

# Hamilton College Library

## “Home Notes”

### **Communal Societies Collection New Acquisitions**

The Communal Societies Collection of the Hamilton College Library is now home to the world's most extensive collection of materials relating to the House of David and Mary's City of David communities. Founded in Benton Harbor, Michigan, in 1903 by Benjamin and Mary Purnell (collectively the seventh messenger in the Christian Israelite tradition), the House of David was the locus for the ingathering of the 144,000 members of the tribes of Israel. This ingathering was to trigger the second coming of Christ. The community at the House of David grew to more than one thousand members, with followers of John Wroe (the fifth messenger) traveling to Michigan all the way from Australia. Following Benjamin Purnell's death in 1927, a legal battle ensued that resulted in Mary and 217 followers leaving the House of David and founding the Israelite House of David as Re-Organized by Mary Purnell, today called simply Mary's City of David.

The House of David and Mary's City of David became popular tourist destinations beginning in the 1910s. The exotic appearance of members—whose long hair and beards were in accordance with Nazarite law—served to differentiate them from the general public. Additionally, members were celibate, vegetarian, and refrained from the burial of their own, again citing Nazirite precedent. Both the House of David and Mary's City of David communities sent barnstorming baseball teams all over the United States. The House of David had an amusement park, beer garden, motel, preserve industry, cold storage facility, greenhouses, art studio, traveling band, and basketball team. Mary's City hosted a large contingent from Chicago's Jewish community each summer in their resort cabins, and built a synagogue specifically for their use. Mary's City also operated

a large hotel in downtown Benton Harbor, and both communities ran vegetarian restaurants.

The collections at Hamilton College consist of materials from both the House of David and Mary's City of David, including hundreds of imprints, thousands of photographs and postcards, hundreds of examples of ephemera, hundreds of manuscript letters, the writings of Mary Purnell and Francis Thorpe, records of the cold storage and preserve industries, general business records, thousands of newspapers printed by both communities and outside newspaper accounts of the communities, records from the baseball teams, video taped interviews with community members, original art works, and extensive printed material relating to Joanna Southcott (the first messenger), Richard Brother (the second messenger), John Zion Ward (one of two successors to Joanna Southcott), John Wroe (the fifth messenger), and James Jezreel (the sixth messenger). The collections are currently being organized and conserved, and photographic materials are being digitized. The following pages contain some examples of ephemera from the House of David.



Sign, possibly from the House of David's Grande Vista Motel, ca. 1940s.

**BASEBALL** **SUN. - May 12**  
**At 2:30** FAST TIME

**At House of David Park**

BENTON HARBOR, MICHIGAN



EDDIE DEAL, HOUSE OF DAVID CATCHER

**House of David Traveling Club**

In their only appearance here this Spring

— VS. —

**Studebaker Champions**

ADMISSION 25c

-:-

GRANDSTAND 10c

See Other Side for Particulars About House of David Team

VISIT HOUSE OF DAVID PARK FOR A PLEASANT OUTING!

Miniature Railway - Aviary & Zoo - Bowling - Billiards

DINE & DANCE - BEER GARDENS - HOUSE OF DAVID ORCHESTRA

Promotional flyer for House of David traveling baseball team, ca. 1935.  
(front)



## A FEW COMMENTS ON PLAYERS APPEARING IN LINEUP FOR HOUSE OF DAVID TRAVELING CLUB

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### "PEP" BRANNON

**Shortstop.** The fastest man on the club, and can cover more ground than a dust storm. He is one of the hardest hitting shortstops in independent baseball, and has a strong accurate throwing arm that many a major leaguer would envy. Once on base he will test the speed and accuracy of any catcher's arm.

### DAVE HARRISON

**Veteran Third Baseman.** His playing ability in the hot corner and consistent hitting has made him one of the most colorful and outstanding players on the House of David Club for over twelve years. His baseball career dates back to 1914, when he was bathboy, when the Colony organized its first baseball club. Since 1923 he has traveled approximately 18,000 miles annually, and played in practically every state, and in Canada. He has played against many major and minor league clubs, and during this period has had a remarkable batting average of over .345. This can be verified, as he has kept almost a complete record of his diamond activities. Harrison is also middle man in the "pepper game".

### AL LITFIN

Only 19 years old but a veteran when playing **2nd Base**. Is a terrific slugger, getting more three base hits than any man on the club. Bats third position and hit .396 last season. This is his second year with the club, and already thinks a razor is something to peel potatoes with.

### EDDIE DEAL

**Captain and Catcher**, since 1929. Had previous experience with Decatur of the 3-I League, and Waterloo and Cedar Rapids of the Mississippi Valley League. His powerful and efficient arm has caught many a base stealer, and his consistent hitting always makes him a dangerous man at bat. Is one of the "pepper" players, and his antics during the game will keep most of the fans in an uproar of laughter. Eddie is the "New Deal" the fans have been waiting for.

### LOUIS CATO

**Star Outfielder**, and one of the fastest men on the club. He has over six years experience playing organized ball in the Southern States. A heavy hitter and a smart outfielder who can judge a fly ball while the pitcher is still winding up.

### BOB DEWHIRST

**Outfielder and Business Manager.** Has played steadily and consistently on team since 1925, and when he connects with the ball will make a marathon runner out of an outfielder. He is also a musician and can make a Saxophone talk. Is a recognized artist on the Vibra-Harp, and as member of the Colony Band has played in the leading vaudeville houses, radio stations and ballrooms over the country.

### TOM PEARSON

**Flashy First Baseman**, playing his second year with the club. His long drives, clever fielding ability, and smart base running, makes him a dangerous man at all times. Is one of the "pepper" players, and his luxuriant growth of beard would be the envy of a new deal gold prospector.

### NOEL RATHBUN

**Pitcher.** Formerly with Denver, of the Western League, and Oakland in the Pacific Coast League. He also plays outfield, and keeps his batting average well over the .300 mark. He has just signed for his first year with the team, believing, as Grover Cleveland Alexander once put it, "If you want to see the world, join the navy; but if you want to see America First, join the House of David Traveling Club."

See Other Side for Game SUN., MAY. 12, with Studebaker Champions

Promotional flyer for House of David traveling baseball team, ca. 1935.  
(back)



A FEW COMMENTS ON PLAYERS APPEARING IN LINEUP FOR  
**HOUSE OF DAVID TRAVELING BALL CLUB**



**EDDIE DEAL** - Captain and Catcher

**"PEP" BRANNON**

**Shortstop.** The fastest man on the club, and can cover more ground than a dust storm. He is one of the hardest hitting shortstops in independent baseball, and has a strong accurate throwing arm that many a major leaguer would envy. Once on base he will test the speed and accuracy of any catcher's arm.

**DAVE HARRISON**

**Veteran Third Baseman.** His playing ability in the hot corner and consistent hitting has made him one of the most colorful and outstanding players on the House of David Club for over twelve years. He has played against many major and minor league clubs, and during this period has had a remarkable batting average of over .345. Harrison is also middle man in the "pepper" game. Being faithful to the House of David teachings he is a vegetarian—does not eat meat, fish or fowl—and does not shave, or cut his hair.

**AL LITFIN**

Only 19 years old but a veteran when playing outfield. Is a terrific slugger, getting more three base hits than any man on the club. Bats third position and hit .386 last season. This is his second year with the club, and already thinks a razor is something to peel potatoes with.

**EDDIE DEAL**

**Captain and Catcher,** since 1929. Had previous experience with Decatur of the 3-I League, and Waterloo and Cedar Rapids of the Mississippi Valley League. His powerful and efficient arm has caught many a base stealer, and his consistent hitting always makes him a dangerous man at bat. Is one of the "pepper" players, and his antics during the game will keep most of the fans in an uproar of laughter. Eddie is the "New Deal" the fans have been waiting for, but is the only one on the club who hasn't received a chain letter.

**LOUIS CATO**

**Star 2nd Baseman,** and one of the fastest men on the club. He has had over six years experience playing organized ball in the Southern States, including Birmingham and Forth Worth, and also Omaha of the Western League. A heavy hitter and a smart infielder, who can judge a ground ball while the pitcher is still winding up.

**BOB DEWHIRST**

**Outfielder and Business Manager.** Has played steadily and consistently on team since 1925, and when he connects with the ball will make a marathon runner out of an outfielder. He is also a musician and can make a Saxophone talk. Is a recognized artist on the Vibra-Harp, and as member of the Colony Band has played in the leading vaudeville houses, radio stations and ballrooms over the country. Has been a member of the House of David since 1920, and therefore a vegetarian and does not shave or cut his hair.

**TOM PEARSON**

**Flashy First Baseman,** playing his second year with the club. His long drives, clever fielding ability, and smart base running, makes him a dangerous man at all times. Is one of the "pepper" players, and his luxuriant growth of beard would be the envy of a new deal gold prospector.

**NOEL RATHBUN**

**Pitcher.** Formerly with Denver, of the Western League, and Oakland in the Pacific Coast League. He also plays outfield, and keeps his batting average well over the .300 mark. He has just signed for his first year with the team, believing, as Grover Cleveland Alexander once put it, "If you want to see the world, join the navy; but if you want to see America First, join the House of David Traveling Club."

**Spend Your 1935 Vacation at House of David Park, Benton Harbor, Mich**  
 Michigan's Greatest Summer Resort! - In the Heart of the Fruit Belt!

Promotional flyer  
 for House of David  
 traveling baseball team,  
 ca. 1935.

## BASEBALL CONTRACT

THIS AGREEMENT made and entered into this ..... day of  
....., 193...., by and between the HOUSE OF DAVID of Benton Harbor,  
Mich., hereinafter designated as the party of the first part, and .....  
whose address is ..... hereinafter designated as  
the party of the second part;

WITNESSETH: It is hereby agreed between the parties hereto that the party of the first  
part shall exhibit the HOUSE OF DAVID BASE BALL TEAM at .....  
on .....193...., for the purpose of playing a game of baseball.

It is further agreed that the party of the second part shall pay to the party of the first part  
the sum of \$..... in consideration for playing said baseball game or for willingness and readiness  
to play said baseball game, subject to the right of the option herein below given.

It is further agreed that in the event inclement weather, rain, wet grounds or other adequate  
cause renders impossible the playing of such baseball game, then the party of the second part is to pay  
to the party of the first part a guaranteed sum of \$....., rain or shine, in its fully accepted sense,  
in consideration of the willingness and readiness of said party of the first part to play said baseball game.

It is also agreed that the party of the second part extends to the party of the first part their  
option to receive ..... per cent of the entire gross receipts, gate and grandstand charges and in  
fact all charges collected for the observation of said baseball game, in lieu of the aforementioned cash  
guarantee; and also the right to party of the first part to station its representatives at gates and other  
entrances to the grounds for the purpose of checking admissions to the grounds.

Party of the first part reserves the right to substitute players who are not members of the  
House of David, in case of injuries or illness, or indisposition of any kind, or for any other reason ben-  
eficial to said team, in the judgment of said first party.

It is further mutually agreed that party of the second part shall use roll tickets and furnish  
to party of first part a true box-office statement, and effect settlement of all moneys due under this agree-  
ment at the completion of four and one-half innings of said game, unless the aforesaid baseball game is  
prohibited from being played from any cause hereinbefore mentioned, in which latter event immediate  
settlement shall be effected.

Party of the second part agrees to not play or have on the club any player who is not in good  
standing in organized base ball during this game.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF both parties to this agreement have hereunto set their hands and  
seals this ..... day of ..... A. D., 193....

HOUSE OF DAVID BASE BALL CLUB

By Thomas Dewhurst Booker  
..... Manager  
Party of the First Part.

WITNESSES

.....  
.....  
Party of the Second Part.

Baseball contract, House of David, ca. 1930s.



# BASE BALL

Thorpe's

**M**ICHIGAN  
MIDGETS!  
OF  
Benton Harbor  
Michigan



REAL LITTLE MEN  
near the 5 Foot height

Not A Boys Team



FRANCIS THORPE, Owner and Manager  
House of David Traveling Club for  
Past 14 Years, and of

Home of Thorpe's  
House of David  
TRAVELING TEAM



Stars Developed in Past 14 Years.

New Home of



**Midgets!**

**THE TEENIE-WEENIES IN BASE BALL**

*Selected from the fastest professional and semi-professional clubs throughout the country. Lilliputian in size, but mammoth in action*

**Challenging** Any Professional, Semi-professional or Independent  
Base Ball Team in **THE WHOLE WORLD**

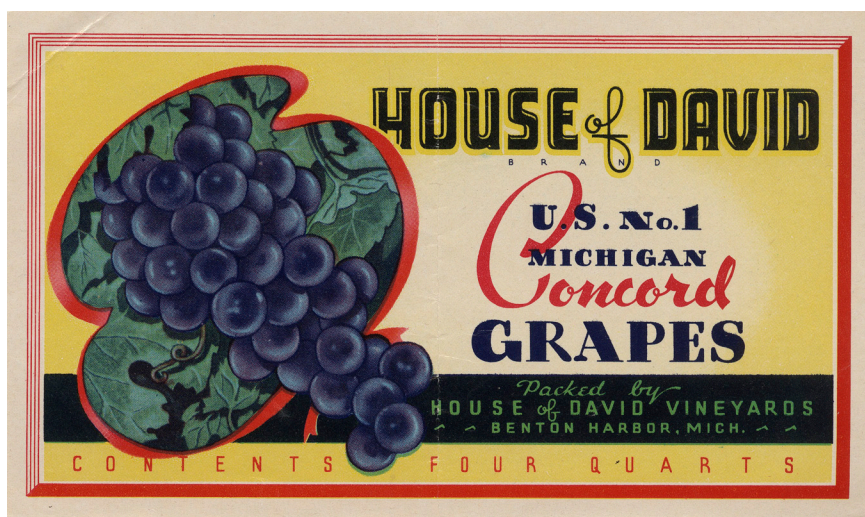
PLAYING AT

Traveling in their own STUDEBAKER 'Bus; Come early for the practice Exhibition

*Bring the Ladies and Children to see the Little Wonders, the Giant Killers, Perform their version of the Great American Pastime*

Poster for House of David baseball team, ca. 1925.

This rare poster advertises the HoD traveling club as well as Francis Thorpe's Michigan Midgets.



Labels for House of David grapes and grape juice grown at the community's Lakeside vineyards. ca. 1950s.





Labels for products of the  
House of David Preserve  
Department, ca. 1950s.



## APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP

To the ISRAELITE HOUSE OF DAVID:—

**WE**, the undersigned, hereby make formal application to be received as members of the ISRAELITE HOUSE OF DAVID, to abide by the rules and by-laws of the said ISRAELITE HOUSE OF DAVID, and we are now ready to turn over to the Officers of the said ISRAELITE HOUSE OF DAVID all money, deeds or personal property which we now possess, or which we may become possessed of in the future, and we each of us do pray that we may be accepted as members of the said ISRAELITE HOUSE OF DAVID.

We hereby set our hands and seals this.....

day of.....A. D., 19.....

at Benton Harbor, Michigan, U. S. A.

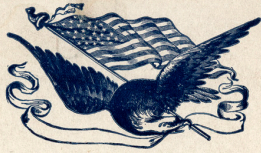
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*Witnesses*

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Membership application of the House of David, ca. 1920.





# EDEN SPRINGS

Hotel and Vegetarian

# RESTAURANT

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Eden Springs Hotel and Vegetarian Restaurant

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## HOUSE OF DAVID

Benton Harbor, Michigan, U. S. A.

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PROMPT AND ATTENTIVE SERVICE

EUROPEAN PLAN

HIGH-CLASS FURNISHED ROOMS ON APPLICATION.

EXTRA CHARGES FOR LUNCH SERVED IN ROOMS.

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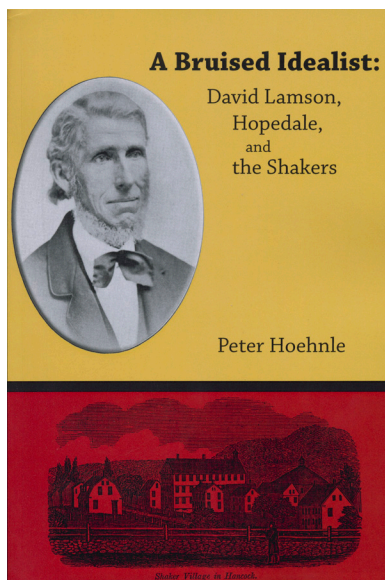
Menu from the Eden Springs Hotel and Vegetarian Restaurant,  
ca. 1910s.

## NEWS FROM RICHARD W. COUPER PRESS

### New Publications

**Peter Hoehnle. *A Bruised Idealist: David Lamson, Hopedale, and the Shakers*. Clinton, N.Y.: Richard W. Couper Press, 2010. 275 p. \$25.**

In 1848, David R. Lamson published his account of the Hancock Shaker Village community, *Two Years' Experience Among the Shakers*. Although written by a man who had turned against the Shaker community in which he had once lived, Lamson's book presents accurate detail about life in a community at the height of the Shaker movement. This reprinting of Lamson's classic account includes a biographical essay about this enigmatic Jacksonian Era reformer and his experiences, both with the Shakers and the Hopedale Community, as well biographical information on all of the individuals mentioned in his landmark Shaker account. Additionally this volume reprints for the first time, Lamson's editorials and a rare published sermon, presenting, in total, the most complete exploration of the thought of this controversial figure. Frequently referenced by Shaker scholars, Lamson has, until now, remained in the shadows; the present work brings the contradictory figure of David Rich Lamson into the light.





**Sandra A. Soule. *Independency of the Mind: Aquila Massie Bolton, Poetry, Shakerism, and Controversy*. Clinton, N.Y.: Richard W. Couper Press, 2010. 105 p. \$10.**

At the age of fifty-three, Aquila Massie Bolton joined the Shakers at Union Village, Ohio. His decision to do so was influenced by over twenty-five years of spiritual seeking in which he tested Quakerism, Owenism, and Swedenborgism. Bolton brought to his Shaker experience the same independent-mindedness and contentiousness that he had exhibited throughout his entire lifetime. He also brought his poetic talent, which he used to praise Shakerism and recruit Believers. In time, he challenged the beliefs of Shaker leaders, which inevitably led to controversy and his apostasy. Surprisingly, years after Bolton apostatized from the Shakers, his testimonial poetry promoting Shakerism was published by a Shaker brother. Tracing Bolton's spiritual journey and accomplishments reveals much about him and the Shakers as well.

