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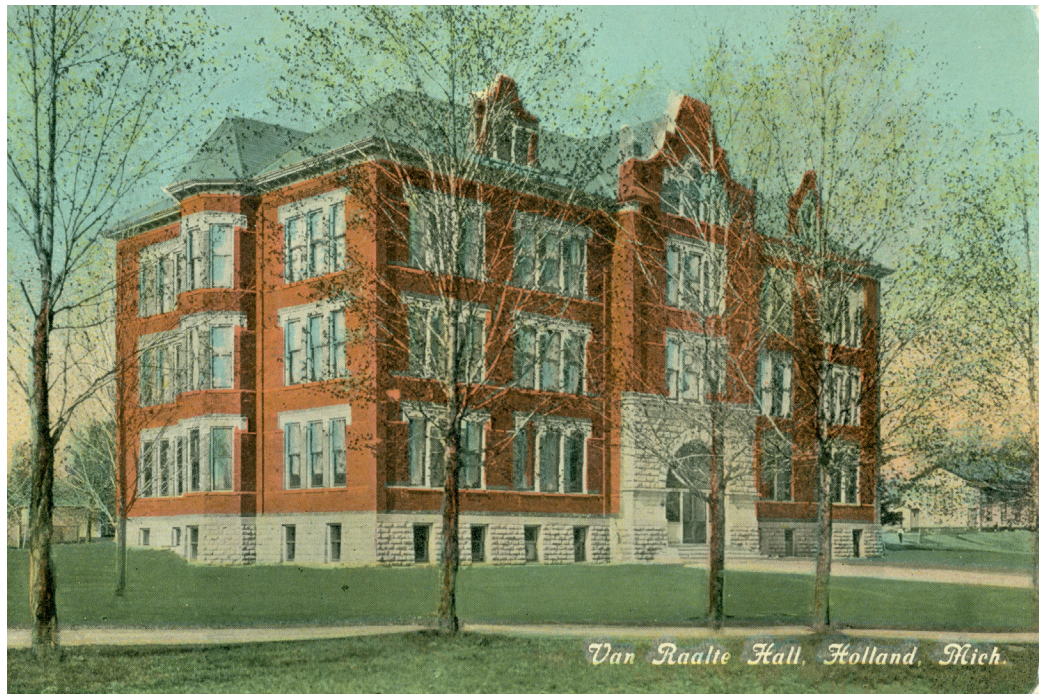
Van Raalte Hall, Hope's Former Campus Center

By Wyatt Wilcox

“Soon another massive edifice will tower among the buildings on Hope college campus” announced a 1902 *Holland City News* article about the groundbreaking for Van Raalte Memorial Hall.¹ This four-story brick building was a central part of Hope College, housing classes, offices, the first Kletz café, and many, many other things from 1903 until April 1980 when it was destroyed by fire. Now only grass and a sidewalk inhabit the former site of this building, and seems to be largely forgotten by many at Hope. However, “Old Main,” as it was called, was a central piece of Hope College for its 77 years of life.

Beginning

Ground was broken for Van Raalte Hall on Saturday, March 29, 1902, with a speech by Hope President Gerrit J. Kollen to the body of students, faculty, ministers, and citizens gathered there.² Several months later, on June 18, 1902, the cornerstone was laid with much ceremony by D.B.K. Van Raalte, civil war veteran son of Rev. Albertus C. Van Raalte, the hall's namesake and Hope and Holland's founder.² Dedication ceremonies, with speeches and hymns, were held on September 16, 1903, on the second day of the



Van Raalte Hall Postcard, circ. 1928

school year.³ Enrollment set a new record that year, at just over fifty. Van Raalte was built of Veneklasen brick from Zeeland, MI, and local Waverly Stone trim (the same stone that Graves Hall is built from).⁴ It was 132' x 72', and the new building contained laboratories, classrooms, a reading room, and a museum, among other things. It was built for \$29,000. Thus began Van Raalte Hall's long history.

The Early Years 1903-1942

Van Raalte was primarily a classroom building in its first years. It housed the chemistry, biology, and physical science labs, as well as classrooms dedicated to physics,

From the Director of Archives and Special Collections



Our *Archives and Special Collections Quarterly* often takes its inspiration from recent happenings on Hope College's campus, bringing older or lesser-known stories of historic Hope and Holland, MI into conversations about current events. This issue is no exception.

As Hope's campus evolves, documenting the physical footprint and architecture of the college has become an increasingly important part of telling its stories. Archives and Special Collections received several photograph collections earlier this year that capture changes to Hope's landscape over the past few decades. Curious about this aspect of local history, student archival assistant Wyatt Wilcox researched many of the college's former landmarks. His article details the rise and fall of one of Hope's most iconic buildings, Van Raalte Memorial Hall. Keep an eye out for an upcoming exhibit on campus architecture as well!

In April 2024, Hope's Center for Global Engagement (CGE) celebrated the unveiling of a new bronze relief of Motoichiro Ohgimi (Class of 1879) and the existing relief of Kumaji Kimura outside Van Vleck Hall. Doug Braat '72 and CGE staff consulted resources within Archives and Special Collections, looking to share the stories of these students' time at Hope and the college's connections to Japan. The second article, authored by Braat, continues this research, describing Ohgimi and Kimura's journeys from Meiji era-Japan to Holland, MI as some of Hope's earliest international students.

We are also excited to welcome Charlotte Ulloa to Hope as the Collections Archivist. Take a moment to read Charlotte's introduction and look out for the new Collection Highlights column in future issues of the *Quarterly*.

Sarah Lundy

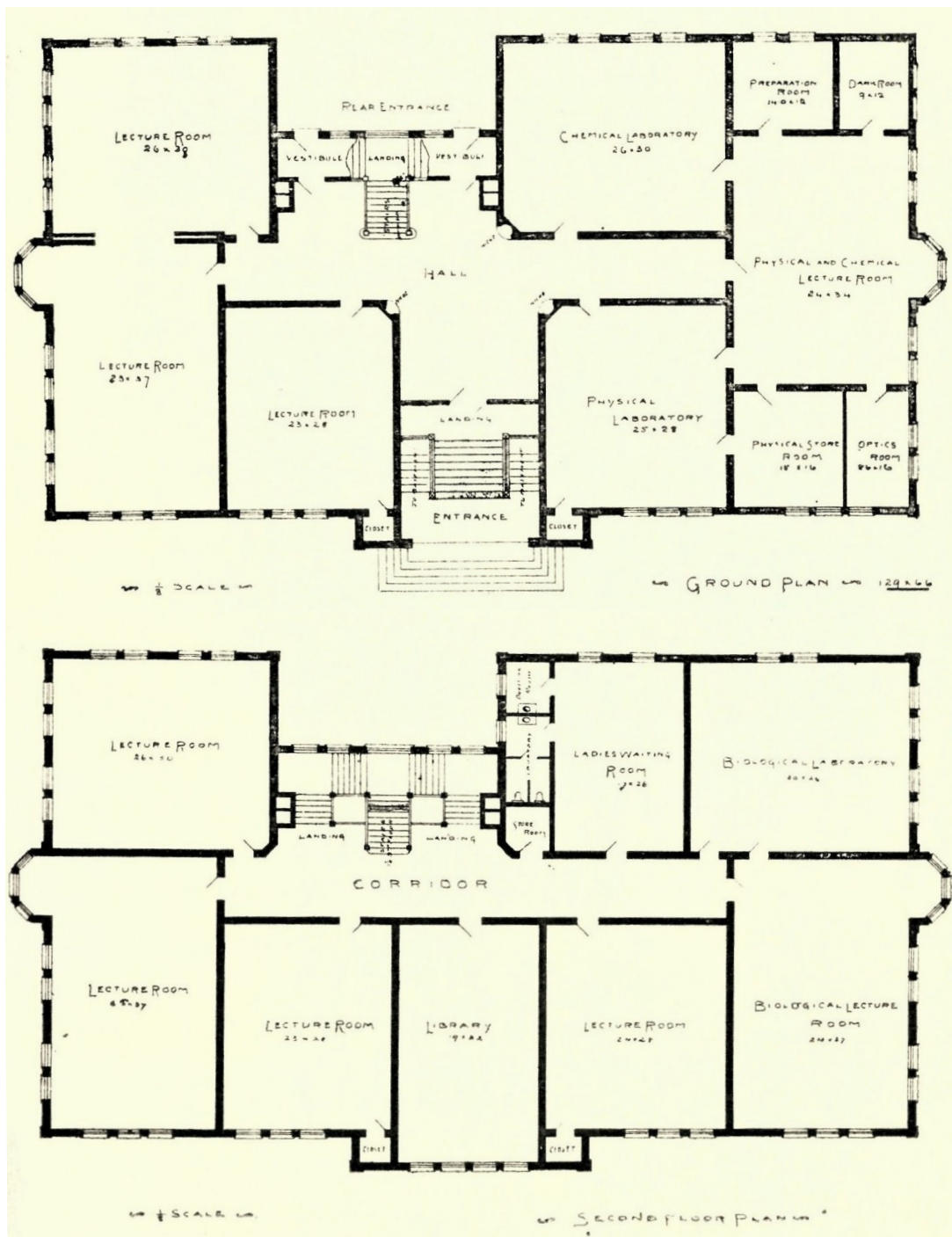
chemistry, biology, Greek, modern languages, education, biblical instruction, English, and math courses. The first two floors held classrooms and office spaces, and the third floor originally housed a museum and choral rehearsal room. The science labs created a lot of fumes, even with the fume hoods, but this issue was remedied in 1929 with new ventilation systems. Besides classrooms and offices, *The Anchor* student magazine was located in the basement.

During WWI, the third floor was used as a mess hall for the Student Army Training Corps, a group formally inducted into the U.S. army who stayed at Hope during the war years, numbering in the hundreds.⁵

The museum was originally located on the third floor, and housed many artifacts, mostly from Holland area missionaries. It moved to the fourth floor in May 1923, and was not heated.⁶ The museum's collection, as reported by *The Anchor*, included a Sudanese spear, opium pipes, beetles from South Africa, an assortment of taxidermied animals (including all sorts of birds, an alligator, and a porcupine), an extensive geology collection, Native American arrowheads, butterflies, and "mummy beads" from Egypt.⁷ The museum was consistently open to students from an early, unknown date until 1924. It was then somewhat neglected after the death of the last curator for four years, until Prof. O. E. Thompson reopened it in 1928. It was still open in 1934, then run by Dr. Teunis Vergeer, who was still running it part time in 1940 (opening for the first time in May that year.)⁸ These were the golden years of Van Raalte's museum, yet even in 1928, it was "Almost entirely unknown to the student body. . ."⁹ It suffered from lack of heating and inaccessibility even then, located on the fourth floor of Van Raalte.

The Golden Age of Van Raalte Hall 1941 – 1967

Life in Van Raalte continued as usual for its first thirty-eight years. It was the main building for classrooms and offices, and it served that purpose very well. However, the science labs were becoming increasingly outdated each year. The opening of the new science building (Lubbers Hall) caused the science labs to move out of Van Raalte Hall, and the old labs were converted into additional classrooms. During this time period, Van Raalte Hall saw its most intense use. It was a central social center of campus, held the classes that were not in the Science Building, and housed the Kletz, bookstore, and mail room. After the war, Hope saw a dramatic jump in its enrollment; in 1945, the student body was 330, and in the 1947-48 school year, the student body was 1,341.¹⁰ This was due to the GI Bill that allowed returning veterans to enroll in college at the cost of the government. Because of this, dozens more faculty were hired, but office space was limited. Thus, two second-floor classrooms in Van Raalte were converted into offices in late June 1946. These were very cramped with somewhat makeshift cubicles. It was partitioned into six "offices," and two faculty members were put into each one. Faculty members did not relish this temporary arrangement, but it was the best that could be done at the time.¹¹ 1946 brought lots of other remodels to the building, including a second entrance that faced



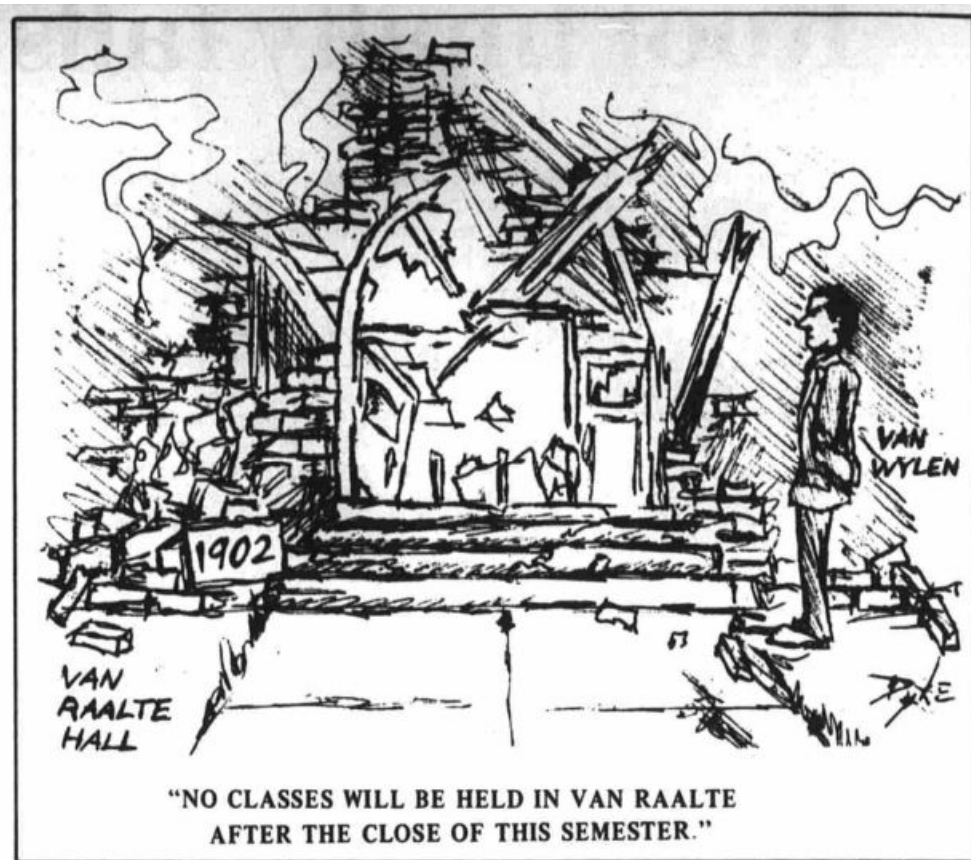
Original Van Raalte Hall Floor Plan

central campus, and extensive remodeling of the interior. The corridors were repainted a “dark” white above the wainscoting, and beige/cinnamon below. The ceilings were painted green and door transoms were removed, and false ceilings and fluorescent lights were added.¹² The east side of the first floor was remodeled into an administrative office complex. The mail room was also added in this remodel, and it also included the college telephone switchboard. Additionally, the building had started to sag, and steel girders were added to each floor. A side product of these

renovations was the removal of the main staircase to the fourth floor and its replacement with a bathroom. There was also remodeling done in 1949; this remodel added two student lounges, one on the main floor and a women’s lounge on the second. However, the fire marshal was concerned about Van Raalte in terms of fire safety, and a fire escape was added, and regular fire drills held in the late 40s.¹³

The first Kletz, called the “Koffee Kletz,” was opened in the basement of Van Raalte Hall by the members of the Alcor Honor Society. It served milkshakes, sundaes, coffee, tea, pop, rolls, and more. Board games were provided in the lounge, and it was furnished with leather couches. The room was blue and yellow, and ceramic dishes were used. It was an extremely popular student gathering place (as it was one of the only student social areas when it opened) and some faculty were regulars as well. In 1945, coffee was only a nickel.¹⁴

It was during this time period that Van Raalte Hall was the center of student life. The student congress operated out of Van Raalte, and when its elections were held, pictures of candidates were displayed in the main lobby with ballot boxes. The German Club, Philosophy Club, Spanish Club, Freshman Girls Club, and International Relations Club all had meetings in Van Raalte as well, according to *The Anchor*.¹⁵ Speech contests were held in a room on the third floor, and fraternities and sororities



The Anchor, December 1, 1972

held meetings in Van Raalte as well. The bookstore, originally operated by the Blue Key Honor Society, was located in Van Raalte's basement. The two student lounges were often sites of meetings and campus activities. Registration for placement into cottage/apartment housing also took place in Van Raalte. Every student at Hope was familiar with Van Raalte Hall in some capacity, whether they had a class there, bought books, picked up mail, got Coca-Cola from the Kletz, or were involved in a society that met there.

However, very few were familiar with the museum, or rather, what was left of it. A bad accessibility situation was made worse when the main staircase to the fourth floor was removed in 1946, which left only the narrow, emergency staircase to access it. The museum had long been abandoned, and was subject to vandalism, burglary, and pigeon droppings. Some artifacts, such as the extensive taxidermied bird collection and samurai armor, had been moved to better places. (They are now on display in the Schaap Science Center and the Martha Miller Center for Global Communication International Room, respectively). There was an attempt to rejuvenate it in the 60s, by cleaning and painting it. This project seemed promising until the fire department stepped in, saying that the museum was

a fire hazard. The museum was subsequently abandoned.¹⁶

In February 1962, perhaps as a sign of things to come, Van Raalte suffered a structural mishap. That year was reportedly one of the worst snowstorms to hit Holland, and that day, a large amount of snow fell through the roof during a math exam.¹⁷ The roof was repaired, and racks installed onto the roof to prevent it happening again, but this was not the only structural issue Van Raalte Hall would have.

The End 1967-1980

On December 13, 1966, a report was sent to Hugh De Pree, President of the Board of Trustees, about a recent inspection of Van Raalte Hall completed by Detective Sergeant Marquardt of the Michigan State Police. This report stated that Van Raalte was unsafe for further classroom use unless twenty-one specific actions were taken to bring

Van Raalte up to fire code.¹⁸ Though this was met with a positive response by Mr. De Pree, nothing was done to remedy the situation, as it did not seem urgent, and Hope was not doing the best financially. Thus, on Nov. 20, 1969, Hope College received a Notice of Abatement from the Michigan State Police Fire Marshal Division, reading "Order for Abatement of fire hazard and conditions hazardous to the public peace, security and safety of persons and property."¹⁹ This was followed by many meetings with state representatives, delayed action, and the agreement to phase Van Raalte out of classroom use and perhaps phase it out of use for good, as the Board of Trustees at the time was interested in eventually razing it.²⁰ However, the fire marshal was going to have to take the case to court if the college continued to do nothing about the situation, since the fire hazard of Van Raalte was so severe and since it had been so long. However, the removal of classes from the third floor and relocation of the Kletz and the bookstore to the newly built DeWitt Student Center helped to substantially reduce the list of needed renovations, and a plan was put forth for some renovations. Additionally, the Peale Science Center was about to be completed, and Hope was able to only carry out limited renovations in Van Raalte.²¹

On Nov. 20, 1972, in room 205, Prof. Ruth Van Kampen's



Aerial View of Fire Damage, 1980

sociology class was just beginning, around 10 am. However, the suspended tile ceiling of the classroom was becoming a concerning situation. According to Prof. Van Kampen, “a row of tiles split apart, followed by another row. Then a light started to sag and we decided it was time to leave the room.”²² Shortly after the class had left the room, the entire suspended ceiling fully collapsed with a groan. This prompted President Van Wylen to decree that “no classes will be held in Van Raalte after the close of this semester.”²³ This meant that no legal action would follow regarding the safety of Van Raalte, since classrooms would be vacated. However, it had been five years since the initial State inspection. After this incident, Van Raalte became solely an administrative building. The remains of the museum, long forgotten, continued to stay on the fourth floor. Secretarial services, the campus mail room, the school paper supply, offices of the deans, etc. were all located in Van Raalte in these final years. Additionally, most if not all college records were stored in Van Raalte.

At 5:50 am on April 28, 1980, a custodian noticed a light from the east side of Van Raalte. Upon further observation, the light turned out to be a fire. The fire department was called immediately and arrived five minutes later, and began fighting the blaze, which was spreading quickly. Once the fire reached the central wooden staircase (that had been cited as a major fire concern in the years prior), the fire spread rapidly. The fire was fought continuously throughout the morning, and students and faculty came out to watch. Unfortunately, the fire just became too big to stop, and when it stopped burning, Van Raalte Hall remained a skeleton; all that was left were the walls and the main floor.²⁴ It was decided to tear down the remains and leave the space open, like it is today. Much was lost with Van Raalte, including academic and financial aid records, and photographs of Ralph and Elizabeth Voorhees, longtime Hope College donors and the namesake of Voorhees Hall. However, not all was destroyed. Many files were photocopied after being dried (they had gotten wet from the fire hoses), and many other important files whose hard copies were lost had been

previously microfilmed. Additionally, some things that could have been lost were saved: the Nykerk Cup usually had its home in Van Raalte Hall, but that year's winning captain had kept it in her apartment; the 1980-81 budget had gone home with financial manager, Barry Werkman, the day before, so that was also not in the building.²⁵

Van Raalte Hall, a central facet of Hope's campus for a large part of the 20th century, lived a long, good life that deserves to be remembered. Though the steel sculpture next to Dimnent is supposed to be a reminder of this building, there is nothing that would imply that a four-floor brick building stood behind the chapel. So, next time you walk on the former Twelfth Street and look behind the chapel, remember that there once was a grand old building standing there, a dignified central piece of main campus.



About the author *Wyatt Wilcox is from the St. Johns, MI area and is a rising junior at Hope. He is double majoring in History and German, with minors in Classics and Philosophy. He is currently the Historian of Phi Alpha Theta, member of the orchestra, and works for Hope's grounds and concessions. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with friends, reading, and biking.*

Endnotes:

¹ "Ground Broken for Van Raalte Hall," *Holland City News*, April 4, 1902, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/hcn_1902/14/.

² "Laying of the Cornerstone of the A.C. Van Raalte Memorial Hall," June 18, 1902, Van Raalte Memorial Hall - General, H88-0322 Box 1, Hope College Archives.

³ "Van Raalte Memorial Hall Dedicated," *Holland City News*, September 18, 1903, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/hcn_1903/37/.

⁴ H04-1540.50 Zeeland Brick Company Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

⁵ Wynand Wichers, *A Century of Hope* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968).

⁶ "Our Museum," *The Anchor*, May 9, 1923, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1923/15/.

⁷ "Attic Museum Displays Unique Curios," *The Anchor*, February 1, 1928, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1928/4/.

⁸ "Hope's Museum, Look! Learn!" *The Anchor*, May 10, 1928, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1928/16/; "Hope Museum Opens," *The Anchor*, May 22, 1940, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1940/9/.

⁹ "Attic Museum Displays Unique Curios," *The Anchor*, February 1, 1928, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1928/4/.

¹⁰ Eileen Nordstrom and George Zuidema, *Hope at the Crossroads: The War Years* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 2008), 135.

¹¹ Nordstrom and Zuidema, *Hope at the Crossroads: The War Years*, 128-54.

¹² V. E. Thebaud, "Specifications for Remodeling Van Raalte Hall," Van Raalte Hall and Van Vleck Hall - Renovations in H88-0322 College Advancement Records (Box 1), Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

¹³ Nordstrom and Zuidema, *Hope at the Crossroads: The War Years*, 146.

¹⁴ "You Name Anything . . . 'Koffee Kletz' Has It!!" *The Anchor*, October 26, 1945, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1945/30/.

¹⁵ *The Anchor*, 1949, accessed July 12, 2024, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1949/.

¹⁶ "Museum Renovation Project Continues," *The Anchor*, March 26, 1963, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1963/11/; "Secret Museum Houses Past," *The Anchor*, February 20, 1970, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1970/3/.

¹⁷ "Winter Means Snow, Snow, & More Snow," *The Anchor*, February 9, 1962, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1962/4/.

¹⁸ Glenroy M. Walker to Hugh De Pree, "Inspection of Van Raalte Hall," December 13, 1966, Van Raalte Order of Abatement in H91-1118 Willard C. Wichers Papers (Box 7), Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

¹⁹ "Notice of Abatement," Order for Abatement (Michigan State Police, November 20, 1969), Van Raalte Order of Abatement in H91-1118 Willard C. Wichers Papers (Box 7), Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

²⁰ Willard C. Wichers, "Willard C. Wichers to Det. Lieut. Glen E. Tanner," February 10, 1970, Van Raalte Order of Abatement in H81-1118 Willard C. Wichers Papers (Box 7), Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

²¹ Clarence J. Handlogten, "Clarence J. Handlogten to Det. Lieut. Willis Myers," May 15, 1970, Van Raalte Order of Abatement in H91-1118 Willard C. Wichers Papers (Box 7), Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

²² "Roof Finally falls in on Van Raalte," *The Anchor*, December 1, 1972, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1972/27/.

²³ "To students and faculty," *The Anchor*, December 1, 1972, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1972/27/.

²⁴ "Fire Claims Second Hall" *The Anchor*, May 1, 1980, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1980/12/.

²⁵ "From Ashes Comes Rebirth," *News from Hope College*, June 1980, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/news_from_hope_college/31/; "Believe It or Not," *News From Hope College*, June 1980, News from Hope College, June, 1980, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/news_from_hope_college/31/.

Hope's First International Graduates: Class of 1879

By Douglas Braat '72

In 1853, Commodore Matthew Perry of the United States Navy and a fleet of four “black ships,” as they are commonly referred to in Japan, arrived off Uraga, at the mouth of modern Tokyo Bay. This triggered a process that by 1868 ended two and half centuries of self-imposed isolation from the rest of the world with the exception of Dutch traders who were allowed to remain at Dejima in Nagasaki. During this 15-year period and in the early years of the Meiji Period (1868-1912) that followed, hundreds of Japanese, mainly of the elite samurai class, went abroad to the United States, England, the Netherlands and other

countries of the West to learn as much as they could and, as former samurai whose lives were linked to service, achieve distinction for themselves in Japan's new society as it was aiming to modernize.¹

It is thus not surprising, perhaps, that five of them would turn up at Hope's Preparatory Department and College between 1869 and 1875, three of whom stayed the full eight years and graduated from the College. The first to arrive, in October 1869, was Ryōzō Tsugawa who graduated from the Preparatory Department in 1874. Then came Kumaji



The six graduates in Class of 1879, Milestone, 1930

Kimura and Motoichirō Ohgimi, who arrived together in March 1871 and graduated in 1879 (two out of six in this class). In 1874 came Tametsune Matsuda who graduated in 1883. Finally, Boonzō (aka Bunzō) Hashiguchi arrived in 1875 and stayed one year, possibly two, before transferring to Massachusetts Agricultural College where he graduated in 1881. All these students started their education at Hope in the “D” (lowest) class of the Preparatory Department.²

Possibly due to the historical factors described above, these first international students at Hope College were from Japan. That they arrived at Hope also involved a bit of luck in the case of Tsugawa, Kimura and Ohgimi, as they happened to come into contact with Rev. Philip Phelps Jr., the first president of Hope College. Phelps was frequently in New York on fundraising trips and assured the Japanese embassy in Washington that he would be their guarantor during their stay in the U.S., as the new Meiji government was attempting to bring these “students” who no longer had funding back to Japan.

The present article focuses on Kumaji Kimura (1845-1927) and Motoichirō Ohgimi (1845-1941), Hope College’s first international graduates. In the 1860s, Kimura and Ohgimi as samurai fought in battles that supported the Tokugawa shōgunate against imperial forces from Chōshū, Satsuma, and other domains in western Japan that had not been under the control of the Tokugawa and were aiming to restore Japan’s emperor to power. This culminated in the Boshin War that led to the Meiji Restoration in 1868 and the end of Tokugawa rule. Since Kimura and Ohgimi were on the losing side and their lives were still in danger, they found a way through connections of their battlefield commander, Kaishu Katsu, to travel to the U.S.³

Prior to departure from Japan, Kimura married Tōko Taguchi in 1865 and their son, Yukichi, was born in 1868. Ohgimi, born with the surname Marumo, at age 24 became the adopted son and heir of an Ohgimi family and was engaged to their daughter. They married in 1884, after Ohgimi returned from the U.S.⁴

On January 23, 1871, Kimura and Ohgimi boarded the *Great Republic*, a large passenger vessel of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, and on

February 16 arrived in San Francisco.⁵ Also aboard this voyage were Arinori Mori, Japan’s first ambassador to the U.S., and his interpreter, Masakazu Toyama, whom, through Kaishu Katsu, they already knew as he had helped them to obtain travel documents to the U.S. through his contacts at the U.S. legation in Japan. Katsu also arranged financing for their passage. The immediate aim of Kimura and Ohgimi was to leave Japan.

From San Francisco, they traveled on the recently-opened transcontinental railroad and arrived in New York on February 26, 1871. Just 10 days later, President Phelps wrote a letter dated March 8, 1871 (photo), to Rev. Charles Scott, a professor at Hope College (and president from 1880-1893), concerning these latest arrivals from Japan:

“Dear Brother,

I think that I mentioned to you that the last Japanese arrival [not specified] had orders to send Tugawa back to Japan. This afternoon I have received an answer to my representations; and instead of that, we are now to have two more at their own expense. It is necessary that they come out next week, and they therefore precede me. Will you have the kindness to see that there is a good room for them somewhere even if it has to be hired. It ought not be in the building [i.e. Van Vleck Hall]. The best plan perhaps would be to take a comfortable room at the hotel though I prefer a more private one. I had an interview with members of the embassy, and if a good impression is made, our Institution will boom in this connection now that diplomatic relations are

Phelps’ Letter, March 8, 1871

established with our government. If the Zwemer House has been vacated by Mr. Wormser, it might be well to put Tugawa and the new ones together there. I write in haste.

*Yours sincerely, Ph. Phelps, Jr.*²⁶

In a letter dated March 30, 1871, that Kimura wrote to his wife Tōko, he mentions that he and Ohgimi met Phelps on March 12. Toyama was possibly with them at this meeting, as Kimura wrote that Toyama returned to Washington the next day and that he and Ohgimi traveled with Phelps by steamship up the Hudson River to Albany, Phelps' hometown.⁷ The exact sequence of events, however, is unclear.

Phelps' daughter, Frances Phelps '82 Otte, in 1908 wrote about her recollections of the impending arrival of Kimura and Ohgimi:

*“When, (also about the year '71), one day, my mother received a letter from my father, in the East, asking us to prepare for two strangers from Japan, we children were excited, indeed. When they actually arrived, how we watched them, and tried to make them comfortable. We were quite willing to help teach them the English alphabet, and some of the older Alumni will call to mind that they, too, were pressed into service to help prepare these promising pupils for the “D” class in Grammar school. They had found their way to this country, as so many hundreds of Japanese had, at that time. Though belonging to aristocratic families, (as their three swords and rich costumes indicated), they did not seem to possess much money, and some Japanese friends in New York were about to raise a sum sufficient to send them back. Providentially, my father heard of this, and asked if they could be given to his charge. Consent was obtained, and, raising some money and pledges from friends in the East, they were brought to Holland and to Hope College.”*⁸

Kimura and Ohgimi left Albany on their own for the three-day trip to Holland, arriving on March 20, 1871, where they were welcomed by the Phelps family, students, faculty members, and Tsugawa was also there to greet them.⁹ In this letter to Tōko, Kimura did not mention Tsugawa by name but as “a Japanese from Chōshū”. It is possible that Phelps talked about Tsugawa when he met Kimura and Ohgimi in New York, however he may have mentioned that Tsugawa was from Iwakuni, the way his hometown was recorded in Hope's records,¹⁰ not knowing that Iwakuni



*Great Republic, 1866 Steamship, that brought Kimura & Ohgimi to the U.S.
(Image: Public Domain, Wikimedia)*

was a part of Chōshū, Kimura and Ohgimi's archenemy in their battles prior to the Meiji Restoration. Nevertheless, Kimura and Ohgimi arrived to this welcome and remained for the ensuing eight years.

Then on October 9, 1871, occurred the great fire of Holland that burned through most of the town, barely sparing the campus and Van Vleck Hall where the Phelps family, the three Japanese, and about 15 other students were living.¹¹ Ohgimi reminisced the scene in a letter he wrote to Frances Phelps Otte some years later from Japan: “The wind meanwhile became more furious, and Van Vleck Hall itself seemed almost lost, some trees and bushes on the College ground catching fire, though the President and the students tried hard to extinguish it.” In this letter, Ohgimi also expressed admiration for Mrs. Phelps' reaction while it was happening: “Some [students] asked her if they could do the same for her [to help rescue some things], and she courteously but positively declined saying, ‘If it is the Lord's will that we be deprived of what we have, all our efforts to save them are useless, but if He means otherwise, however dangerous it may appear, all is safe, His sovereign will be done.’” And indeed, in the end “All was safe.”¹²

Tsugawa, Kimura and Ohgimi converted to Christianity early during their time in Holland. In a letter to Frances Phelps Otte around 1906, Ohgimi touched on his experience, which she quotes in her 1908 article in *The Anchor*:

*“My sole object of going to America was to study something that would give me distinction and honor in my future career. This worldly ambition made me decidedly disinclined towards religion, but, since I came to Holland, I was struck with the happy state of the Christian homes – something I never found in Japan. At last I came to the conclusion, that Christianity was what made them so different from others. I began to study the Bible more earnestly.”*¹³

Professor Eiichi Kudō of Meiji Gakuin University, Hope's sister school in Japan, relates Kimura's experience in "Japanese People of Holland," an English translation of an article he wrote in *Meiji Gakuin University News*:

*"As for the process of Kimura's conversion, it was greatly influenced by President Phelps and his family. As Kimura described in his later years, he had a high regard for the lofty personality of President Phelps. All members of Phelps' family received him warmly. Kimura experienced a vagrant life in his youth, but finally found his ideal image of a Christian home in the Phelps' home."*¹⁴



Photos of Kimura, Ohgimi and Tsugawa that were taken on the occasion of their baptism.

This part of Kimura's experience is similar to Ohgimi's quoted above. However, Kudō continues:

*"[In Holland], Kimura unexpectedly met a Japanese. This encounter helped him to devote himself more earnestly to Christianity. The name of the Japanese was Ryōzō Tsugawa. [Kimura] was the subject of a local lord while Tsugawa was the subject of the central lord [Chōshū, victorious in the Meiji Restoration]. Therefore, Kimura and Ohgimi could not feel kindly toward Tsugawa at first. ... Tsugawa was in need of financial aid – this aid readily came from President Phelps and other Americans at the College. ... Because Kimura was a Japanese he felt he should have a greater reason for being sympathetic towards Tsugawa than the Americans. He then gave 100 dollars, a fourth of all he had at the time. Thus Kimura could not be indifferent to the true life directed by the Bible. ... : 'Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you'. [Matt. 5:44]"*¹⁵

On June 1, 1872, Kimura, Ohgimi, and Tsugawa were all baptized by Rev. Abel T. Stewart of Hope Church.¹⁶ Since the church building had been destroyed by the fire, "church services were held for a while in the first College chapel which was a large room on the first floor of Van Vleck Hall."¹⁷

(Author's note: This is the first of two articles on this subject. The stories I relate here are as much as possible based on resources that I and others have uncovered at Hope College Archives. Special thanks to Ikuko Okada, at Hope first in 1976-77, who assisted me in reading Kimura's letters to Tōko. Japanese names in the text appear with the given name preceding the family name.)



About the author Doug first researched Hope's early students from Japan after returning from his junior year on a GLCA program in Tokyo in 1971. He is now retired and living in Hokkaido, Japan where he has more time to explore the history of Hope's early Japanese students in resources he has collected over the years. He also wishes he lived closer to the Hope College Archives!

Endnotes:

¹ Ishizuki, Minoru, *Kindai Nihon no Kaigai Ryūgaku-shi* (History of Overseas Students from Japan in the Modern Era), Chūō Kōron Publishing, 1992. The lists of students in the appendix include the first three Japanese students at Hope College: Ryōzō Tsugawa, Motochirō Ohgimi, and Kumaji Kimura. All initially received funding from local governments.

² *Circular of Hope College* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1871-72): 36; *Circular of Hope College* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1872-73): 5; *Circular of Hope College* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1876-77): 23, 41 (Class information in this circular is for the year 1875-76); *Catalogue of Hope College* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1878-79): 9, 11; *Catalogue of Hope College* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1881-82): 11; *Catalogue of Hope College* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1882-83): 6. Some circulars/catalogues in the 1870s were either not produced or not archived.

³ Kudō, Eiichi, "Meiji Shoki ni okeru Shizoku no Kirisuto-kyō Juyō: Kimura Kumaji no baai (Christian Converts from among the Samurai in the Early Meiji Period: The case of Kumaji Kimura)", *Meiji Gakuin University Economic Journal*, November 1970, 4–10. An account of mainly Kimura's life in the years prior to departure for the U.S. is described here. More general information on the topic can be found in Irwin Scheiner's *Christian Converts and Social Protest in Meiji Japan* (University of California Press, 1970).

⁴ Sobania, Neal, “Hope and Japan: Early Ties,” *News from Hope College* (December 1998): 11. Kaoru Ogimi, a grandson of Motoichirō, whom Sobania mentions at the end of the article, was at Hope College briefly in the early 1990s working with Dr. Paul Fried, Director of International Education at the time, on researching material at Hope College Archives for the book by Ōta Aito, Akiyama Shigeo, Okami Akira, and Terada Noboru titled *Ōgimi Motoichirō to sono Jidai* (Motoichirō Ohgimi and his Times) (Tokyo, Japan: Shinkyō Publishing, 1994). It is a valuable compendium of Motoichirō’s life.

⁵ *Kimura Kumaji & Tōko Ōfuku Shokan* (Letters between Kimura Kumaji and Tōko) (Institute for Comparative Studies of Culture, Tokyo Women’s Christian University, 1993): 285–293. The letters on these pages were written by Kimura to his wife Tōko during the period from his departure from Japan to his arrival in Holland. The departure and arrival dates he gave for his journey from Yokohama to San Francisco on the *Great Republic* (December 3 and 27, 1870, respectively) did not accord with actual sailing dates of this vessel until they were converted to solar calendar dates (January 23 and February 16, 1871, cf. Frajola, Richard C. et al, *The United States Post Offices in China and Japan 1867 to 1872*, The Collectors Club, 2006, p205, trip #ET40). Kimura was thus using lunar calendar dates in his letters and diary until sometime after his arrival in the U.S. Japan did not officially adopt the solar calendar until 1873.

⁶ Philip Phelps, Jr., letter to Rev. Charles Scott, March 8, 1871 in H88-0122 Philip Phelps, Jr. Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

⁷ *Kimura Kumaji & Tōko Ōfuku Shokan*, 290.

⁸ Otte, Frances Phelps, “Hope’s Japanese Students,” *Hope College Anchor*, May 1, 1908, 21, https://digitalcommons.hope.edu/anchor_1908/5/.

⁹ *Kimura Kumaji & Tōko Ōfuku Shokan*, 291.

¹⁰ *Circular of Hope College* (Holland, MI: Hope College, 1871-72): 36.

¹¹ *Circular of Hope College* (1871-72): 13, 20–21, 35–36.

¹² Ohgimi, Motoichirō. Extract of a letter to Mrs. Philip Phelps Jr., copied by her son Philip [Tertius], according to a handwritten note by Frances Phelps Otte. No date; possibly shortly before or in 1907, the year of Mrs. Phelps’ death. H88-0116 Frances Phelps Otte Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

¹³ Otte, “Hope’s Japanese Students,” 24.

¹⁴ Kudō, Eiichi, “Japanese People of Holland,” *Meiji Gakuin University News*, July 6, 1968, 3.

¹⁵ Kudō, “Japanese People of Holland,” 3-4. When relating this episode in “Meiji Shoki ni okeru Shizoku no Kirisuto-kyō Juyō,” Kudō cites Kimura’s “Megumi no Tabiji (Journey of Blessedness),” Part 2, in *Seisho no Kenkyū* (“The Biblical Study”), No. 5, January 22, 1901, 66–67. *Seisho no Kenkyū* is a monthly periodical published by Kanzō Uchimura, an influential leader of Christianity in Japan.

¹⁶ Record book of Rev. Abel T. Stewart in W91-1034 Hope Church Records (Box 53), Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI; photographs of Kimura, Ohgimi, and Tsugawa in H89-1035 Elaine Stephan Papers, Archives and Special Collections, Hope College, Holland, MI.

¹⁷ Otte, Frances Phelps, “Reminiscences of Early Japanese Students at Hope College,” *Intelligencer Leader*, June 12, 1935.

Welcome Collections Archivist!



Hello friends of Hope College’s Archives and Special Collections! I’d like to take this moment to introduce myself as the Collections Archivist and newest member of our team here. I began this position in July and hope that some

of you have already seen me around the Archives and Special Collections Reading Room and Van Wylen Library. Before arriving at Hope, I received my Masters of Library Information Science with an Archives concentration from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and lived in Gurnee, Illinois. I am so happy to have returned to my home state of Michigan to focus on preserving the history of local communities, making archival collections accessible to all, and continuing to broaden our resources for our wonderful supporters.

Be on the lookout for my Collection Highlights in our future issues of the *Quarterly*! In this recurring column, I will be showcasing one of our many treasures by describing a collection and sharing some of the history that surrounds it. This may include pictures, suggested reading, other places to look for similar materials, or links to our digital content. It is my hope that you will find something here that may tempt you to come visit us to see it in person!

Charlotte Ulloa



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Van Raalte Memorial Hall, 1903



Site of Former Van Raalte Hall, 2024