

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	
<i>Lillian Gill, Our Local Hero</i>	2
<i>GGRWHC Research and Recognition Committee Writing Workshop</i>	3
<i>Women's History Month Calendar of Events</i>	4-9
<i>Amazing Women of West Michigan</i>	6
<i>Zonta of Grand Rapids</i>	9
<i>Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame Presents Two Programs</i>	9
<i>Ladies Literary Club: A Legacy Worth Preserving continued</i>	10
<i>President's Message continued</i>	10
<i>GGRWHC Meeting Dates</i>	10
<i>Membership Information</i>	10
<i>State History Award: Diana E. Barrett and www.historygrandrapids.org, a Virtual Archive</i>	11
<i>Grand Rapids Historical Society Program Schedule</i>	12

<i>Don't forget to check out our website www.ggrwhc.org</i>	

President's Message Mary A. Seeger

Happy New Year 2008, and welcome to another year of local history events.

And it promises to be a busy and productive year. We continue our oral history project, interviewing local women, and I am pleased that board member MargEd Kwopil will be the new coordinator of that project. As always, we welcome suggestions for women to be interviewed as well as volunteers to assist with the interviewing itself.

Our membership stands at 129, and we thank you for renewing your membership and for your other financial contributions.

And of course we celebrate Women's History month every year. Do plan to attend the March program that we cosponsor with the Grand Rapids Historical Society:

**Thursday, March 13, 7 p.m.
Free and open to the public
Gerald R. Ford
Presidential Museum**

*The Boat-Rocking Lake Lawyer
Elizabeth Eaglesfield: 1870s Grand
Rapids Attorney and Great Lakes
Shipping Captain*

Baxter Award-winning historian and author JoEllyn Clarey shares the colorful history of Grand Rapids' first female attorney (1878) and fruit boat captain.

Continued on page 10

Ladies Literary Club: A Legacy Worth Preserving by Christopher Meehan and Mary Seeger

New Life for a Venerable Building

Located on Sheldon Boulevard in the historic Heartside neighborhood of Grand Rapids, the Ladies Literary Club building doesn't look very big from the outside. With its peaked roof and brick façade, it could be an ornate residence, conceivably a small downtown mansion. Stepping inside, however, one finds a large 440-seat auditorium, a separate meeting room, a dining area and an impressive, stained-glass Tiffany window featuring Shakespeare at his desk.

A Michigan historical marker standing by the front sidewalk near the recessed front entrance tells of the six women who got together to study history and organized the club in 1870. But what the historical marker doesn't say is that after flourishing for many years, well into the 20th century, the club's membership began to decline. In a letter to members, a club official succinctly described the situation: "There...are not enough new members to add to our roster, not enough members to take positions on the Board and not really enough attendance or interest by the members we do have. Speakers are charging ever higher fees for their presentations."

Lack of adequate parking, and the fact that many women had joined the workforce and no longer had time to volunteer to the club, further stifled its activities. Finally, the building required

Continued on page 10

Lillian Gill, Our Local Hero

Pamela VandenBerg

I came across Lillian Gill's name while attending the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council research workshop last spring. Upon reviewing Mrs. Gill's vertical file at the Grand Rapids Public Library that same afternoon, I discovered she has dedicated her life towards community service, civil rights, and breaking racial barriers in the Grand Rapids community.

The achievements of Mrs. Gill's community service and civil rights activism embody determination, compassion, and courage. My favorite example of this would be when Mrs. Gill, along with Lucille Skinner, became the first black women to play golf in Grand Rapids. Both Mrs. Gill and Ms. Skinner indomitably tested out a golf course on behalf of the N.A.A.C.P. This exemplified her efforts in breaking down racial and gender barriers.

Mrs. Gill was also the organizer and first president of the Grand Rapids Matron Council for the Order of the Eastern Star, an organization that is cherished by Mrs. Gill. Her service in the institution elevated her to the elected position of Illustrious Grand Matron (Supreme), and she also served as the Educational Director and National Sovereign of Stars for the International Masons.

In addition to her activism and leadership, she is also a lifetime member and former vice-president of the N.A.A.C.P., a member of the Grand Rapids Urban League, and has served twenty-six years as president of the District Congress of the Western District Association of Baptist Churches in Michigan. These memberships exemplify her commitment to community and civil rights.

Mrs. Gill has also received countless awards based on her activist and community service achievements, which include the National Award of Sojourner Truth from the Negro Business and Professional Women group in 1971, and Mrs. Gill's name can be found in the 1977 book, *Notable American Citizens*.

While reading through the articles in Mrs. Gill's vertical file, I also discovered that Mrs. Gill was the first black leader for Camp Fire Girls. As an

AmeriCorps member, I serve for Camp Fire USA West Michigan Council. With this unique position, I took the opportunity of presenting Mrs. Gill's achievements to my executive director at Camp Fire USA, and together we decided to present Mrs. Gill with the WoHeLo award at the annual Camp Fire Alumni Tea, hosted by the past National and Council Camp Fire president. The WoHeLo award is Camp Fire's highest honor. The award embodies one's dedication to education, leadership, speaking out about community needs, and serving the community. This award is earned by a dedicated few who demonstrate a commitment to Camp Fire USA and advocate for improved social conditions. Mrs. Gill's lifetime activism is an outstanding example of exceptional leadership and dedication to community needs. I presented Mrs. Gill with the WoHeLo award on October 25, 2007. At the event, Mrs. Gill shared some of her wonderful memories of her involvement with the Grand Rapids community. I continue to contact Mrs. Gill to further my research into her legacy with the Grand Rapids community.



Mrs. Gill and Pamela VandenBerg

**Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council
Research and Recognition Committee
Writing Workshop**

9 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Saturday, January 26, 2008

For all you budding researchers and writers, we have put together a plan we hope you can't resist! To help you fulfill one of your New Year's resolutions, we have organized the time, the place and the tools for composing the stories about your favorite female research subjects. Whether your subject is a special woman from your own family or from the community, you are invited to come to learn how to present her story in a written form. It may be as short as a photo essay or as long as a book with many different options (e.g., essay, newsletter or magazine article) in between, or you can come without a subject, and we'll help you pick one out.

The Research and Recognition Writing Workshop will teach you how to think about and organize your research into stories that will appeal to a number of audiences, including yourself. The workshop will offer a practical six-step writing process, discussion about many different writing formats and venues, and time or help in getting started on your own project.

Please join us in bringing these special women back to life in their stories. Sharing life stories is a universal and powerful way for women to learn from each other. Let's unite around this legacy of women collaborating and learning together. Let's spread the word about the wonderful women who have come before us and contributed to making Grand Rapids a great place to live and learn.

What: Research & Recognition Writing Workshop

**Where: Grand Rapids Public Library, Level 4,
Vander Veen Center for the Book**

**When: 9 a.m.–12:30 p.m. Saturday, January 26, 2008,
with coffee and donuts at 9 a.m.**

Presentation begins at 9:30 a.m.

**Who: Registration is required and limited to the first 20
participants. Please call Falinda Geerling at 616/735-0630 or
email falindag@sbcglobal.net**

by Wednesday, January 23, 2008.

**How much: Free and open to anyone wanting to do
research and write about it.**

**Benefit: Publish an article about your research in the
GGRWHC Newsletter.**

Women's History Month Calendar of Events

Even though March is Women's History Month, programs are spilling over to February and April. On the next five pages, you will find programs sponsored by area organizations. They are in alphabetical order by organization rather than in date order. Updates to the list will be on the GGRWHC web page www.ggrwhc.org.

PLAN TO ATTEND SOME OF THESE PROGRAMS.

Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council and The Grand Rapids Historical Society

The Boat-Rocking Lake Lawyer Elizabeth Eaglesfield: 1870s Grand Rapids Attorney and Great Lakes Shipping Captain, Jo Ellyn Clarey, Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council and Grand Rapids Historical Society. The nineteenth-century case of daring and ambitious Elizabeth Eaglesfield helps make Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's point that "well-behaved women seldom make history." But even the lives of misbehaving women must often be pieced together from the public record. She was a practicing attorney from 1878 and a later Great Lakes fruit boat captain. Oh, can Eaglesfield be found in the newspapers! She was born in the era of Manifest Destiny and came of age during the socially reckless Gilded Age. Most women law graduates of her period did not actually practice and few women were on the lakes, but Elizabeth Eaglesfield engaged her tainted world for decades, a rousing model of determination, persistence, and daring.

Thursday, March 13, 7:00 p.m., Gerald R. Ford Museum

Free and open to the public.

Actors' Theatre

Rabbit Hole, David Lindsay-Abaire, winner of 2007 Pulitzer Prize for Drama. The story of a mother dealing with the untimely death of her child and how her struggle to come to terms with the death impacts the rest of her family.

Thursday-Saturday, March 20-22 and 27-29, 8:00 p.m., Spectrum Theatre, 160 Fountain Street NE

Tickets \$22.00 (discounts available for students and seniors). Box office opens March 10. Call 616/234-3946.

Aquinas College Women's Studies Center

Student Creative Writing Contest. In Celebration of Women's History Month, Aquinas students will submit their poetry, creative non-fiction, or fiction celebrating women or issues related to women. Winners will read their work at the Aquinas Faculty Tandem Poetry Reading.

Submission due to the Jane Hibbard Idema Women's Studies Center on March 12 by 5:00 p.m.

Appreciation Luncheon in Honor of International Women's Day, Dr. Katharina Häusler-Gross, Associate Professor of German, Aquinas College. With its beginnings in Copenhagen, nearly 90 years ago, women's groups around the world celebrate International Women's Day. Professor Gross will present its history and offer bread and roses, inspired by James Oppenheim's famous poem.

Thursday, March 13, 12:30-1:30 p.m., Loutit Room, Aquinas College

Free and open to the public.

Sustain Your Brain: A hands-on demonstration about what individuals can do for sustainability. Brown Bag Lecture Series, Dr. Deborah Steketee, Assistant Professor for Sustainable Business.

Tuesday, March 18, 12:30-1:30 p.m., Loutit Room, Aquinas College

Free and open to the public.

Aquinas College continued

The Faculty Tandem Poetry Reading, featuring Aquinas' own poets, Miriam Pederson, Pamela Dail Whiting, Michaelleen Kelly and Michelle DeRose, and the student winner(s) of the annual creative writing contest.

Time: Thursday, March 20, 7:00 p.m., Cook Carriage House, Moose Café

Free and open to the public.

The Annual *Outstanding AQ Woman Awards*. As the academic year draws to an end, the Jane Hibbard Idema Women's Studies Center is honored to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and commitment of the women of Aquinas College. An outstanding faculty, staff, student and alumni are selected, based upon nominations, by a special committee to win these awards and they will be honored at this award ceremony. Nominations are due March 21 by 5 p.m.

Friday, March 28, 12:30-1:30 p.m., Holmdene Board Room (tentative), Aquinas College

Circle of Cronos

The Circle of Cronos is a grass roots group dedicated to raising interest and awareness about conscious aging, supporting a positive view of aging, especially for women, and empowering older women by offering opportunities to learn and to celebrate the last third of life. The Circle of Cronos steering committee members are Chris Belding, Ora Jones, Nancy Lee, Judy Raymond, Johanna Sizick, Jan Tzortzinis, Bunny Voss and Irene Walker.

What Does It Mean to Be a Crone? Join other women at this workshop during which we will explore the possibilities for the last third of life...the time when we reap the wisdom from long years of experience, when we recognize our passion and our gifts that we can share with others.

Saturday, March 8, 9:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Family Life Center, 1256 Walker Ave NW

Cost: \$20.00. Send a check for \$20.00 made payable to *Circle of Cronos* to Chris Belding, 21-15 Mile Rd NW, Sparta MI 49345. Call or email Chris at 616/887-7854 or belmor97@msn.com to reserve your place and pay at the door. Deadline: March 6.

Community Croning Ceremony. All women and girls (age 10 & up) are invited to attend this event to celebrate the lives of older women in our community.

Sunday, April 27, 2:00 p.m.-4:00 p.m., Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain St NE; park in GRCC ramp, NE corner Bostwick and Fountain

Free and open to the public. Registration appreciated but not necessary.

For more information, call or email Chris Belding at 616/887-7854 or belmor97@msn.com.

Grand Rapids Community College Bob and Aleicia Woodrick Diversity Learning Center

Diversity Lecture Series, *Hiding in Plain Sight: Breaking the Cycle of Violence in our Society*, Terri Jentz.

Wednesday, March 12, 7:00 p.m., Fountain Street Church, 24 Fountain St. NE

Free and open to the public.

For more information contact Jennifer A Smith, 616/234-3390 or jesmith@grcc.edu.

**Grand Rapids Community College
Bob and Aleicia Woodrick Diversity Learning Center continued**

Grand Rapids Community College Salute to Women Reception. Celebrate the diversity of the accomplishments of women throughout Grand Rapids Community College and to encourage young women to pursue pathways to achievement and honor GRCC women (alumna, students, employees, and former employees) who are exemplary in their roles as professionals, volunteers, or agents of change.

Wednesday, March 26, 1:00-3:00 p.m., GRCC Applied Technology Center Banquet Rooms

Free and open to the public.

For more information, contact Jennifer A. Smith, 616/234-3390 or jesmith@grcc.edu.

Grand Rapids Public Library

Cesar Takes a Break, Susan Collins Thoms. When a pet iguana escaped? from her son's classroom one spring break, Susan Collins Thoms thought it had the makings of a children's book. What did the iguana do? Where did he go? And why did he choose to return after a week? The iguana's story is told in *Cesar Takes a Break*, a picture book just published by Sterling Publishing. In a diary format, Cesar the iguana tells about his spring break — meeting other class pets, playing hockey in the teacher's lounge, performing on stage. In her talk, Susan will discuss how her idea became a published book — how she found an editor, how the editor found an artist, and how the illustrator brought the story alive through his illustrations. Tips and contact information will be included for those interested in writing children's books.

Thursday, March 6, 7:00 p.m., Main Library, 111 Library St. NE

Free and open to the public.

Ladies of the Lights, Dianna Stampfler. Meet the ladies who kept the lights burning at beacons throughout Michigan and the Great Lakes Region. They were women before their time, taking on the romantic, yet dangerous and physically demanding job of tending to the beacons that protected the shoreline. Come hear their stories.

Thursday, March 20, 7:00 p.m., Main Library, 111 Library St. NE

Free and open to the public.

Stealing Buddha's Dinner, Bich Minh Nguyen. Local author Bich Minh Nyugen discusses writing her critically acclaimed memoir *Stealing Buddha's Dinner*.

Thursday, March 27, 7:00 p.m., Main Library, 111 Library St. NE

Free and open to the public.

For more information, on these programs contact Kristen Krueger-Corrado, 616/988-5402 ext. 5438 or kcorrado@grpl.org

Amazing Women of West Michigan

Amazing Women of West Michigan is a celebration of women who strive to make their community a better place to live. From doctors and lawyers to social workers and artists, the thirty-five women featured here are each unique in the role they fulfill. They come from a wide variety of ethnic and religious backgrounds, yet all exhibit the same sort of courage, strength, and determination.

These amazing women have overcome difficult circumstances, pursued nontraditional careers, and changed lives with their care and compassion. Their stories as told by author Crystal Bowman — accompanied by Tim Priest's exceptional black-and-white photographs — celebrate lives well lived and will inspire readers of all ages in western Michigan and beyond.

79 pages; dimensions (in inches): 9.25 x 9.25; 37 black-and-white photos; 2006, ISBN: 978-0-8028-4022-6 Cost \$20.00, Eerdmans

Link to book: http://www.eerdmans.com/shop/product.asp?p_key=9780802840226

**Grand Valley State University
School of Communications**

Theatre at Grand Valley presents *Nickel and Dimed*, by Joan Holden, based on *Nickel and Dimed: on (Not) Getting by in America*, by Barbara Ehrenreich, directed by guest director Penny Notte. With stories of the working poor who just barely scrape by, cleaning houses, waiting tables, and re-stocking shelves across America, *Nickel and Dimed* transforms award-winning journalist Barbara Ehrenreich's undercover journey to find out how (or whether) a person survives on \$5.15 an hour. Come find your own answer by joining us for this provocative, terribly real and delightfully funny theatrical event.

**Friday-Saturday, April 4, 5 and Thursday-Saturday, 10, 11, 12, 7: 30 p.m.,
Sunday, April 6, 2:00 p.m., Louis Armstrong Theatre, Performing Arts Center, GVSU-Allendale campus.**

Cost: \$6.00 students; \$10.00 Faculty/Staff/Senior; \$12.00 General Public
Box Office Hours: 12:00-5:00 p.m. weekdays, and one hour prior to curtain
Box Office Telephone: 616/331-2300, Box Office FAX: 616/331-8105
Theatre Web site: www.gvsu.edu/theatre

**Grand Valley State University
Women's Studies Center**

Indulge in a Cause. "The vision of the Women's Center is to make a substantial difference in the quality of life for women of the Grand Valley community and surrounding area. The Women's Center enriches and improves lives through high quality programs and services. *Indulge in a Cause* is a fund-raising event that helps ensure the vital work carried out by the center continues. The even will feature the area's best chocolate desserts and a silent auction for fabulous prize packages.

Wednesday, February 6, 5:00-7:30 p.m., Hager-Lubbers Exhibition Hall, Bldg E, GVSU's Pew Campus

Cost: \$30.00. Call 616/331-2748 or email: womenctr@gvsu.edu to reserve your tickets today!

Vagina Monologues. The GVSU Women's Center presents the Vagina Monologues as part of the GVSU V-Day College Campaign. Running for the seventh year at GVSU, the Monologues raises over \$12,000 yearly to STOP VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN. Come be a part of the V-Day College Campaign at GVSU. The performances are:

**Monday, February 11, 7:00 p.m., Louis Armstrong Theatre, GVSU, Allendale campus
Friday, February 15, 7:00 p.m. Wealthy Street Theatre.**

Cost: \$10.00 students; \$20.00 non-students.

For more information, contact Ashley Nickels at 616/331-2748 or nickelas@gvsu.edu.

A Memory A Monologue A Rant and A Prayer, a collection of short stories and monologues written by many different men and women on the topic of violence against women. Performed and produced in a similar fashion to The Vagina Monologues, the MMRP aims to end violence against women—and gives men a chance to be on the stage as well.

Wednesday, February 20, 7:00 p.m., Cook Dewitt Center, GVSU, Allendale campus

Cost: \$10:00.

For more information, contact Ashley Nickels at 616/331-2748 or nickelas@gvsu.edu.

**Grand Valley State University
Women's Studies Center continued**

Hungry For More, Robyn McGee. In her presentation, *Hungry for More*, Robyn McGee addresses the issues of anorexia, bulimia and compulsive overeating among women of color. Until recently, these conditions were thought to be exclusively for the "white and middle class." However, with the pressures of college and as young women enter into the corporate world, more African Americans and Latinas are engaged in unhealthy eating and body image.

Wednesday, February 27, 7:00 p.m., Grand River Room, GVSU, Allendale campus

For more information, contact Ashley Nickels at 616/331-2748 or nickelas@gvsu.edu.

Women's Tea Party. Please join other activist women, faculty, staff and students as we celebrate a centuries-old tradition of combining tea parties with discussions of literature, politics, and reform. There will be entertainment, scrumptious food, and an opportunity for interaction among diverse women.

Wednesday, March 26, 3:00-4:30 p.m., Rm 204, Kirkhof Center, GVSU, Allendale campus

RSVP's required! To reserve your spot and to receive a parking pass, please call the Women's Center at 616/331-2748 or email womenctr@gvsu.edu.

For individuals requiring special accommodations, please contact the Women's Center.

Women's City Club

Meet Desdemona Sweet's Neighbors. Desdemona Sweet lived at 254 East Fulton from 1860-1890, and she will come to life and open the doors of the Sweet House. Visiting her will be Emily Campau, Harriet Guild Burton, Lucy Ball (John's daughter), Lorraine Immen, and Anna Bissell, each sharing the story of her life in the early years of Grand Rapids. Join us to hear the interesting stories and see their pictures.

Thursday, March 28, 11:00 a.m. followed by a delicious luncheon at noon, Women's City Club, 254 E. Fulton (sw corner Fulton and Lafayette). Parking is available in two lots. Handicap accessible.

The cost for the program and luncheon is \$14.00. Prepaid reservations are required. Call 616/459-3321 with credit card information or mail checks to: WCC, 254 E Fulton, Grand Rapids MI 49503.

Women's Resource Center

2008 Pillar Award, New Name, Same Spirit. Since 1987, Women's Resource Center has honored local employers who have implemented best practices that empower women at work. WRC called this honor the Employer Recognition Award or ERA. This year, WRC unveils its *Pillar Award*. While the name of this award has changed, its intent has not. It will continue to showcase the noteworthy efforts of West Michigan employers who are pillars in our community. Previous award winning organizations have been both large corporations as well as small businesses from a wide variety of business sectors.

Wednesday, March 26, 11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m., Ambassador Ball Room, Amway Grand Plaza Hotel

Cost: \$50.00 Individual tickets, To reserve your ticket, email development@grwrc.org or call 616/458-5443.

World Affairs Council

Iraq: No Exit in Sight, Deborah Amos, NPR Foreign Correspondent. A recurring question found in most public opinion polls and on the 2008 presidential campaign trail: What will be the end-game for the U.S. in Iraq? How will U.S. decisions about continued engagement affect Iraq itself and the Middle East?

Monday, February 4, 6:00 p.m., Performing Arts Center, Aquinas College, 1607 Robinson Road SE

Cost: \$5.00 World Affairs Council members; \$10:00 non-members

WGVU

Fresh Looks at Grand Rapids Women a Century Ago, The March 2008 WGVU Morning Show with Shelley Irwin

Monday, March 3, 10:35 a.m., *Surveying the Skills of 20,000 Women in 1918 Grand Rapids*, with Diana E. Barrett, Grand Rapids Historical Commission

Monday, March 10, 10:35 a.m., *Grand Rapids Women Attorneys, 1878-1940*, with Jo Ellyn Clarey, Grand Rapids Historical Society and Ruth S. Stevens, Grand Rapids Thomas M. Cooley Law School Library

Monday, March 17, 10:35 a.m., *Grand Rapids Working Women, 1890-1930*, with Marcella Beck and Ruth Van Stee, Grand Rapids Public Library, History and Special Collections

Monday, March 24, 10:35 a.m., *Nineteenth-Century Grand Rapids Women Physicians*, with Mary Alice Williams, Retired CEO of Arbor Circle

FM 88.5 and 95.3; AM 1480 and 850. Sponsored by WGVU NPR/PBS. Contact Jo Ellyn Clarey, joellynclarey@yahoo.com, or Shelley Irwin, inwinsh@gvsu.edu, for additional information.

Zonta Club of Grand Rapids

Zonta International's mission is to improve the status of women and girls globally through service and advocacy.

FACT:

- *1 in 3 women will suffer some form of violence in her lifetime.*
- *Domestic abuse is the #1 health issue in the United States.*
- *3 of 4 women killed are killed after leaving an abuser.*

GIVE: your time and talents to change these statistics:

- Remember that silence is affirming. When you choose not to speak out against violence you are supporting it.
- Recruit men to help. Women have traditionally worked alone on this problem.
- Talk about this topic in any group you belong to, keep this topic in the forefront.
- Join a local Zonta Club (www.zontagr.org).

Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame Presents Two Programs

The Michigan Women's Historical Center and Hall of Fame is hosting two exhibits. *Ladies of the Lights: Michigan Women in the U. S. Lighthouse Service* and *Painted Music*, a display of painting by Edee Joppich and 20 of her students.

Stirring stories of dedication and determination such as these may be found in a new exhibit, entitled *Ladies of the Lights: Michigan Women in the U.S. Lighthouse Service*, developed by the Michigan Women's Historical Center and set to be displayed there January 14-June 27, 2008.

"Use your paintbrush like a maestro's baton, and let music infuse your art." That's the direction that artist and educator Edee Joppich recently gave to students in her watercolor painting classes at the Visual Art Association of Livonia. The resulting works of 20 of those students as well as Joppich's own paintings will be displayed in an exhibit entitled *Painted Music*, to be held January 27 through March 28, 2008 at the Michigan Women's Historical Center. A free public reception for the exhibit is set for Sunday, February 10 at the historical center from 2:00 to 4:00 p.m.

(See Current News at www.ggrwhc.org for complete articles.)

Ladies Literary Club: A Legacy Worth Preserving continued

extensive and expensive maintenance. In 2005, the remaining Ladies Literary Club members made a hard—and sad—decision. After thoroughly reviewing their options, they voted to give up ownership of the building and disband.

The committee selected to determine the fate of the building, chaired by Rosemary Van Houten, worked for many months to determine what to do with the building and at the same time preserve the club's legacy. The women narrowed the field to two potential owners: Cooley Law School and Calvin College; at a joint news conference in October 2006, Calvin officials and representatives of the club announced that Calvin would be taking over the clubhouse. No money changed hands. The women gave the club to Calvin "to preserve its heritage and keep it available to the community in the future," says Tom McWhertor, vice president for enrollment and external programs at Calvin College.



Ladies Literary Club
Courtesy of Calvin College web site

grating bricks, fix the leaking roof, replace rotting window frames, make the structure fully accessible to those with disabilities and upgrade the electrical, light and sound systems. School officials hoped to have the building available for meetings, concerts, literary readings, classes, workshops and seminars by late 2007. Calvin president Galen Byker pledged that "the outcome will be a literary and cultural heritage continued as well as a classic building preserved and equipped for 21st century service to the community."

The decision to preserve the building, continue the programs and carry on the heritage of the Ladies Literary Club represents an exciting new chapter in a story that began 135 years earlier when Grand Rapids was a frontier city of 15,000 people with a history of less than five decades, but boundless optimism for the future.

Editor's Note

This article is a part of a paper that was presented at the Great Lakes History Conference in October 2007. The complete article will be in a future issue of *The Grand River Valley Review*.

In accepting the building, Calvin faced the task of raising \$1.5 million to shore up and replace disinte-

President's Message continued

Our workshops on researching history continue and attract increasing numbers. The state convention of the Historical Society of Michigan will be held in Grand Rapids this year, and we are involved in the planning committee. We have also begun preparations for LEGACY 2009, our triennial community-wide celebration of Women's History Month.

We welcome your suggestions, and hope you will continue and even increase your participation in our activities...

GGRWHC Meeting Dates

The Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council meets on the second Tuesday of the month at 4:00 p.m.

The meetings are held at the Gerald R. Ford Museum.

The Annual Meeting will be held on May 13.

You are cordially invited to attend any of the meetings.

Membership Information

Membership rates are:

Sponsor	\$100.00
Contributor	\$50.00
Basic	\$25.00
Student	\$10.00

Your membership supports this newsletter, the web page, oral history interviews, the writing workshop, and LEGACY among other things.

If your address label has an asterisk, your membership has expired.

STATE HISTORY AWARD: Diana E. Barrett and www.historygrandrapids.org a Virtual Archive JoEllyn Clarey



Diana Barrett receiving the State History award in the Communications Division at the State History Conference in September.

Off and on over the past year you have read reports from the cyber world as Diana Barrett has led the Grand Rapids Historical Commission into the digital age, broadening its reach and adding to the range of materials it makes accessible on Grand Rapids history. Established by the city in 1962, the Commission's charge was to update the city's published record and to engage the community in

the collection of source material. For forty-five years the GRHC documented the life of Grand Rapids using the print medium. Just a year ago it published *STRIKE: How the Furniture Strike of 1911 Changed Grand Rapids* and it has recently supported video and oral history projects, including documentation of the Vietnamese community's history in Grand Rapids. Now the Commission has emerged from a period of transition by establishing an innovative online archive. Its realization, from unique concept to functioning reality, has been energized and overseen by the multi-talented Diana Barrett.

Barrett's interest in history has taken her into some odd corners and extends far beyond her efforts for the Grand Rapids Historical Commission. Retired from life as a teacher, then financial broker, Barrett began her historical researches in genealogy and discovered that entire communities moved, not just individuals. As she studied the trails communities moved along and the history of the areas they settled, Barrett gradually honed her skills as a researcher and writer by presenting at GVSU's Great Lakes History Conference, aiding research workshops for the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council, masterminding the establishment of an important database for the Grand Rapids Public Library, and generously aiding fellow laborers in their own research projects. The Commission web project has simply focused her talents and kicked her into overdrive.

In a nutshell, the GRHC online archive developed by Barrett is an effort that locates, preserves, and makes digitally available photos and documents illustrating community history that generally are not donated to material archives but are retained by families and organizations. The GRHC is scanning images from the personal holdings of local families, the archives of area public and private institutions, and other local sources that reveal the ways in which Grand Rapids people worked, traveled, educated and enjoyed themselves from the mid-nineteenth into the twenty-first centuries.

Many photos and documents offered to this project are from disparate individuals and families, but as a collection they tell larger stories.

Recent GRHC publication and interview projects have already shifted emphasis from dominant cultural groups; but this web effort aims especially at locating materials from previously untapped sources, adding untold stories to the local record. The organization of varied materials into broader photo essays by the GRHC both celebrates diverse cultural heritages and shows how specific ethnic groups have interacted to form one unique community: Grand Rapids, Michigan. Weaving family records into the community story on a history website demonstrates that those items are a valued part of local history and that city government affirms the importance of preserving them. Students especially will no doubt be impressed that their material can be accessed worldwide and throughout their continuing school years; indeed, their lives.

The GRHC has arranged with the Community Media Center, which designed the site's software and hosts its hardware, to share its frame with other interested historical groups. The Grand Rapids Historical Commission's virtual archive models future collecting possibilities and explores one direction for innovative re-combinations of materials. Thanks to Diana Barrett.

The Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council congratulates Diana on winning the State History Award in Communication .

Grand Rapids Historical Society Winter and Spring Schedule

Meetings are held at the Gerald R. Ford Museum at 7:00 p.m. The time and location for the Annual Meeting in May is to be determined. Call 616/988-5402 ext. 5497 for Annual Meeting details.

February 14

Preying on Polluters: 'Smoke Hawk' Towner Swoops In - 1907-1915, Diana E. Barrett, Grand Rapids Historical Commission. In the early 1900s the nation's cities suffered from severe air pollution generated by coal-burning industries and railroads. Citizens protested, councils passed smoke abatement ordinances and employed smoke inspectors, but powerful opponents fought improvements with propaganda and economic arguments while some even advocated the benefits of smoke. Due to the influence of Louis C. Towner, Grand Rapids smoke inspector, the International Association for the Prevention of Smoke met here in 1914, and Towner was elected national president. How successful was he as the local smoke inspector, and could he achieve results acceptable to both citizens and business?

March 13, 2008

The Boat-Rocking Lake Lawyer Elizabeth Eaglesfield: 1870s Grand Rapids Attorney and Great Lakes Shipping Captain. Jo Ellyn Clarey, Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council & Grand Rapids Historical Society. See page 4 for a complete description.

April 10, 2008

Rails Across the Water: The Rise and Fall of Railroad Carferries in Michigan, Bob VandeVusse, marine columnist for Great Lakes and Seaway Shipping and the Holland Sentinel, will discuss the history of ferrying railroad cars across Lake Michigan, from the tale of its beginnings in the nineteenth century, through its heyday in the 1940s and 1950s, to its demise in the 1980s and the remnants remaining today.

May 8, 2007 Annual Meeting and Banquet

Going to the Blazes: One-Hundred-Sixty Years of the Grand Rapids Fire Department, Dennis W. Morrow, Pastor at Saints Peter and Paul Parish and Chaplain for the Grand Rapids Fire and Police Department. No dramatic disaster underwrote the organization of fire-fighting in Grand Rapids, but by 1848 citizens began institutionalizing practices, buying the equipment, and building the housing that has developed over 160 years into the professional GRFD we know today. (*For more information, see Current News at www.ggrwhc.org.*)

Mark Your Calendar

The annual conference of the Historical Society of Michigan will be held in Grand Rapids in 2008. It will be held at the Eberhard Center September 26-28, 2008. Watch our website (www.ggrwhc.org) for more information. We would like to see a good turnout of Grand Rapidians at the conference.