



# Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council

November, 2015

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## Spirited Women: Grand Rapids and the Push for Temperance

Supplementing the Grand Rapids Public Museum's exhibit, *American Spirits: The Rise and Fall of Prohibition*, on November 17th Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council speakers Ruth Van Stee and Julie Tabberer will take a look at the local scene leading up to and including the thirteen years of speakeasies and bathtub gin and tell the stories of area women in the massive social movements surrounding the Prohibition years 1920-33.

*Spirited Women: Grand Rapids and the Push for Temperance* will illustrate how the "True Woman" of the nineteenth



century and the "New Woman" of the Jazz Age contribute to the long foreground of Grand Rapids as "Beer City USA!"

For over a century Grand Rapids men and women had been pushing temperance as a solution to social ills

intensified by the misuse of alcohol.

Links to nineteenth-century women's rights movements should be no surprise.

After the Woman's Christian

Temperance Union was established in 1874, the Michigan

chapter was

founded in Grand Rapids. Summer headquarters for the national WCTU was hosted by the Bay View Association north of Petoskey, so Michigan became a magnet for speakers, many of whom stopped over in Grand Rapids.

Presenters: Ruth Van Stee & Julie Tabberer

Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council

**Tuesday, November 17, 6:00 PM**  
**Public Museum of Grand Rapids,**  
Free with the price of admission to the museum.



Lydia M. Boise  
Grand Rapids W.T.C.U.  
from 1874 - 1897

## More Events and Activities

See all of our planned activities  
November, 2015 - March, 2016  
Pages 2, 3, 4, 5

# Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council

## Events: November 2015 – March 2016

Mark your calendars and plan to attend the events and activities described on this page and pages 3, 4 and 5. Check for updates on our Facebook page or website [www.ggrwhc.org](http://www.ggrwhc.org) and by calling (616) 574-7307 or signing up for our e-newsletter at [info@ggrwhc.org](mailto:info@ggrwhc.org). All programs and events are open to the public. All are free but those at Celebration North Cinema and the GR Public Museum where you will have to pay an entry to the museum.

### ***A Team of Their Own, Documentary***

**Tuesday, November 10, 6:00 PM**

**Grand Rapids Public Museum**

If you missed the first showing in October of the new Grand Valley State University documentary on the Grand Rapids Chicks, a women's baseball team in the 1940s and 1950s, you can view it at the Public Museum of Grand Rapids.

With many of the men of the city serving in the military during World War II, citizens flocked to cheer on the Grand Rapids Chicks.

Free with the price of admission to the museum.



Erma Bergmann of the Grand Rapids Chicks  
Courtesy Grand Rapids Public Library



### ***Suffragette, the movie***

**Friday, November 20, Doors open at 6:30**

**Celebration Cinema North**

**\$10 RSVP**

**Discussion Leader: Gretchen Galbraith**

Come to the movies with GGRWHC on Friday, November 20, when the star-studded British film *Suffragette* opens in Grand Rapids. We will rent one of Celebration's small theaters, probably #7, but double-check at our table in the lobby.

Look for our banner and logo in the Celebration North lobby, and stop by our table for up-to-the-minute information. Doors will open at 6:30 pm, and the 105 minute film will begin at 6:45 pm.

Afterwards Grand Valley State University women's historian Gretchen Galbraith will answer questions and discuss when the film is rooted in fact and when it slides into fiction, as well as how and when the British and American women's movements were related. No longer will you confuse British "suffragettes" with American "suffragists!"

In a cameo performance Meryl Streep appears as early-twentieth-century British leader Emmeline Pankhurst, while Carey Mulligan and Helena Bonham Carter play foot soldiers in the movement. For a two-minute trailer, see: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=056F12Pq9RY>



Come early! Seating could be limited, so RSVP at EventBrite, [info@ggrwhc.org](mailto:info@ggrwhc.org), or for our members without internet access, call (616) 574-7307.

Celebration Cinema North is on the northwest corner of Knapp and the East Beltline at 2121 Celebration Drive NE.

## History Detectives

Saturday, January 23, 2016

### Grand Rapids Public Library Auditorium

History buffs can spend the entire day at History Detectives at the Grand Rapids Public Library. This is the sixth year for this very popular event. Come for just a few presentations or stay all day. You can even order lunch. See [grpl.org](http://grpl.org) for details for the whole day.

But be sure to be there for the program sponsored by the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council at 9:30.

Details of the 9:30 program:

### Kindergarten and "Radical" Women in 1890s Grand Rapids

Presenter: **Scott Bultman**,  
Red Hen LLC and Kaleidograph Design

Kindergarten has a history? In fact, the revolutionary nineteenth-century movement invented by charismatic German educator Friedrich Froebel was



Friedrich Froebel

transplanted to the U.S., where early on women from the Grand Rapids Ladies Literary Club invested in the radical, new methods devised to teach young children. Author and toy manufacturer Scott Bultman will share his vast collection of photographs and documents to report on the Grand Rapids

Kindergarten Training School founded in 1894 after local women lured Lucretia Willard Treat, arguably the best teacher trainer in the country, here from Chicago. While Clara Marian Wheeler, daughter of



Grand Rapids' first architect, devoted her life to the movement, Kindergarten became both a "calling" and a career opportunity for local women from all socio-economic levels. The movement was built by dedicated women reformers and philanthropists nationwide and became a foundation for settlement houses, and the YWCA, as well as temperance and suffrage initiatives. In the microcosm, the fascinating Grand Rapids story can illustrate the overall national history. All Kindergarten was Froebelian until establishment educators a century ago staged a coup d'etat creating generic "kindergarten," like "coke" and "kleenex," and set the future course of American education.

Former director of Froebel Foundation USA, Scott Bultman has promoted the Froebel Kindergarten method internationally since 1997. Currently, he is creating a documentary film on its place in the mutating story of the American school system.



## Community Builders: Early African American Women in Grand Rapids

February 11, 2016, 7:00pm

John F. Donnelly Conference Center at Aquinas College, 157 Woodward Lane SE

### Presenters:

Yvonne Sims, Grand Rapids Study Club

Jo Ellyn Clarey, Grand Rapids Study Club & the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council

In 1907 five local African American women's groups hosted the annual convention of the State Federation of Colored Women's Clubs. Delegates were welcomed by the Grand Rapids mayor and treated to gracious receptions and trolley tours. Who were these women hosts representing a minuscule percentage of the city's population? Only now are we pulling together their stories from a rich social context that fostered the emergence of diverse local women onto the public stage.



Pierian Club, pictured in 1950, grew out of the Study Club.  
*Courtesy Grand Raids Public Library Archives*

During the 1890s women's clubs proliferated so rapidly and organized women into such a social force that newspapers were compelled to create new sections featuring their plans and activities. What can be found in these early news accounts? That Jewish women, Polish Catholic women, all women, were gathering for self-education and charitable purposes--and sometimes to step up publicly to denounce racist articles, as did the Married Ladies Nineteenth Century Club in 1898.

The Grand Rapids Study Club and Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council will tell a

fascinating story that fills major gaps at the same time correcting errors in Grand Rapids history. This program is cosponsored by the the Women's History Council and the Grand Rapids Historical Society. Our Council has been teaming up with the Historical Society for many years, organizing one of their monthly programs in March or February. This season, note that the Historical Society is holding their monthly meetings at Aquinas College, rather than the Ford Museum because of renovations at the Ford.

## Women's History Sampler

Tuesday, March 1, 2016 7:00 p.m.

Grand Rapid Public Library, Main auditorium

A sampler of people and events in Grand Rapids women's history provided by three members of the local history staff at the Grand Rapids Public Library. Drew Damron, Heather Edwards, and Julie Tabberer, will feature the local furniture industry's Berkey & Gay girls during WWI, the earliest female newspaper cartoonist in the nation,



Minnie Hodges owned and managed the Valley City Desk Company. One example of women in the furniture industry.



Gertrude's "signature" appeared in the corner of her daily cartoons

Grand Rapids's Gertrude ("Gert") Van Houten, and more! The program will be supplemented by an exhibit on women in the furniture industry.

**Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council's**

CITY PLANS MEMORIAL TO CHILDREN'S FRIEND



Gertrude Van Houten drew the plans for the popular John Ball sculpture.

**Annual Reception**  
**Wednesday, March 30, 2016, 5:00**  
**Women's City Club 244 East Fulton**

The GGRWHC's annual reception will be held once again at the Women's City Club. Wrapping up Women's History Month, we will be celebrating the long elective history of Grand Rapids women, noting the women that were candidates for public office and those who served. Our brand new mayor **Rosalynn Bliss**, the first woman to lead our city, has accepted our invitation to attend.

Meet old and new friends—and for updating your membership dues, you'll get a free drink!



### *Council News*

**New Board Member:**

**Julie Tabberer** had worked part-time in the Grand Rapids History and Special Collections department of the Public Library for a few years while completing a library science degree. Then she was appointed the librarian for that department and decided to participate in some local historical or genealogical organization and she chose the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council. The Council is pleased to have a representative that works for the library. Julie has previously been on the board of the Creston Neighborhood Association and edited their newsletter.

**Women's Equality Day**

Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council celebrated Equality Day on August 26 by donning hats, long skirts, and "Votes for Women" sashes and setting up an information table outside the Grand Rapids Art Museum. For a few hours in the middle of the day we asked passersby if they were registered voters, and registered them if they were not.



*Women's Lifestyle Magazine* featured board member Susan Coombes a few days ahead and described Equality Day and the Council's plans for the Day.

It was in 1972 that the U.S. Congress passed a resolution that August 26 of each year be designated as "Women's Equality Day."

We chatted with many people about our organization and handed out literature about us and about the 19th Amendment. One mother explained to her daughter that, at one time, women weren't allowed to vote. The indignant ten-year-old replied, "Well, that's not fair." Indeed.

**Volunteer Opportunities**

The Oral History Committee is committed to putting descriptions of each of our oral histories on the website by the end of the calendar year so that more people will know these exist and can be used for historical or family research. Around 100 oral histories have been completed and transcribed, but some brief descriptions based on the transcript have yet to be created. Your task would be reading and summarizing a transcript following a form provided. It's interesting work! Contact board member Ruth Stevens, [stevenru@gvsu.edu](mailto:stevenru@gvsu.edu) 616-331-7173 and she will get you started.

Or, if you'd like to help us on the social media side, Twitter or Facebook, let us know. Our phone, (616) 574-7307 or email, [info@ggrwhc.org](mailto:info@ggrwhc.org).

## Members News

We celebrate the life and mourn the passing of former board member

**Maurilia Blakely Ortiz,**

known to us as **Molly Blakely,** on October 25.

In addition to raising six children and organizing and promoting the Hispanic community and culture in this city, she had time to serve on the the Women's History Council's board, beginning in 1995. She was one of the women featured in an exhibit of *Twelve Outstanding Women*, now on our website where you can read part of her life's story and accomplishments.



**JoAnn Thome,** a member who is also featured on our website as one of the *Twelve Outstanding*



*Women*, was included in a recently published book, *Michigan Apples: History and Tradition* by Sharon Keggereis. The author gives JoAnn and her cohorts, other apple farmer women, credit for getting a Michigan law passed that made sure the fruit growers had a fair shake.

Member **Cindy Laug** was one of the three finalists, receiving an honorable mention for the *Gordon Olson Award* presented by the Kutsche Office for Local History at Grand Valley State University at their spring round-table on March 26.

The Kutsche Office noted that Cindy is well known for studies of women in West Michigan, uncovering little-known stories of women whose accomplishments had been lost to history. With her careful and thorough research, she gave us the story of Mary Hefferan, a local activist who had earned a Ph.D. in bacteriology from the University of Chicago and made a significant impact on the changes in child welfare in Grand Rapids from 1910 until her death in 1948. Laug also uncovered Etta Smith Wilson, a journalist in Grand Rapids already in the 1890s, who

founded the statewide Michigan Women's Press Association. Laug has made presentations on the "women on the ridge," the fruit ridge that is northwest of Grand Rapids. A major contributor of material to the Grand Rapids Historical Commission's website at [www.historygrandrapids.org](http://www.historygrandrapids.org), her work on these women and many others can be found especially under the "Photo Essays."

## Baxter Award Winners

At the Grand Rapids Historical Society banquet in the spring they present the annual Albert Baxter Award to someone who has contributed to the preservation or interpretation of area history. Each year they list all past award winners since they began this tradition in 1980. Looking over the list of winners of the Albert Baxter Award over the last 30 years, eleven were women, and several of these had been or are members of the Women's History Council. With a very brief mention of only part of their work in Grand Rapids history, they include:

**Sister Marie Heyda,** 1981, wrote and published *The History of Catholic Central and West Catholic High Schools: A Diocesan Venture, a Study of 75 Years.*

**Barbara Roelofs** 1986, for her work in historic preservation and in the formation of Heritage Hill Historic District designation.

**Mary Ann Edmond,** 1988, for research in local African American history, Civil War soldiers of the "Michigan Colored Infantry," and the Underground Railroad in West Michigan.

**Mary Jane Dockeray** in 1990 for her work for the Public Museum, establishing Blandford Nature Center, preserving the woods, old buildings, and farm life.

**Evelyn Sawyer** in 1993, for her extensive documentation of Kent County Cemeteries, and many other genealogical projects

**Jane Hibbard Idema,** 1997, headed up the GGRWHC's Oral History Committee conducting many of the oral interviews herself, and authored *Seven Women Who Made a Difference* and *Letters Home From the War as written by Jane N Hibbard.*

**Jo Ellyn Clarey**, 1999, for research on many local women in the suffrage movement and others, and her leadership in the GGRWHC, particularly for her work on the 1999 celebration of the 100th anniversary of the National American Woman Suffrage Association meeting here in Grand Rapids at St. Cecilia.

**Marcia Butgereit**, 2004, along with her husband, Bruce, for initiating restoration of the Civil War soldiers monument downtown. Marcia created special re-enactments of Civil War weddings and has researched the local women in the Woman's Relief Corps.

**Diana Barrett**, 2008, for creating and expanding the Grand Rapids Historical Commission's website and her extensive research on Mayor George Welsh and Women's National Defense Cards.

**Rebecca Smith-Hoffman**, 2011 for her work on historic preservation of area buildings and neighborhoods.

**Loki Boersma**, 2014, along with her husband **Henry**, for their work uncovering the old poor farm and cemetery that was the northwest of Grand

Rapids, and creating many other genealogical sources.

### **Women Veterans in West Michigan**

The Board has been brainstorming for a few months on ways we can honor and highlight the women veterans that served during World War II. That probably will take the form of website exhibit. These women came to light when the Grand Rapids Press and M-live last year featured many World War II veterans including many women from the Grand Rapids area who were still living to record their story.



One example to pique your interest is Mildred Jane Baessler Doyle, 93, a Woman Airforce Service Pilot, a WASP. Women in this service were the first female pilots to fly U.S. military aircraft. Jane was a test pilot during WWII spending 1943 and 1944 at U.S. Air Bases Avenger Field, Sweetwater, Texas. and at Freeman Field, Seymour, Indiana.

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### ***Join and become a member!*** **Membership/ Sponsorship Form**

#### **Membership**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_

State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Individual (\$25) \_\_\_\_\_ Student (\$10) \_\_\_\_\_ Type of Membership: New \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_

#### **Sponsorship (Membership included)**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Are we permitted to recognize the sponsor's name on our website? Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

Platinum (\$500) \_\_\_\_\_ Gold (\$250) \_\_\_\_\_ Silver (\$100) \_\_\_\_\_ Bronze (\$50) \_\_\_\_\_

I want to become a volunteer: Yes \_\_\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

My Interest is in: Research \_\_\_\_\_ Education \_\_\_\_\_ Writing \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Please send check and form to GGRWHC, P.O.Box 68874, Grand Rapids MI, 49516-8874

Save a stamp! Join us online and pay through PayPal by going to our website at [www.ggrwhc.org](http://www.ggrwhc.org)

Greater Grand Rapids  
Women's History Council  
P. O. Box 8874  
Grand Rapids, MI 49516-68874



The WASP women were awarded the

Congressional Gold Medal in



The Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council was started in 1987 when founder Twink Frey was doing research for a paper on the role of women in the history of Grand Rapids. She found little or nothing, either at the local or state levels about the many women who had helped found and shape the city and its surrounding area. Knowing that women had played an enormous role in the development of the region, Frey began to contact others who had a similar interest in systematic research, documentation, and preservation of the lives and contributions of former Grand Rapids and West Michigan women.

In the ensuing 28 years many others joined Frey in this work. A great deal has been accomplished and many woman were discovered to have had important roles in Grand Rapids history.

Visit our website: [ggrwhc.org](http://ggrwhc.org)

*The Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council is dedicated to educating the community and celebrating the legacies of local women, preserving knowledge of their past and inspiring visions for their future.*



2009. Jane received her Congressional Gold Medal at the ceremony in the Capitol in Washington D.C. on March 10, 2010.