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## Come one, come all to this artsy Dutch community.

BY MICHAEL HAUENSTEIN

The Holland, Michigan, area combines natural beauty with well-cultivated artistic vibrancy. No wonder the locals seem so happy.

The approach to Holland from Lake Michigan is marked by the dramatic coastal sand dunes of the Western Michigan shoreline. The aid to navigation indicating the harbor entrance, however, is a manmade beauty: “Big Red,” the unmistakable Holland Harbor Lighthouse.

Local history states that the area’s citizens, lacking adequate federal funds, dug the channel themselves to connect Lake Michigan to Lake Macatawa (at the time called Black Lake). As with so much around Holland, hard work and investment paid off—today a deep shipping channel greets visiting boaters.

Downtown Holland, located at the eastern end of the six-mile-long “Lake Mac,” is lined with fantastic shops, restaurants and artwork.

My parents joined me on a trip to Holland last summer. When we arrived, we quickly made our way to...an Irish pub? But I had a rock-solid reason to venture to the Curragh Irish Pub that summer day: The Netherlands was competing in the World Cup Finals. The sea of Dutch orange soccer jerseys having justified the stop, we settled in to watch the match (which was won in the end by Spain) and commune with the locals.

I learned two certainties over the course of the match: (1) these were some of the nicest people I’ve met; and (2) these nice people are authentically Dutch.

“Holland is a very friendly, welcoming community,” says Lorma Williams Freestone, executive director of the Holland Area Arts Council. “And we’re just happy to show off what we love about our community.”



Located in the town's 1914 post office, the Holland Museum (top) houses one of the finest Dutch art collections in the country. Holland is famous for its many statues throughout town (right).

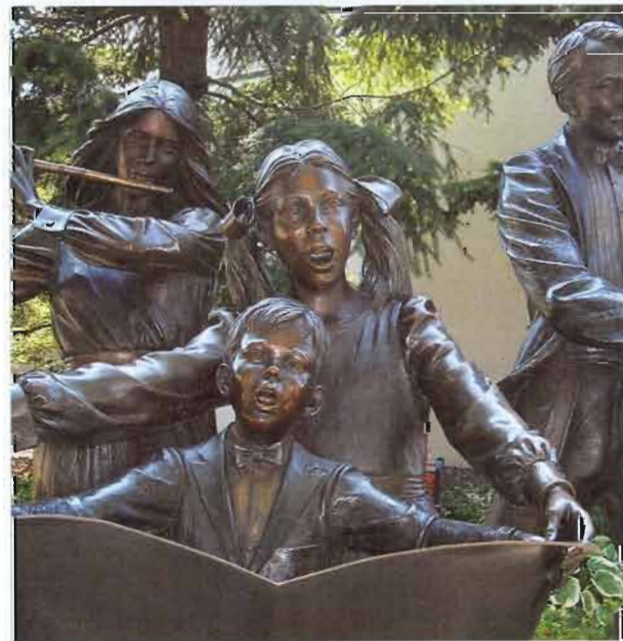
#### Destination for the arts

Located at the eastern end of downtown, the Holland Area Arts Council is an advocate for the arts in the region and administers grants, Freestone says. Its headquarters also acts as the contemporary art museum for the area.

"We have a lot of one-day workshops," Freestone adds. "If you boat in, you can make art in one stop."

Every summer, the council organizes public art projects like the ReMastered banner project, in which local artists put a contemporary spin on master artworks—for example, Whistler's Mother sitting in a Henry Miller-designed Eames chair—displayed on banners hanging from light poles. The Holland Area Arts Council is working on a contest this year for cover art for the Tulip Time Festival program. Residents and visitors will vote to determine the "people's choice" from among 20 finalists.

Outdoor art also includes more than a dozen statues, depicting everything from the Reverend Dr. Albertus C. Van Raalte, who founded Holland in 1847, to a police



MUSEUM PHOTO BY MICHAEL HAVENSTEIN / STATUE PHOTO COURTESY OF HOLLAND CYB WINDMILL PHOTO COURTESY OF MELIS' DUTCH VILLAGE KNIGHTS

officer holding a little girl's hand in front of the Holland Police Station.

In addition to the visual art found throughout the community, visitors will find a symphony orchestra, chorale, several theater groups and other live music offerings.

"I believe [Holland] is a destination for the arts," says Freestone. "I think we have a very strong talent in our community, and a great value is placed on that talent."

It also has a strong philanthropic community that supports the visual and performing arts.

"We have a fabulous museum that has one of the finest Dutch art collections, I would say, in the country," says Freestone.

The Holland Museum is located in the town's 1914 post office. The first floor contains a permanent gallery on the town's history, from its founding by Dutch settlers in the mid-1800s to its manufacturing history, which includes boatbuilding and Herman Miller's modern office furniture. Additional pieces in the permanent gallery include items from the Netherlands Pavilion of the 1939 New York World's Fair and the Netherlands East Indies Pavilion of the 1939 Golden Gate Exposition in San Francisco.

"Mr. [Willard] Wichers, who started this museum, worked for the Netherlands Information Services Bureau, and when the war broke out in Europe, they told him, 'We can't take these now,'" says Anne Stewart, a docent at the museum.

"We get visitors from the Netherlands who come over and say they don't have anything like this in their museums because they were destroyed during the war," says museum and galleries manager Taylor Wise-Harhorn.

The museum also hosts temporary and traveling exhibitions on the first floor. Harhorn says a planned temporary exhibition, tentatively scheduled for the summer of 2013, will cover all the boating companies ever associated with Holland, from classic Chris-Craft cruisers to modern-day Tiara Yachts.

Additionally, the city closes 10th Street in front of the museum for the annual Vintage Holland Boat Show, which is organized by the Holland Museum.

### A colorful history of leisure:

By the turn of the century, Black Lake was a popular vacation destination.

"This was the resort area to come to—people came by rail from Chicago and Grand Rapids, but they also came from Indiana and Missouri," says Stewart. "There were big resorts on both sides of the lake; they're all gone now, unfortunately."

For today's boaters, however, the north and south



shores of Lake Macatawa each boast hundreds of slips. One can't-miss facility is Yacht Basin Marina, a family-friendly, full-service marina located on the north shore of Lake Macatawa. The marina features overnight dockage in a well-protected setting away from Lake Michigan's swells.

The author L. Frank Baum is said to have written "The Wonderful Wizard of Oz" while summering in the Macatawa community.

"The rumor was that the Wicked Witch of the East and the Wicked Witch of the West were in cottages on either side of him—one to the east and one to the west," says Stewart.

As a tourism destination, Holland offers activities for the whole family, from educational demonstrations including wooden shoe carving and candle making to less-traditional pastimes such as laser tag, miniature golf and go karts.

De Zwaan, the 250-year-old windmill shipped from the Netherlands to Holland more than 50 years ago, is still active as a working flour mill.



Because of its deep basin, Holland Harbor is a great place to catch a glimpse of the largest racing yachts (top). This year marks a special anniversary for Holland's Tulip Time Festival. During festival time, you'll find millions of beautiful tulips in bloom on Windmill Island (right).

For that authentic Dutch experience, look no further than De Zwaan, the 125-foot-tall windmill located on Holland's aptly-named Windmill Island. And we mean authentic: The 250-year-old windmill was shipped from the Netherlands more than 50 years ago and still puts in a hard day's work grinding flour.

Windmill Island is located along the Macatawa River, east of Lake Macatawa on the edge of downtown—and contains 36 acres of manicured gardens, dikes and canals, picnic areas, and historical attractions including the miniature Netherlands Village. The Windmill Island Gardens are open daily from late April through early October.

Not surprisingly, the tulip is the flower of choice; Holland has held its Tulip Time Festival each May for more than 80 years. This is a special year for the town and the festival, as it marks the 200th anniversary of Reverend Van Raalte's birth. You'll find millions of tulips in bloom during Tulip Time: On Windmill Island, in flower gardens around town, lining the streets, and especially at the Veldheer Tulip Gardens & Farm. In addition to the massive tulip farm, the site contains the De Klomp wooden shoe factory and an authentic Delftware pottery factory.

Nelis' Dutch Village, another nearby family attraction, recreates an 1800s Dutch village. The theme park is complete with native architecture, costumes and educational demonstrations. Heading back downtown, you can take the kids for ice cream—or stop for an adult beverage. Warner Vineyards opened a tasting room in downtown Holland in May 2010.

"It's always five o'clock here," says third-generation winemaker Billy Warner. Warner Vineyards, located in Paw Paw, Michigan is the second-oldest of Michigan's 80 commercial wineries, according to Warner.

He says the heart of the Michigan wine industry can be found along the Lake Michigan shore because of glacial deposits and the area's sandy soil. In addition to the wineries, there are a handful of orchards and "pick-your-own" farms in the surrounding area.

The New Holland Brewing Company offers brewery tours on Saturdays on the north side of Holland. The New Holland Brewing Company Restaurant and Pub is located downtown and open seven days a week.

### On the water

For brief Lake Michigan dayboating excursions out of Holland, there are a couple beaches to each side of the harbor entrance. The topography is marked by natural, low- and high-bluff coastal sand dunes.

"Between here and Saugatuck there's Laketown Beach [and Saugatuck Dunes State Park]," says Wade Eldean, of Eldean Shipyard on the south shore of Lake Macatawa. "There's a couple more dunes that are in a more natural state that are privately owned, and they don't mind people anchoring out there. You'll see, on a busy weekend, thousands of boats out there on a mile of beach."

There's plenty of action inside the harbor, though.

For sailors, the Macatawa Bay Yacht Club holds races several days a week, from prams and Optimis up to larger boats. On the other side of the lake, the Bayshore Yacht

Club's Wednesday night races are usually held on Lake Michigan. Fishing tournaments, too, are regularly held during the summer months.

Because of the deep harbor basin, the largest race boats are a regular sight, says Eldean. The late Roy Disney's *Pyewacket* has visited, and the 86-foot *Windquest*, a fellow Race to Mackinac winner, is based in Macatawa.

"From west to east, the whole length of Lake Mac is a shipping channel, so when in doubt you stick to the channel markers," says Eldean. Some spots outside the channel that look deep are not, so a chart is recommended.

"It's become more popular, when it's very rough on the big lake, for a lot of people to raft up in the channel here, and spend the day swimming and hanging out," says Eldean, who notes that the lake offers more room than narrower harbors for wakeboarding, tubing and fishing. "There's plenty to do on Lake Mac."

That includes grabbing a bite to eat—even if you didn't bring your reel. Located next to the Eldean Shipyard in Macatawa, and owned by Patricia Eldean, is the Piper Restaurant. The second-floor main dining room and bar provide panoramic views, and courtesy docks are available.

On the eastern end of Lake Macatawa you can tie up at the Boatwerks Waterfront Restaurant. Even if you just stop in for a drink in the Runabout Lounge, you'll probably enjoy the décor: Classic outboards and old Chris-Craft advertisements and murals cover the walls, while even



the bar top is finished like a boat's mahogany-planked deck. And it's just a short walk from downtown Holland, Hope College and the historical district.

"Holland is really beautiful," says the Holland Area Arts Council's Freestone. "We have the lakeshore, a vibrant downtown, and it's a very attractive, walkable community." ♦

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