

Grand River Times

The Newsletter of the Grand Rapids Historical Society

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Grand Rapids Historical Society

Next program: After the March program, the Grand Rapids Historical Society's next program will be on Thursday, April 30, 2020, (**NOTE: different week than usual**) at **Temple Emanuel at 1715 E. Fulton**. Peg Finkelstein and Megan Yost will be presenting: *Jewish Soldiers in Black and Gray*

A Journey from Plaster to Community: The Story of the GUB (Galewood-Urbandale Burlingame)

PRESENTED BY:

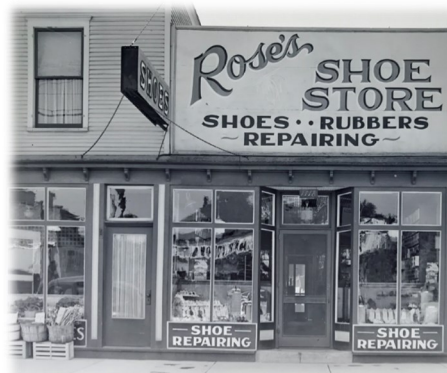
David Britten

Thursday, March 12, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

It was 1841, nearly eight years following the opening of Town 6 North 12 West to government land sales, that West Michigan's first plaster quarry opened for business. With a mill located on what would become the Grandville Road at the junction of Plaster Creek, it set in motion the long but steady growth of north Wyoming.

Cattle, dairy, garden farming, and the plaster industry were the primary occupations during the 1800s, but with the coming of the electric interurban trains (1901 and 1915), Leonard Refrigerator (1908), and a corridor of furniture and other factories along Godfrey and Grandville Avenues, the "GUB" (Galewood, Urbandale, and Burlingame) exploded, attracting primarily large Dutch and Catholic families which led to the growth of churches, public and private

schools, and two viable commercial districts. Seeing this growth potential, land owners and developers began filing the first neighborhood plats in 1889 with more than ninety percent of the GUB platted by the end of the 1920s. The period of the largest population, commercial and industrial growth would last from that decade through the next thirty or more years.



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GRAND RAPIDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY



The Grand River Times is the newsletter of the Grand Rapids Historical Society, published six times annually. Established in 1894, the Grand Rapids Historical Society is dedicated to exploring the history of West Michigan; to discover its romance and tragedy, its heroes and scoundrels, its leaders and its ordinary citizens. The Society collects and preserves our heritage, passing it on to new generations through books, lectures, and education projects.

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Jessica Riley, editor

Grand Rapids Historical Society
c/o Grand Rapids Public Library
111 Library St. NE
Grand Rapids, MI 49503
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Dear GRHS Members,

This column is a continuation from last month. The Grand Rapids Public Library has put all the History Detectives talks from January 2020 on YouTube. I found that the easiest way for me to access them was to type Grand Rapids Public Library YouTube in my search engine. All six presentations came right up. I am sure there is a shortcut, but after a number of options tried, this worked the best and the

most consistently.

The topics are “All Aboard for Kalamazoo” by Marty Arnold; “House History: Uncovering Stories of Early African Americans in West Michigan” by Don Bryant; “CENTENNIAL. 2020! Grand Rapids, Suffrage City” by Julia Bouwkamp and Jo Ellen Clarey; “Seymour Beiboer Documents Building Grand Rapids Freeways” by Gina Bivins; “An Island in the Furniture City: The Black Hills Neighborhood and Grand Rapids Industry” by Matthew Daley; and “Roots and Results: The Furniture Strike of 1911” by Tim Gleisner. Each presentation is approximately 45 minutes long. Thank you to Grand Rapids Community College for recording the programs and to the Grand Rapids Public Library for hosting them on their YouTube channel. The programs have been up on Facebook too. From there I received a message from an out of town friend who watched the presentation on the freeway. His father worked one of the cranes and it brought back memories of when my friend was young and his father would bring him downtown and show what his job was all about. I first spoke about Seymour Beiboer’s photographs of the freeway construction in October of 2018. I have added and subtracted pictures with every presentation, but a question common among all the audiences is, do I know how many structures were torn down for the building of the freeway.

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About the Grand Rapids Historical Society. The Grand Rapids Historical Society sponsors eight programs each year, beginning in September and running through May, including lectures, audio/video presentations, demonstrations, collections, or special tours.

Membership. Membership is open to all interested persons with annual dues of \$30 per family, \$20 for seniors and students, or \$400 for a lifetime membership. The membership year runs from May to the following May. Members of the Grand Rapids Historical Society receive eight newsletters each year. Members also receive a 20% discount on books published by the society as well as books published by the Grand Rapids Historical Commission.

Change of Address. If you will be permanently or temporarily moving to a new address, please notify GRHS before your change occurs. Let us know your new address and the date you plan to leave and plan to return. Email to grhs.local@gmail.com, or mail to Grand Rapids Historical Society, c/o Grand Rapids Public Library, 111 Library Street NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503

Metal Detecting Turns Up Civil War ID Tag

by: Jessica Riley (Newsletter Editor)

In my capacity as Newsletter Editor and Secretary for the Grand Rapids Historical Society, one of my tasks is to monitor and answer our email. GRHS receives many interesting emails from topics across a wide spectrum. A few weeks ago, another great email came our way from John Owens from Falling Waters, West Virginia. He contacted us about a Civil War ID tag. He had recently gone metal detecting and found the Civil War ID tag of a gentleman that is buried in a cemetery in Grand Rapids. The name of the soldier on the tag is Serg E.C. Warner, Company C, 5th regiment Vermont Volunteers, Milton, Vermont.



In John's own words: "I think the preservation of history from further deterioration is a fascinating hobby. I live in an area that is rich in history. I started finding artifacts in the area with a metal detector in 1997. I live 15 minutes from the battle of Antietam, 45 minutes from Gettysburg and troops we're deployed and camped all

through the area, before and after battles. What makes this find so interesting is that I have hunted this field for many years and found some civil war dropped bullets here and there. When I found this, I first thought it was a coin, then as I wiped some dirt off, I saw an eagle, and the hole punched through the top. I did not see the soldier's name on it until I brought it home later that day. I like posting finds on Facebook and YouTube for people to see. The monetary value of an artifact does not motivate me, rather the historical value does. Every find tells a story. This find has the best story of any artifact I have found, as it puts this soldier in a conflict that shaped our country in this exact spot, and it would thrill me to present it, to a direct descendant."



ABOUT Edward C. Warner, CO C, 5th Vermont Infantry, CO F, 5th Vermont Infantry

John also included a link in his email to a website called *Faded Footsteps* where the lives of veterans are documented to remember their service and to honor them. John found information about Edward Warner at this site. We learned that he was born in Vermont, his father was Thomas Warner and his mother was unknown. In the 1870 Federal Census, he is 31 years old and his birthplace is listed as Vermont. His wife was named Mary Warner and they had the following children: Nettie, Cora, and Mark. Edward was from Milton, Vermont. He enlisted on 8/19/1861 as a Sergeant. On 9/16/1861 he mustered into "C" Co. VT 5th Infantry. He re-enlisted on 12/15/1863. He was mustered out in June of 1865 at Munson's Hill, VA.

(According to John): "The 5th reg was in the area of Funkstown, Md a few days after Gettysburg. The Confederates retreated through this area, and they had a battle with Union troops called the Battle of Funkstown. This ID tag was found on the outskirts of the battle in a cut down cornfield. I believe this was dropped by Edward C. Warner sometime between July 10th and July 13th, 1863, most likely in some heavy rains. This is what held the Confederate troops from crossing the Potomac River at Williamsport, was the flooded Potomac. They entrenched for several days in different areas before crossing, as the river went down. Several small battles happened before they crossed. Funkstown was one of them."

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The GUB, which today is defined primarily within the boundaries of the Godfrey-Lee Public School system lying along Burton Street, Godfrey Avenue, Chicago Drive and Burlingame Avenue, was Wyoming’s “first downtown” especially when you exclude the Village of Grandville that was charting its own political course. Besides containing Grand Rapids’ main highway to Grandville, Hudsonville, Zeeland, Holland and eventually Chicago, it boasted the largest refrigerator manufacturing plant in the world, the Pere Marquette Railroad’s Wyoming Yard, and a large number of substantial industries in or nearby this suburban community. Developers and realtors advertised the attractiveness of living in the suburbs while having easy access by walking or riding the interurban to work.



The electric interurban trains began in 1901 with the Grand Rapids, Holland & Chicago line coming down Grandville Avenue, crossing Plaster Creek, and travelling along a line that today marks the Lee Street boulevard. This first line made it easy and inexpensive for those living in the GUB to travel into the city to work, shop or sell their wares. It naturally attracted more working families. Fifteen years later, the Kalamazoo line began with both railroads meeting at a new depot where today’s Chicago Drive and Lee Street meet. While the trains would last only another 10-12 years, they served as a catalyst for the growth the Galewood-Urbandale-Burlingame community.

It wasn’t long before commercial growth took off. Beginning with Harry Groendyk’s grocery near the corner of Godfrey and Burton, a number of neighborhood grocery and meat stores, dry goods stores, furniture stores, and eventually automobile dealers, filling stations and repair shops popped up. Others included bakeries, dairies, a movie theater, hardware stores, shoe stores, dry cleaning establishments, a bank, jewelry, barber shops and several drug stores. Outside of the City of Grand Rapids, the first bowling alley opened in the 1920s and the first tavern at Tubbs Corner dates back to the 1890s. Besides Tubbs and Groendyk, other names of the pioneer business leaders included Mulvihill, Neuman, Huizen, Pfeffer, Greenwald, Burkhead, Rose, Kimble, Dykstra, Waalkes, Nagel, DeWitt, Clock, Steenstra, Schmitt, Koeze and many others.



Tensions arose between the GUB and its neighboring bigger brother Grand Rapids, beginning with the first successful annexations of Wyoming Township territory in 1891 and 1916, flaring up periodically through 1961 with failed attempts to grab even more. As a result, some citizen groups in the GUB made a couple of attempts to split off from Wyoming Township organized as a fourth class city in its own right. Battles over water, sewer, and fire protection added to the smoldering conflict. The GUB served as the first “seat of government” for the township throughout the 1930s and 40s. Often

mentioned as “an urban-suburban neighborhood with a small-town attitude,” the history of Galewood-Urbandale-Burlingame is one that historically is rich in pride, loyalty, and changing culture. It’s an interesting story of how communities on the urban fringe get started, grow up, suffer setbacks, and attempt to rebuild themselves over time.

About the presenter: David Britten is a retired U.S. Army officer with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel of Infantry. Upon his retirement, he was appointed principal of Wayland’s Steeby and Pine Street Elementary Schools. In 2002, he left Wayland and took on the role of principal at Lee Middle & High School, in the community he grew up in during the 1960s. He later was appointed superintendent of Godfrey-Lee Public Schools, retiring in 2017 following nine years in that position. An avid local history researcher, he published the book *Courage without Fear: The Story of the Grand Rapids Guard* in 2004, a 150-year history of the area’s national guard in war and peace. He is currently working on a second publication centered on the topic he’ll explain at the presentation.

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I decided to make a count using a 1955 City Directory that I own. This is as close as I can get counting from the Grand River west to Valley Avenue, from Fourth Street south to Bridge Street. Obviously this is only a fraction of the whole - one neighborhood: 347 houses (some multi family), 10 apartment buildings with 3 to 10 units, 1 firehouse, 3 churches, 1 funeral home, and 22 businesses. It is always my hope that local history programming educates, connects people to their past, or makes them curious. History Detectives does it all.

I am familiar with the area that our March speaker David Britten will talk about, but I do not know the neighborhood or the history. It was a drive through for me. My husband worked at Diesel Equipment Division of General Motors at Burton and Burlingame for thirty-one years. I look forward to learning about GUB, an acronym I was unfamiliar with. Please note that our April and May programs are both off site and at different times than our usual second Thursday of the month.

Society members will be receiving a publication in late spring through the Kutsche Office of Local History at GVSU. It is the culmination of a collaborative project that this Society has been part of for over a year. Local history organizations from Portland to Grand Haven, under the guidance of the Kutsche Office, have provided content for Connections Along The Grand River.

Genia Bivins

SAVE THE DATE

Our Annual Meeting & Banquet will be on Wednesday, May 13 at the Bluff Banquet and Conference Center

Cynthia Bailey will be presenting:
*St. Andrew's Cemetery,
 Nice Quiet Neighbors*

There is a lot of Grand Rapids History buried in St. Andrews Cemetery. In this presentation Cynthia will "dig up" some interesting information about the Cemetery and some of the "nice quiet neighbors" in the cemetery that sits right in the middle of a neighborhood.

*MORE DETAILS IN THE
 APRIL NEWSLETTER*

NEW MEMBERS

- George Bayard
- Linda Damstra
- Tim Karsen
- Tyler Rowe
- Cathy Winick
- Angela Yondo

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Also noteworthy, he was promoted to 1st Sergeant on 9/1/1864 and then to 1st Lieutenant on 11/10/1864

I did a little further research on Ancestry.com and found out some more about Warner. I saw a copy of his death certificate and his mother's name is listed as Anna O'Hara of Ireland and his father is listed as being from Vermont. Earlier records stated his mother as unknown. It is interesting that in a person's life their vital records can contain conflicting information. In 1898, it looks like he is in a Home for Disabled Soldiers in Milwaukee, WI. According to a record I read regarding his military history and his time in the home in Milwaukee, it stated that he had been living in Big Rapids in 1892 and was a widower. The next bit of information that we have about him is his death date. He died shortly before his 90th birthday in August of 1927 in a Michigan Soldiers Home Hospital in Grand Rapids, Michigan. He is buried in the Grand Rapids Veterans Home Cemetery.

I don't think that he had family in Grand Rapids but I can't state this for sure. As John mentioned previously, it would be great to be able to get this ID tag to a descendant. Please email the Grand Rapids Historical Society at grhs.local@gmail.com if any of our readers know anything about this Civil War soldier who died in our city.



HAPPENING IN HISTORY: MARCH 2020

Western Michigan Genealogical Society Mini-Class

Saturday, March 7, 2020, 12:00 p.m.
Main Library—Lower Level Adult Computer Lab
111 Library St. NE

Topic: One Note

Presenter: Michele Hoogewind

Finding the right tool to help organize your research is a struggle. Michele will show features of Microsoft OneNote. It may be just what you are looking for to clear the clutter and find your desk once again.

Western Michigan Genealogical Society

Saturday, March 7, 2020, 1:30 p.m.
Main Library—Ryerson Auditorium
111 Library St. NE

Topic: Native American Genealogy—Hidden Files Tell Amazing Stories!

Presenter: Chris Czopek (“Lansing’s History Detective”)

Chris Czopek will reveal a recently discovered new source of information on Native American families in Michigan – Civil War pension files.

In time of war, Native American men have always volunteered to fight for their land. When a soldier fell on the field of a battle, his widow could apply for a pension. The surviving soldiers still alive in the 1890s could receive a pension. There was one catch – documents. The government insisted on marriage records from the widows, birth records from the mothers, and for the old soldiers receiving a pension, they needed a list of the wife and children and their birthdates. Those rare pension documents still exist in archives in Washington D.C.

Chris Czopek will bring a list of over 100 available pension files. And he will talk about what kind of documents they contain. Expect to hear some interesting stories about the Chippewa, Ottawa, and Potawatomie families of Michigan.



West Michigan Postcard Club

Monday, March 9, 2020, 7:00 p.m.
Faith United Methodist Church
2600 7th St. NW

Topic: A Trip on the Grand Rapids and Indiana

Presenters: Mark Worrall

Take a trip with Mark on the GR&I’s Northern Arrow north, from Grand Rapids to Michigan’s northern resorts. He’ll share sites and views along the tracks on the way to Petoskey. From Petoskey, Mark will be your guide for the suburban trains leading to various summer resort cities and locations for a restful vacation or perhaps even, a relaxing day of fishing or hunting.

Mark is a geologist for the State of Michigan. When he’s not working on geologic and environmental problems, he researches Michigan’s railroad, mining, and industrial history. His family consists of his wife Tina and daughters, Ellison & Abigail and their crazy dog, Pumpkin.

Grand Rapids Civil War Round Table

Wednesday, March 18, 2020, 7:30 p.m.
Doors open at 6:30 p.m.

NOTE NEW LOCATION:

The Chapel, Puritan Reformed Theological Seminary
2965 Leonard Street NE
Grand Rapids, Michigan

John Braden will be speaking about: *The Treatment of Confederate Colored Troops*

Greater Grand Rapids Women’s History Council

Wednesday, March 25, 2020, 5:00 p.m.—7:00 p.m.
Annual Meeting and Reception
Aquinas College—Donnelly Center
1700 Fulton St. E

Wine & hors d’oeuvres with friends, followed by a Suffrage Sampler program!

GRAND RAPIDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

JOIN THE GRAND RAPIDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY OR GIVE A MEMBERSHIP AS A GIFT

The Grand Rapids Historical Society sponsors eight lectures each year.

Members of the society enjoy these benefits:

- ◆ The Grand River Times is the newsletter of the Grand Rapids Historical Society. Published and mailed to members eight times a year, it includes current items of historical interest, details of upcoming lectures, historically relevant activities, and short articles.
- ◆ 20% Discount on all books and other items published by the society.

Please enroll me as a member of the Grand Rapids Historical Society: ___ New ___ Renewal ___ Gift

___ Lifetime: \$400.00 one-time fee

___ Individual/Family Membership \$30.00 per year

___ Senior Citizen or Student \$20.00 per year

Name:

Address:

City/State/Zip:

Email:

Please make check payable to the Grand Rapids Historical Society and mail it with this form to:

Grand Rapids Historical Society, c/o Grand Rapids Public Library

111 Library Street NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49503



GRAND RAPIDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY PHOTO SLEUTH

Our March Photo Sleuth selection comes from the Robinson Photo Studio Collection's negatives. Four children are seated on a couch. In the description of this photo, the date is listed as May 8, 1950 and Aquinas College is referenced. If anyone in this picture looks familiar, please email the Grand Rapids Historical Society at grhs.local@gmail.com



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GRAND RAPIDS HISTORICAL SOCIETY

**A Journey from Plaster to Community:
 The Story of the GUB
 (Galewood-Urbandale Burlingame)**

**PRESENTED BY:
 David Britten**

Thursday, March 12, 2020, 7:00 p.m.

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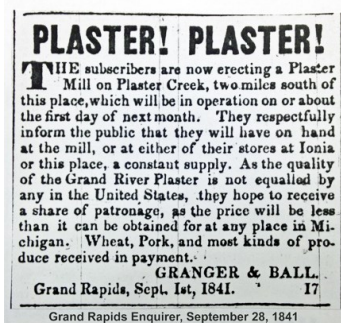
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For more information on Historical Society programs, please visit www.grhistory.org