

Kutsche Chronicle



The Kutsche Office of Local History is part
of the Brooks College of Interdisciplinary Studies
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Cover image of the Grand Trunk Railway bridge over Alpine Ave NW, circa 1920.

Grand Rapids Public Museum Collection

Save the Date

14th Annual
Local History Roundtable

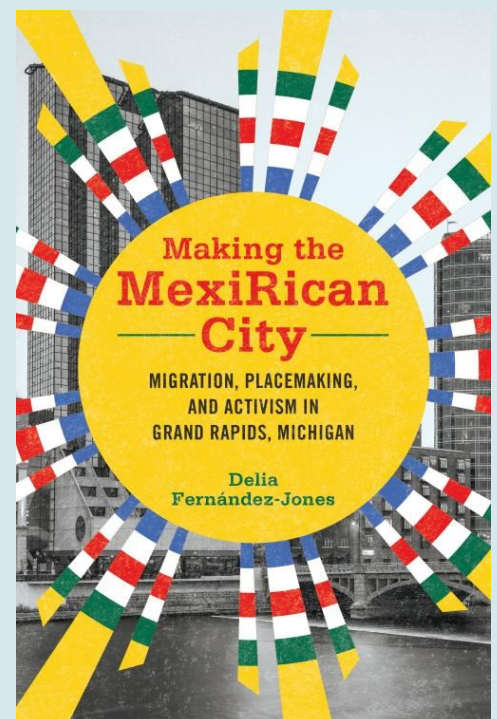
March 22, 2023

With a Can't-Miss Keynote by Dr. Delia Fernández-Jones

The Kutsche Office of Local History is pleased to announce the date and keynote presentation for our 2023 Roundtable.

Dr. Delia Fernández-Jones, MSU Assistant Professor of History and Grand Rapids native, will speak on her forthcoming book, *Making the MexiRican City: Migration, Placemaking, and Activism in Grand Rapids, Michigan*.

Stay tuned for more details, and be in touch with questions or suggestions for the 14th Annual Local History Roundtable.



University of Illinois Press,
on sale February 28, 2023.

Laying New Tracks: Syrians in Grand Rapids & the Midwest

In the early 1900s, thousands of people emigrated from Greater Syria and settled in the Midwest. Grand Rapids had a large Syrian population of shopkeepers and railroad workers, who founded Christian churches and Muslim societies in the city while building up key aspects of the area's twentieth-century infrastructure.



Grand Rapids Public Museum Collection

Dr. Ashley Johnson Bavery, Assistant Professor of History at Eastern Michigan University, will trace the circuitous routes Syrian migrants took to reach Grand Rapids, where they established benevolent societies that provided medical insurance, immigration aide, and camaraderie. Join us to explore the long and enduring roots of Arab Americans in Grand Rapids and across the Midwest.

Thursday, October 6, 2022 • 3:00-4:30 pm
Details & RSVP at gvsu.edu/kutsche/syr



William Barnwell

Teaching West Michigan Histories
Special Projects Graduate Assistant

Will is coming to GVSU to begin a Professional Master of Arts in Social Innovation program. This Mackinac Islander will serve as a Curriculum Developer, creating and piloting lesson plans that bring the local history of underrepresented communities into West Michigan's K-12 classrooms. In his free time, Will likes to hike, read, fish, and play guitar.

Join us in welcoming Will to the Kutsche Office!



Welcoming our community to
the 2022 Annual Local History Roundtable.
Photo courtesy Kristina Bird · Bird + Bird Studios

Director's Report

I want to thank you for your support in the past year. It has been great to get more involved in the local history community through leading the Kutsche Office.

As I enter my second year as Director, I find myself thinking often of just how critical the mission of the Kutsche Office is today. History can “give voice to diverse communities” if done in the spirit of our founder, Paul Kutsche, but history can also take away people’s voices. Fortunately, there are so many wonderful people in our West Michigan community making sure that our history speaks to, and about, people from all walks of life. Supporting and amplifying that work is something that is so

meaningful to myself and everyone involved with the Kutsche office.

To this end, one of our key focus areas for the 2022-2023 academic year will be the Teaching West Michigan Histories Project (TWMHP). We are fortunate this year to be joined by our Special Projects Graduate Assistant, Will Barnwell. Will brings the teaching experience we need to advance this project. You can learn more about Will elsewhere in the Chronicle. One important next step for the TWMHP is recruiting educators, local historians, and community stakeholders to review the lessons we are developing. If you are interested or know someone who is interested in bringing materials on the local history of our diverse communities to youth, please contact us to see how you might get involved. I would love to hear from you!

Another part of expanding our reach this year is the re-launch of our Community Collaboration Grant to support faculty work with community partners and GVSU students. This grant was paused for a few years, but we are fortunate to be able to return to celebrating, documenting, and preserving the voices of West Michigan’s diverse communities through this grant. Faculty can use this grant to support community involvement while providing students with research opportunities. For more information or to apply, go to the “Faculty Opportunities” portion of our website at gvsu.edu/kutsche/ccg or contact us at kutsche@gvsu.edu.

This year the Kutsche Office will be hosting a mix of in-person events and recorded content on our YouTube page at gvsu.edu/kutsche/youtube. If you were unable to attend our 2022 Annual Local History Roundtable, we invite you to view the recordings on our YouTube page, as well.

I look forward to seeing you or hearing your feedback on our digital programming.