

Kutsche Chronicle

The Kutsche Office of Local History
Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies
Grand Valley State University

Fall 2023

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Upcoming GVSU Events

Great Lakes History Conference

October 5-7

GVSU DeVos Center - Loosemore Auditorium

Braiding Sweetgrass with Robin Wall Kimmerer

November 8 @ 11:15 am

GVSU Kirkhof Center - Grand River Room

Global Encounters in Oceana County:

Mexicans, Germans, & World War II

November 9 @ 7:00 pm

West Michigan Research Station of Hart, MI

Director's Note



Director Nora Salas, Advisory Council chair Peg Padnos, & Gordon Olson Award winners Marjorie Viveen & Melissa Fox.

Photo by Isabel Media Studios of Grand Rapids

Collaboration is key. Our founder, Paul Kutsche, knew this when he first proposed bringing community members together with the university to preserve and share underrepresented histories.

This fall, the Kutsche Office of Local History begins its 15th year and continues to rely on partnerships to advance our mission. This issue of the Kutsche Chronicle features the fruits of many of these collaborations and details on what you can expect to see from us next.

Summer Projects

This summer, I was delighted to work on another project making vibrant connections in our local history community. I mentored advanced undergraduate student Hannah McBride (GVSU Group Social Studies major) as she researched people's experiences at the Grand Rapids Salvation Army's Evangeline Home. Also known as Booth Home for Unwed Mothers from 1945-1985, it was one of many maternity homes across the country. Maternity homes were where unmarried people could give birth in a time when being pregnant outside of marriage was severely stigmatized. These parents were told to keep their stories private for their own best interest; over time, many have come to the opposite conclusion, and now want to share their unique experiences. Hannah's project truly speaks to the mission of the Kutsche Office by uncovering stories which were not "meant" to be told.



The 1215 E. Fulton St. facility in 1921.
Grand Rapids Public Museum

As a part of this project we were able to conduct two oral history interviews and look at collections preserved by the Grand Rapids Public Library's History Center and the Grand Rapids City Archives. Thanks also go out to the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council and other local historians for helping us to find people to interview. This project is continuing, with future opportunities to hear about Hannah's research. I look forward to watching how Hannah's project develops over the coming years. Perhaps at a future roundtable Hannah will join some of the other members of West Michigan communities who have gone on to publish about our area, such as Randal Jelks or Delia Fernández-Jones!

15th Annual Local History Roundtable

Save the Date

March 20, 2024

GVSU Richard M. DeVos Center
Grand Rapids



Keynote by
Dr. Jennifer Bonnell

Author of the forthcoming book
*Foragers of a Modern Countryside:
Honey Bees, Environmental Change,
& Beekeeper Advocacy in
the Great Lakes Region*

NATIONAL BESTSELLER

A hymn of love to the world.
—ELIZABETH GILBERT

**BRAIDING
SWEETGRASS**



Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge,
and the Teachings of Plants

Weaving Science & Wisdom

The Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies invites everyone to hear from best-selling author Robin Wall Kimmerer. The Potawatomi Nation member, MacArthur Fellow, and founder of the Center for Native Peoples and the Environment will kick off the 2023 GVSU Teach-In to share lessons of collaboration and reciprocity between humans and our environments. Learn more - including parking information and where to stream the event live at bit.ly/Nov8RWK



Roundtable Recap

Thank you to everyone who helped make the 14th Annual Local History Roundtable a success!

We tested out a few changes for the Annual Local History Roundtable that took place on March 22, 2023, and are thrilled to report that it paid off in increased public accessibility and additional vendors and sponsors.

Congratulations to our Gordon Olson Award winners, Melissa Fox and Marjorie Viveen. The speakers that graciously donated their time and knowledge for this year's Roundtable included Charlie Brock, Nancy Brock, Rodney Brown, Rev. Melvin Burns, Dr. Delia Fernández-Jones, Kathrine Kolokithas, Adam Oster, and Marjorie Viveen.

For those who could not make it in person, or if you want to review or share any of the day's talks, full recordings of all panel sessions and keynote are now available on our YouTube channel:

bit.ly/kolh-rt



Isabel Media Studios of Grand Rapids

Coming Up: History Detectives 2024

It is hard to believe that January 2024 is on the horizon, bringing another History Detectives series with it! We are happy to continue supporting the annual, day-long showcase of local history presentations at the Grand Rapids Public Library.

From 10:30 - 11:30 am, you can hear our director Nora Salas and GVSU student Hannah McBride share some of their original research on the Booth Home for Unwed Mothers from 1945-1985.

A full slate of presenters and topics will be available shortly at **HistoryDetectivesGR.org**





2023 Great Lakes History Conference

Division and Reaction

GVSU is hosting the 48th Annual Great Lakes History Conference this October 5, 6, & 7th.

Presenters from around the country will be at the Richard M. DeVos Center at GVSU's Pew Grand Rapids campus to share the latest scholarship on growing sociopolitical rifts, attempts to fight back against these conditions, and what history has to tell us about handling these issues.

To register or view the full program, visit gvsu.edu/glhc

Bridging the Internship Equity Gap

Internships are a prickly subject. Organizations that cannot pay interns are at a competitive disadvantage and may struggle to find qualified, engaged candidates. Students who cannot afford to work for free are effectively kept out of the running, having to choose between furthering their career or feeding themselves. This cycle perpetuates inequalities in all aspects of the local history field.

Our new Internship Partner Program seeks to bridge that equity gap. Each semester, we will partner with a local history organization that has unmet internship needs, and provide 100% of a student intern's wages at a fair market rate.

Our pilot partnership began in the Fall 2023 semester with GVSU History major Hannah Krebs. Ruth Stevens of the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council collaborated with Kutsche Office staff in defining an appropriate project, composing and sharing a job posting, and ultimately hiring Hannah.



Collaboration & Cultures

We were thrilled to recently restart our Community Collaboration Grant after a COVID-related hiatus. This grant is one of the ways we bridge the university and the community, providing funding to GVSU instructors to collaborate with community organizations in West Michigan.



Migrant farm workers making a home in Michigan.
Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division

Our 2023-2024 grantee is Professor Andrew Schlewitz, who teaches in human rights and global studies, and serves as program coordinator for the Latin American & Latino/a Studies minor. Working with the Oceana County Historical & Genealogical Society, Dr. Schlewitz and GVSU student Jacey Adams are digging into the story of how Braceros and Prisoners of War (POWs) both ended up in the fields of Oceana County from 1942-1945.

This grant helps untangle an unusual corner of West Michigan history by exploring the relationships between Mexican migrants, Nazi POWs, private industry, agriculture, and the rest of the Oceana County community. They are utilizing resources from the Oceana County Historical & Genealogical Society among others, including oral histories, family history collections, government reports, local news and editorials, school textbooks, and pop culture from the era.

“The hope is to put together a story of how local and global concerns intertwined in this region, setting the stage for the post-war surge in community and agricultural development.”

Join us to learn more at

Global Encounters in Oceana County: Mexicans, Germans, & World War II

Thursday, November 9 at 7:00 pm

West Michigan Research Station

5185 N. Oceana Drive, Hart, MI 49420