

Kutsche Chronicle



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

Spring 2024

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Upcoming GVSU Events

For the Culture Quiz Bowl

February 27 - 5:00 - 7:00 pm
GVSU Grand Rapids campus

15th Annual Local History Roundtable

March 20, 2024 - 1:00 - 8:00 pm
GVSU Grand Rapids campus

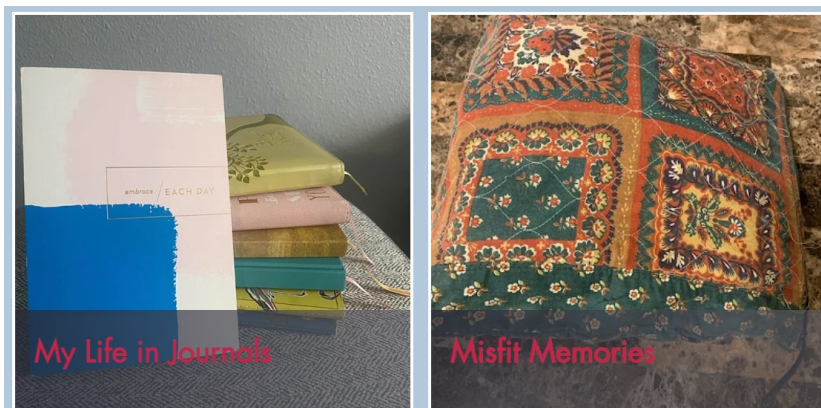
Director's Note

The Kutsche Office is uniquely placed to draw together historians from the community, local institutions, and the university. As Director, I am pleased to see the fruits of these interactions in events like the Grand Rapids History Detectives. This year's event, held on January 20, brought together panels sponsored by the Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives, the Grand Rapids City Archives, the Grand Rapids Historical Commission, the Grand Rapids Historical Society, the Grand Rapids Public Library, the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council, the Kutsche Office, the Library of Michigan and the Western Michigan Genealogical Society. With such great partners, and the many wonderful volunteers, the day was once again a testament to the abilities and interests of the local history community. If you were not able to make the event, I encourage you to check out the presentations on the [History Detectives YouTube channel](#).

Looking forward, I want to draw your attention to the upcoming commemoration of the United States' 250th anniversary. I was recently honored to be included in [Michigan's Committee for the United States Semiquincentennial](#). As a part of this group, I want to be sure that you are aware of the [Program Guide](#) that the committee created to help local groups plan their 2026 events. The committee has focused on ensuring Michigan's role in the commemoration embraces *all* of American history, taking in the good, the bad, and the ambivalent from our past. They have also adopted the national program themes which highlight stories excluded from the nation's founding years: Unfinished Revolutions, Power of Place, We the People, American Experiment, and Doing History.

Though 2026 is a few years in the future yet, it is never too early to start discussing how to "give voice to diverse communities through history," as our mission indicates. Do you have ideas about how West Michigan can contribute to discussion around the semiquincentennial themes? I look forward to talking with more of you soon about this important anniversary.

Life Stories



Prof. Ramya Swayamprakash called on the Kutsche Office to help offer a unique writing exercise to students in her INT 314: Life Journeys class. While learning about the process and composition of museum object labels, students [curated a digital gallery](#) showcasing key moments in their own identity formation. By combining Prof. Swayamprakash's expertise with the Kutsche Office's

commitment to sharing our local stories, students gained greater insight into themselves alongside some helpful editorial experience.

15th Annual Local History Roundtable

Changing Lands: Past, Present, Future



Photographic Negative Files, Records of the Department of Agriculture,
RG 1-7, Box 16, #4941, Pennsylvania State Archives.

Registration is now open for our 15th Annual Local History Roundtable! See our full schedule online: gvsu.edu/kutsche/rtp

This year's keynote presenter is Dr. Jennifer Bonnell, Associate Professor of History at York University. She will speak about bees and beekeepers in the Midwest.

These tiny-but-mighty pollinators are not native to the Americas, yet one-third of our food crops rely on bees to fruit. Bonnell's work breaks down the history of honeybees in the Great Lakes region, how beekeepers and honeybee-driven agriculture have changed the Midwestern landscape, and the looming threat of losing bees to Colony Collapse Disorder.

We are pleased to welcome our panelists this year, who will each speak on West Michigan topics related to agricultural history, Indigenous foodways, the use of captive agricultural labor in the 20th century, and how communities use the land to commemorate and celebrate.

- **Kaya DeerInWater:** Tribal Restoration Ecologist for the American Indian Higher Education Consortium & member of the Citizen Band of Potawatomi
- **Andrea Riley-Mukavetz:** Community Engagement Manager for the City of Grand Rapids Office of Equity & Engagement
- **Andrew Schlewitz & Jacey Adams:** Latino/a & Latin American Studies at Grand Valley State University
- **Jennifer Tompkins:** Community History & Education Director for the Grand Rapids Asian-Pacific Foundation
- **Eric Gollanek:** Director of the Saugatuck-Douglas History Center
- **Jeff Smith:** Local History Author & Creator of the Grand Rapids People's History Project
- **Camren Stott:** Good Food Systems Program Manager for Access of West Michigan & member of the Little Traverse Bay Band of Odawa Indians

Kang Awarded Grant for Podcast Series



The Kutsche Office of Local History has awarded Dr. Leanne Kang the Community Collaboration Grant for Winter 2024.

Kang and her community partners will receive nearly \$10,000 to support Grand Rapids Public Schools Uncovered: Oral History as Podcasts. Professor Kang, the Grand Rapids African American Museum and Archives, and the Grand Rapids People's History Project will conduct and share original interviews from Grand Rapids Public School staff, faculty, and students, from 1968 to the present.

They are especially interested in first-hand accounts of the controversial closure of South High School, which was the city's most minority-serving institution and the only school closed when the entire GRPS system was forcibly integrated. The project is already underway, with [a handful of interviews available to stream online](#).

Stay tuned for project updates, podcast releases, and community events!

Remembering Gordon Olson (1953-2024)

The Kutsche Office of Local History is deeply saddened by the passing of Gordon Olson, our founding Advisory Council President and namesake of our Gordon Olson Award for Outstanding Contributions to Local History. Olson made incredible strides in West Michigan's public history realm. He served as Assistant Director of the Grand Rapids Public Museum until the city created a position for him as the inaugural Grand Rapids City Historian.

During his decades of service, Olson offered guidance and expertise to countless initiatives. Along with helping establish our own organization, Olson played an important role in establishing historical markers, walking tours, exhibitions, and was a founding member of the Historical Society of Michigan and the National Council on Public History.



**Do you know someone who is carrying on Gordon Olson's legacy?
Nominate them for our Gordon Olson Award by February 25th at
gvsu.edu/kutsche/go**