

Busy Fall for the Women's History Council

President's Corner By Mary Seeger

September marks the beginning of the academic year as well as the regular resumption of business for many organizations, and your Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council is no exception.

Elsewhere in this newsletter you'll find details and updates of our activities. We will miss former president Vernis Schad as she leaves the board, but she promises to stay involved in research and recognition efforts. The death of board member Norma Brink saddened us all.

We are beginning to plan for LEGACY 2006. If you would like to be on a committee, please let us know by calling the office at 616/234-3603 or emailing malfroid@triton.net.

The Michigan Women's Hall of Fame will have a new member in the historical category, namely Constance Mayfield Rourke. We invite you to join us at the induction dinner October 28.

Finally, we will be getting new quarters at Grand Rapids Community College. The new office is located at 259 Main Building. Our phone number, 616/234-3603, will stay the same.

Mark your calendar. The **2005 Women's History Month information** is due on December 1 if you want it printed in the Winter Newsletter. Please send it to Merry Malfroid at malfroid@triton.net.

Welcome, or welcome back, to the GGRWHC. As always, we appreciate your support of the projects we undertake to educate the community and celebrate the legacies of local women, preserve knowledge of their past, and inspire visions for their future.

Norma Brink Remembered By Barbara Robinson

Press headlines would read "Local Girl Makes Good" and they would be referring to Norma Brink who grew up on the west side of Grand Rapids in the Lithuanian community. Norma grew up singing as well as acting. She toyed with the idea of becoming a music major at college, but changed her mind because she couldn't play the piano well and felt her voice wasn't great. So she headed into elementary education because that was what was available.

Norma married Ted Brink in 1950. During the 1950s Norma and Ted adopted three children from Ireland, a girl and two boys. She did freelance work while the children were young, but returned to teaching when their youngest was in school.

As Norma began her teaching career at Lafayette School (renamed Vandenberg) she began to share her interest in drama. In 1951 Norma helped to found Community Circle Theatre in the ballroom of the old Manger-Rowe Hotel. As it grew in popularity it found a semi-permanent home at John Ball Park in the Pavilion. The dream to realize a more permanent home came to be realized at Aquinas College just this last year.

During her years in education Norma became principal of the old Ottawa High School which had become an elementary, junior high, and a Montessori School. She moved on to be in charge of art and music for the Grand Rapids Public School district. When Norma found herself squeezed tight budget-wise, she decided to retire after 34 years. She became adjunct faculty for Davenport in the field of communication, English, and math and continued her connections with the drama world and did many volunteer activities. When Norma lamented in her oral history interview in 1996 that there were fewer acting roles for older women, she remembered fondly Paul Osborne's "Mornings at Seven." It is fitting to note that "Mornings at Seven" presented at Circle Theatre's new Aquinas venue was her last play.

More information about Norma can be found at www.ggrwhc.org. Then click on her picture.

In this issue you will find information about:

- GGRWHC's New Board Members
- The Michigan Women's Hall of Fame Dinner where the GGRWHC nominee, Constance Mayfield Rourke will be inducted.
- The Great Lakes History Conference
- The Grand Rapids Historical Society's Programs for 2004-2005

Michigan Women's Hall of Fame Inducts Constance Mayfield Rourke By Jo Ellyn Clarey

Grand Rapids' own Constance Mayfield Rourke (1885-1941) will be inducted into the historical division of the Michigan Women's Hall of Fame on Thursday, October 28th, 2004. Thanks to Mary T. McLoughlin, who put her writing skills to work for GGRWHC. (Information about the dinner is on this page.)

Pioneer cultural historian Constance Mayfield Rourke (1885-1941) managed to lead an intellectual life generally closed to women and often closed to those outside New York before our era of enhanced communications. Forging one of the richest careers in the early search for an American "usable past," Rourke authored seven books and over one hundred articles from her modest Grand Rapids home between 1915 and 1941. Her idiosyncratic early thinking on the roots of American culture hastened the flowering of the American Studies movement in the mid-twentieth-century.

Rourke's best-known book, it has been quipped, is "always being rediscovered." *American Humor: A Study of the National Character* was first published in 1931, has never been out of print, and describes an American identity which still has explanatory power. Rourke identified the cultural matter filling our evolving literature (one can even find tall tales in Emerson) and noted the significant function of comedy as a nineteenth-century way of blunting criticism from European "high" culture.

In an extended history only partially published after her death, Rourke's original research helped her find a way toward a new set of cultural heroes and configurations--among them the Shaker religious sect practicing its own version of gender equality and women educators training young women to enter the "great world." During the 1920s and 1930s Constance Rourke herself had managed to overcome overwhelming odds and carve a place among the intellectuals of her day. Today we recognize her as a model--perhaps of a cultural type she would next have added to her list, the twentieth-century New Woman. But Rourke didn't live to write her up.

Today we choose from among her fertile thoughts ways to help us negotiate a complicated and consciously multicultural world. As we rediscover the study of regions and oral traditions, we remember that early in the twentieth century Rourke documented the rich cultural contributions of Native Americans, African Americans, Moravian peasants, Puritans, Shakers, farmers, merchants, miners, women, and cowboys. Rourke opened paths for us once and reopens them once again. She spent her life showing us how rich we are.

Jackie Taylor Honored

On August 24, former Board member, Dr. Jackie Taylor received the 2004 Woman of "E" Quality Award from the Women's Resource Center. Jackie has given extensive time and effort to the community. For more information about Jackie, see Current News on the website www.ggrwhc.org. Congratulations, Jackie!

Michigan Women's Hall of Fame Induction Dinner

The dinner and program will be held on Thursday, October 28th, 2004. Sponsored by the Michigan Women's Studies Association as its major fund-raiser, the celebratory dinner will be held at the Detroit Sheraton in Novi (21111 Haggerty Road). Tickets are \$100 per seat, with a cash bar and silent auction at 5 pm, followed by the dinner at 6 pm, program at 7 pm.

We hope for significant representation from West Michigan at this event and in its handsome program. Corporate table and program advertising prices are available. Program material must be sent before an October 4th publishing deadline. The MWSA can be reached at 517/484-1880, but locally Jo Ellyn Clarey will coordinate tables and transportation for Grand Rapidians. To receive information or to report your plans, please call her at 616/454-7457. She will be happy to coordinate funding from persons who can't attend with persons who can but don't have the money. Please feel free to donate any amount. Reservations must be made by October 21st. Hotel discounts are guaranteed through September 28th, but most people return to Grand Rapids that night.

GGRWHC Welcomes New Board Members

MargEd Kwapil was a WHC Board member for several years during the 1990s. She was formerly co-owner of Editorial Consultants, a small firm specializing in writing and editing services, until her retirement about 1996. Over the years she has been a volunteer with a variety of organizations including the Public Museum of Grand Rapids. For the last five years she has been a docent at the Meyer May House and is active with the West Michigan Quilters' Guild.

Darlene Lee is a freelance writer published in local and national publications. She is the owner of Darling Communications, a lifestyle coaching organization designed to help people from all walks of life reach their potential. She recently returned to Grand Rapids after living in New York City where she was the television talk show host of *For Women / About Women*. Ms. Lee is excited about being a part of this organization and plans to use her talents wherever needed.

Jennifer Morrison has her Bachelor of Arts in public history from Western Michigan University and her Master of Arts in public history from Bowling Green State University in Bowling Green, Ohio. She is in her seventh year at the Grand Rapids Public Library in their newly named Grand Rapids History and Special Collections Center. Jennifer has over twenty years experience working in historical organizations throughout Michigan. She and her husband, John, own AfterWord, Professional Historians, LLC, a service that helps people preserve their life stories in audio or print. Jennifer is the chairperson of the Great Lakes region of the Association of Personal Historians.

**Grand Rapids Historical Society
Programs 2004-2005**

By Ruth Van Stee

All programs are held at the Gerald R. Ford Museum at 7:30 pm and are free and open to the public.

October 14, 2004

Calder Stabile and Its Place in Grand Rapids: Celebrating the 35th Anniversary of La Grande Vitesse. Jennifer Metz, Nancy Mulnix, and Joe Becherer will look at the Calder from three different angles – artistic, architectural, historical.

November 11, 2004

Civil War Battle of Franklin, Tennessee. In cooperation with the Civil War Round Table of Grand Rapids and the Lakeshore, Thomas Cartwright, curator of the Cater House Museum in Franklin, Tennessee, will relate the Battle of Franklin, which involved many soldiers from Michigan.

February 10, 2005

African Americans in Grand Rapids. Randal Jelks will continue his history of the African American Community in Grand Rapids, beginning this time after the Civil War.

March 10, 2005

Women's History Month
'We Can Do It': Gathering the Histories of Women WW2 Veterans. During fall semester 2004, Jennifer Holberg's writing course at Calvin will videotape local women WW2 veterans to chronicle their experiences as part of the Library of Congress's Veterans History Project. Holberg discusses the joys and challenges of the project, shares stories of the veterans who participated, and examines the need for oral histories.

April 14, 2005

The American Civil Liberties Union in Grand Rapids History. Gil Davis, Emeritus Professor of English at Grand Valley State, has been an active civil libertarian for 40 years. He will report on the activities and the people of the ACLU in Grand Rapids.

May 12, 2005

Banquet and Annual Meeting
Guest Speaker: Tom Logan is the author of forthcoming book on the history of Heritage Hill Historic Neighborhood.

Membership Campaign

Have you paid your membership dues for this year? The fiscal year is now July 1-June 30. By paying now, they will not be due again until July 1, 2005. If your address label has an asterisk, your membership is not current.

Membership rates:	
Sponsor	\$100.00
Contributor	\$ 50.00
Basic	\$ 25.00
Student	\$ 10.00

Vernis Schad Retires as a Board Member

Vernis Schad has been a member of the Women's History Council since 1990 and served as the Council's President. She is committed to education and served on the Grand Rapids Public Schools Board for 12 years. Vernis has belonged to other organizations including the American Association of University Women, the Women's Resource Center, the Grand Rapids Historical Society, and World Affairs Council of West Michigan. She is currently a member of the Progressive Women's Alliance of West Michigan, a new organization to get women interested in politics. Vernis will continue to lend her expertise to the Women's History Council as needed. For that the board is grateful.

**History in the Future
(Calendar of Events)**

SEPTEMBER 2004

14 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum

OCTOBER 2004

12 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum
28 Women's Hall of Fame Dinner
29-30 Great Lakes History Conference

NOVEMBER 2004

9 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum

DECEMBER 2004

14 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting and Holiday Party, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum

JANUARY 2005

11 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum

FEBRUARY 2005

8 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum

MARCH 2005

8 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum
10 7 pm Women's History Month Presentation

APRIL 2005

12 4 pm GGRWHC Board Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum

MAY 2005

10 4 pm GGRWHC Annual Meeting, The Michigan Room Gerald R. Ford Museum

**Greater Grand Rapids
Women's History Council
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Grand Rapids, MI 49503**

Nonprofit Organization
U. S. Postage
PAID
Grand Rapids, MI
PERMIT No. 372

Phone Number

616/234-3603

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Vice President: Fran Pepper
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Nominations Fran Pepper
Nelle Frisch
Publicity Barbara McGregor
Packer
Research and Recognition
MargEd Kwapil

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Judith Claytor, Nelle Frisch, Sarah
Heath, Kyle Irwin, MargEd Kwapil,
Darlene Lee, Jennifer Morrison,
Debra Muller, Barbara McGregor
Packer, Barbara Robinson

Ex-officio Member

Twink Frey

Administrative Assistant

Merry Malfroid

**Recommendations for Women's Hall of Fame
Inductees are Needed
By Jo Ellyn Clarey**

Overseeing Michigan Women's Hall of Fame nominations is only one function of GGRWHC's Research and Recognition Committee; but West Michigan women are badly under-represented in both the historical and contemporary divisions of the Hall of Fame, so we need to concentrate effort on seeing that we receive our share of state-wide and national acclaim.

See <http://hall.michiganwomenshalloffame.org/> for complete information. Each year several Michigan women and one man are honored. In recent years Joan Wolfe was inducted into the contemporary division (1996), Emily Burton Ketcham into the historical division (1999), and Gordon Olson received the Philip A. Hart Award (1996).

Please contact MargEd Kwapil at 616/949-8649 or email her at recognition@ggrwhc.org to suggest nominees or report that you would be willing to work on nominations. In 2004 Mary McLoughlin, of McLoughlin Communications & Public Relations, did an especially good job editing and resubmitting two nominations already in the pipeline: Constance Rourke will be inducted. There are many ways to help in this process.

Woman Pins®

Your purchase of this pin benefits the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council, an organization dedicated to celebrating the legacies of local women, preserving knowledge of their past, and inspiring visions for their future. Our projects include a bibliography of materials on local women, an extensive oral history project, LEGACY (a triennial celebration of Women's History Month) and support of other local history projects.

All pins are unique as no two pins are alike. The women depicted on the pins are multi-cultural and represent a variety of activities. These very colorful pins are only \$14.00. To see the pins, contact Fran Pepper at 616/234-3908. They make great gifts!



2004 Great Lakes History Conference Friday and Saturday, October 29-30, 2004

The Twenty-Ninth Annual Great Lakes History Conference, sponsored by the History Department of Grand Valley State University and co-sponsored by the Grand Rapids Historical Commission, Grand Rapids Historical Society, and Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council, will be held Friday and Saturday, October 29 and 30, 2004, at GVSU's Eberhard Center in downtown Grand Rapids. The conference features thirty-eight panels on historical topics, with over one hundred and twenty presenters.

Conference Theme: *Challenging Historical Borders: Exploring Intersections between Nations, Regions, and Disciplines*

Opening Lecture: Friday, October 29, 8:00 pm Ric Burns, Documentary Filmmaker

Keynote Address: Saturday, October 30, 12:30 pm Professor Patricia Limerick, University of Colorado

Grand Rapids History Panels

On **Saturday, October 30th, 2004**, at GVSU's Eberhard Center, GGRWHC will sponsor two panels on Grand Rapids women's history in the afternoon and co-sponsor another panel in the morning.

8:30 am, "When Grand Rapids Was the West" will feature Father Dennis Morrow discussing the early Catholic history of West Michigan, Randal Jelks on Afro-Michiganders before the Civil War, and Gordon Olson on pathfinder John Ball.

1:45 pm, Christine Byron will chair a panel titled "Crediting Women for the Built Environment: The Case of Grand Rapids." Rebecca Smith-Hoffman will speak on the variety of women's contributions to Grand Rapids architecture; Marcella Beck, on the legacy of 1920s prolific home designer Fannie Boylon; and Rebecca Mayne, on the convergence of urban renewal, historic preservation, and public art in Grand Rapids, especially Nancy Mulnix and Vandenberg Plaza.

3:30 pm, "The Private Lives and Public Faces of Nineteenth-Century Grand Rapids Women" will be chaired by Vernis Schad, with papers by Diana Barrett ("Follow the Money: The Story Behind the Brown Home for Aged Women") and Jo Ellyn Clarey ("The Colorful But Hidden Past of Elizabeth Eaglesfield, Grand Rapids' First Female Attorney [and Shipping Captain])."

Michigan and Great Lakes Panels

Friday

11:00 am – Gender and Higher Education in Michigan
1:30 pm – Rivers through Time: Rethinking Rivers in the Midwest
3:00 pm – Anti-Radicalism in Detroit, 1897-1930

Saturday

10:15 am – The Michigan Natural Rivers Act and Michigan Environmental Activism
10:15 am – If the Bomb Had Not Been Dropped: The Survivors' Story (*Michigan Military Preservation Society Panel*)

10:15 am – The Lake Superior Basin as Northern Borderland
10:15 am – Native Americans and the Contest for the Great Lakes Region
1:45 pm – The Changing Role of the Reserves (*Michigan Military Preservation Society Panel*)
1:45 pm – Cultural Interaction and Assimilation in Michigan and Upper Canada
1:45 pm – Negotiating Tainted Terrains: Environmental Regulation and Historical Change in the Great Lakes Region
3:30 pm – Agriculture and the Agrarian Myth in Late Nineteenth-Century and Early Twentieth-Century Michigan

Other panel topics include: Changing Borders in the Civil War; German-American Community Formation; African-Americans and Resistance to Slavery; The "No Child Left Behind" Act: History and Implications; Gender, Race, and the Reconstruction South; The Second Great Awakening and the Course of American Protestantism; War and Society in Early America, and more.

For the full program, see <http://www.gvsu.edu/history>

Registration fees (includes breakfast, lunch and reception on Saturday)

GVSU Students, Faculty and Staff	no charge
Members of the Grand Rapids Historical Society, Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council and the Grand Rapids Historical Commission	\$15.00
General Public	\$20.00

For more information contact Ms. Shelby Hughes, Department of History, Grand Valley State University, One Campus Drive, Allendale, MI, 49401, 616/331-3298. The website for the conference is <http://www.gvsu.edu/history>

Please register me for the 2004 Great Lakes History Conference.

Please Print

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Phone (work) _____ (home) _____

Email address _____

I am a GVSU faculty or staff member or student _____ No charge

I am a member of the Grand Rapids Historical Society _____ Fee \$15.00

I am a member of the Greater Grand Rapids Women's History Council _____ Fee \$15.00

I am a member of the Grand Rapids Historical Commission _____ Fee \$15.00

I am a member of the community _____ Fee \$20.00

Total Enclosed _____

Please send me information on the Grand Rapids Historical Society _____

Please send me information on the Greater Grand Rapids Women's
History Council _____

Please send me information on the Grand Rapids Historical Commission _____

Return the registration form to: Ms. Shelby Hughes, Department of History, Grand Valley State University,
One Campus Drive, Allendale, MI, 49401