



Kutsche Chronicle

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

Spring 2021

In This Issue

- Farewell from Director Kimberly McKee
- Digital Programs calendar
- Archives Against the Grain
- Oral Histories & Community Engagement
- 2021 Gordon Olson Award nominations

Upcoming Events

Friday, April 30, 2021 / 10:30 - 11:30 am

Live Zoom webinar:

“Great American Field Trip:

The Omnibus College Experiment”

April - July

See inside for our slate of upcoming
recorded programs this spring & summer

www.gvsu.edu/kutsche | 616-331-8099 | kutsche@gvsu.edu

Cover image courtesy of Karen Sieber, from the Omnibus College scrapbook of Alyce Peterson.

Goodbye from the Director

Kimberly McKee



Since I began serving as director of the Kutsche Office in Fall 2016, I have gotten to know so many local historians and history organizations. We've embarked on different projects, and I have learned so much about West Michigan local history. In Fall 2021, I will be starting a year-long sabbatical and am transitioning out of my role as director.

I am so happy I could steer this Office through the last year as we transitioned to digital offerings. I have enjoyed all of my conversations with each and every one of you at the roundtable, fall luncheon, and other events. I will remain in touch with the Office and am pleased to introduce our incoming director, [Nora Salas, associate professor of history at Grand Valley State University](#). She has a proven record of creating high-impact learning opportunities for students that also directly support West Michigan communities and reflect a deep commitment to local history.

Nominations Open Now!

2021 Gordon Olson Award

Do you know someone who has helped write, record, or share West Michigan history? Would you like to help **recognize an individual making especially creative, valuable, or thought-provoking contributions** to our understanding of local history? Consider nominating them for the Kutsche Office of Local History's 2021 Gordon Olson Award.

The Gordon Olson Award recognizes individuals whose work embodies the Kutsche Office's mission of "using history to give voice to diverse communities." We celebrate those who help **facilitate our understanding of the past and those who are documenting history as it happens in the present**. Nominations are open to anyone, from historians, librarians, and genealogists, to journalists, artists, and community organizers.



Gordon Olson Award
Contributions to Local History

Submit your nomination by June 27 at gvsu.edu/kutsche/go21

Friday, April 30

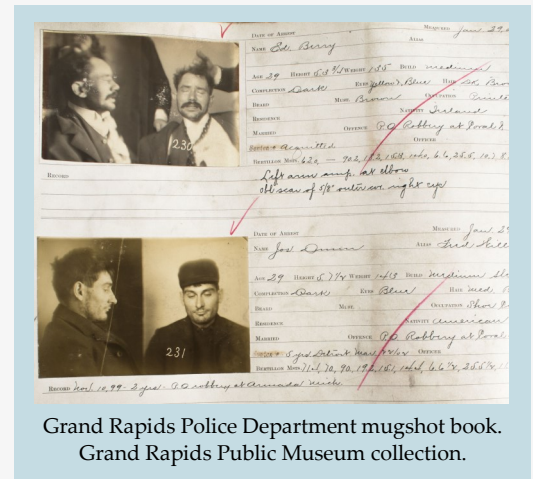
10:30 - 11:30 am

Great American Field Trip: The Omnibus College Experiment

Our latest installment of the Grand Rapids Time Traveler series dives into the history of the Omnibus College. In the 1920-30s, the Omnibus College program was a mobile, experimental, adult education experience that toured the United States. Join live to learn about their stops in the Great Lakes region and the program's connection to the modern school field trip.

Archives Against the Grain

In Winter 2021, we launched our [Archives Against the Grain series](#) featuring historians, archivists, scholars, and those who are passionate about archival materials. This series highlights how we can read "against the grain" to find the stories, voices, and people who may not be typically found in the historical record. **Dr. Delia Fernández** highlights how she used the Grand Rapids Police Department's Fingerprint Identification Cards and the Grand Rapids City Directories to tell the stories of Latinos in West Michigan. **Chris Byron** and **Gina Bivins** also discuss how they engage archival materials to help tell West Michigan history.



Oral History & Community Engagement



Image still from an interview with veteran James FA Turner, GVSU Digital Collections.

Interested in telling the story of a particular community, or creating enriching service-learning opportunities? Listen to **Dr. Marilyn Preston** as she discusses her work with Muskegon's Jewish community as part of "**L'dor V'dor: Oral Histories of the B'nai Israel Congregation.**" She shares best practices for community-based learning projects with students as well as how she embarked on a reciprocal relationship with the congregation to preserve their history. Additionally, learn more about **GVSU's Veterans History**

Project with **Dr. James Smither**, the project's director, as he shares his experiences preserving the voices of veterans and those whose lives were affected by wartime experiences. He also discusses his work with the All-American Girl Baseball League.

Digital Programs Calendar

Enjoy these pre-recorded programs online, at your convenience.

Programs debut on [our YouTube page](#) at the dates below.

April 1 **L'dor V'dor: Jewish Histories of Muskegon**

Dr. Marilyn Preston speaks to preserving the stories of Muskegon's 130-year-old B'nai Israel congregation, creating valuable service-learning experiences with students and community partners.

April 15 **Archives Against the Grain - Delia Fernández**

Dr. Delia Fernández shares her own challenges and opportunities in researching Latina/o life using primary source materials from modern university and municipal archives.

May 10 **Archives Against the Grain - Christine Byron**

Librarian and author Christine Byron shares common missteps, work-arounds, and interesting side adventures when conducting family and local history research.

May 24 **Archives Against the Grain - Gina Bivins**

Local historian Gina Bivins discusses the role local museums can play in preserving local history, and how local stories can enrich the broader historical record.

June 18 **The Lowell Showboat: Blackface Minstrels & Community Identity**

Drs Matthew L Daley and Scott Stabler revisit the Lowell Showboat, which operated on the Grand River in downtown Lowell, MI in the mid-twentieth century and played heavily on Lost Cause mythology, Blackface, and racial dynamics in West Michigan.

July 1 **GVSU's Veterans History Project**

Dr. James Smither shares his experiences as director of GVSU's Veterans History Project and incorporating student workers into long-term, ongoing oral history projects.

July 12 **Anthropology & Local History**

GVSU professor emerita Dr. Jan Brashler reflects on her time as a professor and curator of Anthropology, and how archaeology and anthropology can both complement local history work.