amateur way, and enjoy them very much. I look forward to your writing. Is there anything we haven't covered?

CM: I think it might be interesting to talk about how the museum in its present shape evolved.
JP: Yes.

CM: If there is time?

JP: Yes. I've been watching the tape and we have plenty of time. I can turn it over. I even have another tape so, go ahead (laughing).

CM: As I say, when I was hired in June 1990 the capital campaign was well underway. Work on the exterior of the old Post Office had already begun.

JP: But you were actually working at the old house, at what was the Netherlands Museum.

CM: Yes. The museum was very spread out then. I was with the collection at the Netherlands Museum, there at 12th and Central. Reid and Ann, and Grace Antoon, and Board members when they had meetings, were over on the third floor of City Hall in Mr. Wichers' former office - the office that was also known as the Netherlands Information Bureau. And then of course, the other objects in the collection were spread all over town. We had some objects on exhibit at Windmill Island. We had had some objects stored in the old Board of Public Works building. I forgot now what that building did, a Board of Public Works building down on Sixth Street, it was demolished just shortly after I arrived here. I drove down there and took some quick photographs of it. Goodness, I should remember where some other things were stored, but it was really kind of haphazard. Things were all over town. I'd here horror stories of how something was lost because it was stored somewhere and people forgot about it.

JP: Yes. I remember there were things stored up in the attic of A. D. Bos.
That's right. And then, there were things stored over in the old Post Office, but they couldn't be stored there much longer because work was going to begin inside. So, where to move these things? Tom Bos had just become a new member of the Board and he said, "Well, I've got some empty storage space there above A. D. Bos. It was a real help. It wasn't climate controlled and it was dirty up there, it was like going back in time. Downstairs it was all modern and clean and efficient, but up there it was a turn of the century warehouse with just one light bulb or so, but it really met our need. As I was shown the plans for what the new museum would look like, the interior floor plans of the new museum, I had concerns about it. The board always said, "we welcome whatever comments you have." So, I told them I had reservations about the floor plan. It had the director's office right inside the front door over where the gift shop is now. The director and secretary were going to be there and the curator's office was going to be over on the loading dock, up against the back wall, I think it was. And to get to my office, you would have to walk through what was going to be the exhibit fabrication room. I thought it was just not a good idea for me to be wheeling artifacts through an exhibit preparation room where there is sawdust and paint. I really should be closer to where the collection is stored, which was going to be in the basement. Then the main gallery was going to be on the main floor in just the building proper, the old Post Office proper. The whole upstairs was going to be temporary gallery. It would have been a lovely, a big gallery, very lovely, but really too big for our needs. I thought it would be better for all the staff to be together so we could talk more easily. There wasn't much of a gift
shop planned, it was going to be a circular booth right there in the middle of the lobby. A square kind of counter, a ticket taker/gift shop. So, I talked to Ann and the Board members. I’m sure the Board wasn’t real pleased to hear this. Everything was so far along, and they had already sold the floor plan and so on to the donors. People who had given money to the campaign and certain areas had been.... For a certain amount of money, an area was going to be named after so and so. That threw a wrench in all of that. It made the situation kind of uncomfortable, but we realized it was now or never to make the changes. Right about then, a very timely article was in one of the AAM magazines, maybe the August issue of Museum News. It was by John Hilsbury of Detroit, a museum architect, and he was talking about how to correctly design a museum. So, Ann called him up and he came over and spent about two days kind of retreating with the staff and the Board and looking over the Post Office. And, at the end of the second day, he presented his version of the museum. That is the museum as we know it today.

JP: I’ve got the tape going again now. This is side two of the interview with Cobie Moore from the Holland Museum. You were talking about the new museum design and I think this is very interesting, I hope you’ll go on.

CM: The original design for the museum interior, as I understand it, had been brainstormed by Reid Van Sluis, the former director, and Steve Bassett, an architect who was also a trustee. Steve was of Architects Collective, formerly on 8th Street in the old fire station. Ann and I were both uncomfortable with what we perceived as a conflict of interests, that a trustee was also the architect. Being hired to do the design
work, and an architect with no experience in designing museums. But we were so thankful when John Hillbury came over and we were able to (laughs).... He designed this new layout and Steve was in charge of handling all the smaller details. He was still given that work to do being the on-site architect. So, things got ironed out that way. Before I came along, a exhibit design and fabrication company had been hired. I can’t remember what their name was now, they were from Midland, Michigan. These two fellows, and they, needless to say, were very eager to get going with the work. I think it is good to have all this information down for posterity, but it was a sticky time. A very awkward time for everyone involved, I think. Because no inventory of the collection had been done, Reid did not really know what was in the collection. Therefore, he couldn’t really go to these people and say, "This is what we have, let’s design an exhibit with it." These designers meanwhile were frustrated that they really had nothing to work on. In order to go out and raise money for the capital campaign, Reid, the exhibit designers, and maybe some Board members too had brainstormed on, generally, what could be exhibit areas in the gallery. So the Board then took these exhibit names and went out and sold them to the donors. But, after Ann and I came on board, we started to rethink about how the gallery had been divided up into these different areas and whether or not that was really feasible, if it was realistic thinking. We decided to go for more of an open gallery idea and have the exhibits feed off of each other more. Have more flow, not have things so self-contained. The exhibit designers had come up with some drawings, kind of mock-ups of what exhibits could look like, because you need these
kind of marketing tools when you go out on a capital campaign. I remember one of them showed a huge fly-wheel that is in the museum's collection, but stored over at the City garage. A huge generating fly-wheel that used to be used at the Baker Furniture Company factory, which was where Freedom Village is now. Reid and the designers thought that, well, you know, they could get this fly-wheel going and that would be really neat for people to see this thing moving and creating energy to power wood-working machines and so on. Realistically, that thing weighs several tons, and they couldn't have sunk it in the floor at the museum. It probably would have been too big to fit in there.

JP: I was just wondering. Yes, the size would be prohibitive.

CM: Yes, and the floor could not have supported that weight. They had a mock-up of the inside of an immigrant ship. I don't know, maybe I shouldn't be rambling.

JP: No. I think it is interesting. Particularly in view of how striking the museum is now, and how many compliments we've gotten on the appearance of it. Of course, I came into the process very late and I did not realize there was this background. It seemed so well organized when I got there, and it did seem to fall logically from one area to the next, as a community would have developed, first with the hard scrabble realities of life that they had to make a living, to their refinement of this process and finally ending up with the cultural assets that a community has today. So, this is very interesting. I hope you'll continue.

CM: Putting a museum together is hard work and especially when a staff is in transition.

JP: Yes. I have often thought how hard it must have been to adjust as each new person
came onboard, or as each person was replaced.

CM: I am sure Reid was in a difficult spot too because he was succeeding Mr. Wichers. That is a hard act to follow.

JP: Not easy. Right.

CM: Aside from the women, the receptionists at the museum who were mainly there just to be receptionists, and Grace Antoon, his secretary, Reid was all alone. A one person staff can really accomplish only so much. So, a lot was expected of him too. So, it is amazing. I think everybody can be really proud about what did finally happen, the museum that we have today. All that hard work and agonizing did pay off.

JP: Yes. I think you can be very proud of your part in bringing it to life.

CM: Well, I was just one of several. And all the volunteers, yourself and the others.

JP: I was wondering when Nancy Van Rhee came on board?

CM: Let’s see, yes, Nancy deserves to be talked about. She was one of the first people who answered my appeal for volunteers. She was a full-time nurse at the hospital then, working evenings. She had recently finished her degree in history at Grand Valley State. So, she wanted to....

JP: Start using it.

CM: Yes. She started coming very faithfully as a volunteer. One or two mornings a week. I knew that there was only so much that I could accomplish by myself. Conducting an inventory requires a lot of detail work and detail checking. If I was needed to plan exhibits and get out there and publicize the museum, and go out and solicit donations to fill in the major gaps that were in the collection, I couldn’t also be
there in the collections building, double-checking the volunteer's work, and Ann agreed. So, we hired Nancy starting about twelve hours a week to do just that, to work on the inventory, to keep that moving along while I went on and did these other things that were necessarily geared more toward the museum. Because at that time, we were kind of focused on two things - keeping up on the present museum, operating that, and also looking to the future.

JP: Yes. From that view alone, it would have been difficult even for the most stable museum staff. I've thought in retrospect, just to move a museum from one site physically to another is a monumental task.

CM: That we had to do too. I worked up a calendar, I spread over at least six months of what we hoped to accomplish.

JP: And when.

CM: Yes, what our goals were on a monthly or weekly basis, what artifacts were going to be moved when. We worked very closely with Boer's Mayflower and their men. We moved those deities that are there at the entrance.

JP: The stone figures from Bali.

CM: Those had been stored over in Soren Wolff's garage over behind City Hall.

JP: Oh, my goodness.

CM: I remember moving them, running alongside the Boer's... Who did bring us the fork-lift? It was another guy from the community. It was amazing how the community stepped forward and helped us. Some guy with a fork-lift who worked for some company downtown. Oh, I wish I could remember. I put in an appeal. I would
approach a company, do you have a fork-lift and an operator who could help us with such and such? And, yes they did and they would loan him to us. Here we were moving these deities down River Avenue blocking traffic, (laughing) moving along at a snail’s pace. I was right alongside, so nervous that the deities would fall off.

Then, moving the lighthouse lens.

JP: Another fragile object.

CM: Yes. That had been on exhibit in the front window at the old museum, we brought that over. I remember when the men came over to move it, they said, "We can’t do this. We don’t have the right equipment, this thing is top heavy." We had to go back and re-think this. These were really challenging things, and that lighthouse lens was valued at two hundred and fifty thousand dollars. It was something in that ball park. Each week it was another challenge. I really enjoyed working with those guys. They were really resourceful and always up to the challenge (laughing).

JP: Good for them.

CM: It was amazing what had been stored in that old museum; up in the attic, down in the basement, even in crawl spaces in the lower level of the old museum. The place was packed and we had to get it all emptied out.

JP: The little bit of that process that I remember were, for example, the clock still in many, many pieces on the floor of the new museum on the very afternoon that the museum was going to open with its gala preview. The other thing I remember was digging around in the basement of the clinic building and finding so many things there.
CM: Ann and the Board decided that there was no way we could open the museum with all the exhibits done, we weren't nearly that far along. They would focus more on the building itself; how the building had been renovated and restored. The facade and the lobby had been restored. The rest of it had been renovated. The building itself would be what would be celebrated. The other exhibits would be done as they would be done. I was primarily responsible for moving the collection. I had designed the new collection storage and coordinated moving the collection over there, preparing the artifacts for exhibition, cleaning them, getting them ready to be exhibited, helping with the exhibit planning process, brainstorming and doing a little bit of research, and making lists of artifacts that would be appropriate for each exhibit. I was also personally responsible for the Volendam room, getting that set up, and the Netherlands Collection gallery. Those are what I was busy finalizing for the opening. And then also helping Deborah Ashley with the temporary exhibit, the opening exhibit on Mr. Wichers. Those were my number one priorities. I thought if we can get those up then I will be satisfied.

JP: I remember the night the museum opened on the anniversary of its original opening on December 12, 1914, and how wonderful everything looked that night. I’ve never forgotten that. It was a place I was proud to be associated with.

CM: It was a big sense of relief. I went on vacation shortly after that. I went on vacation for Christmas, and it was like a load had been lifted off my shoulders.

JP: I’m sure, very strenuous work. Thank you. It was very interesting. It recalls things that I had almost forgotten even though I was involved in the volunteer way at the
time. Can you think of anything else you would like to add to this interview?

CM: Just to clarify, the exhibit planning process did go on, but that firm in Midland was released.

JP: As I remember it was somebody from Kalamazoo by the time I had any acquaintanceship there.

CM: Yes. Jeff Bernstein.

JP: Yes. I only met him once

CM: Tom Kayser, former director of the Kalamazoo Institute of Art. We hired them as a pair. Jeff was the lead man. They designed exhibits, and we had most of the exhibits fabricated up in Grand Haven at Design Implementation. That is the setup that we did eventually use. The exhibit planning process was done.... I suggested to Ann that we create a committee: Ann, myself as curator, somebody from the Archives and that turned out to be Craig.

JP: Who also left.

CM: Yes. Now, I can't even remember Craig's name. Wright, Craig Wright. Then, Joel. He was my assistant and he knew the collection well. And then Randy Vander Water, since he was the board's Chairman of the Programs Committee, exhibits and education. I think Dr. Paul Fried sat in on a lot of meetings too because he is an historian. Besides he had been on the Board of the Muskegon Art Museum, so he could bring another museum perspective and a long-time local resident too. With all this nice input, plus with Jeff and Tom, that is how we ended up designing the exhibits. Finally, I would like to say, I hope what I have said here hasn't offended
anyone.

JP: I'm sure not, you are a tactful person.

CM: It was a difficult time, but I think it is good to have the history down.

JP: Yes. I think it is very important that people realize that a lot of energy was used to get the museum to its present state. It is something that anybody associated with it can be proud of. We have many nice comments from out-of-town visitors on both the physical appearance of the museum and the displays themselves. The kinds of things that are in the displays and the way they are exhibited. So, you can take credit for that.

CM: Well, partial credit. I think back on all the work that the trustees did. Dale Van Lente, Elton Bruins, especially. Just very dedicated to the project.

JP: That is what I have heard from others also. I think anybody on the Board at that time really put their heart and soul into accomplishing the end result. And, I know that it shows.

CM: It was a pleasure to work with them.

JP: There are some outstanding people in Holland. Well, thank you very much.

CM: You're welcome.
Initial Contact Form

Name: Pauline Jacoba van Huttenburg Haas Moore

Date of birth: [date removed], 1959  
Place of birth: St. Louis, Mo.

Mother’s name (include maiden name): Lucy King Ambler

Father’s name: Albert J. van Huttenburg Haas

Siblings’ names (include birthdates if known):
- Ina van H. Maas Clough (1957)
- Dick (1961)

Spouse’s name (include wife’s maiden name):
- Dwaine Francis Moore

Date of marriage: June 12, 1973  
Place of marriage: Holland, Mi.

Children’s names (include dates and places of birth):
- Natalie Christine Moore (Holland, Mi.)

Date of death: [date removed]  
Place of death and burial:

Religion and church membership:
- Christian Science

Schooling and/or other training:
- M.A. in Historical Administration
- B.A. in European Studies

Residential history (list all residences chronologically, noting the dates lived at each):
- St. Louis, Mo. - Birth to 1987
- Grand school, Charleston, Ill. (1987-88)
- Holland, Mi. - June 1990 - present

Occupational history (list all occupations chronologically, noting the place of work, the type of work done there, and the approximate salary):
- Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis - 1985-87
- Jackson County, Mo. Museum, Independence - 1988
- St. Louis Science Center - 1988-1990
- Holland Historical Trust - 1990-1994

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