

# Grand Island Historical Society

PO Box 135, Grand Island, NY 14072

[Isledegrande.com/historicalsociety/historicalsociety2018.php](http://Isledegrande.com/historicalsociety/historicalsociety2018.php)

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## Spring 2018 Newsletter

### 2017-18 GRAND ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY OFFICERS

President – **Curt Nestark 864-8697**

Vice President – Programs – **Adele Upton 773-5847**

Recording Secretary - **Robin Shipman 912-6590**

Corresponding Secretary – **Mary Cooke 255-5838**

Treasurer – **Arlene Ehde 773-3881**

**A MESSAGE from PRESIDENT CURT NESTARK**

As president of the Historical Society for over ten years, I am still awed by our Christmas events. River Lea decorated, the luncheons, members holiday party, Sunday Christmas Open House tours with the harpist, and the fashion shows where the society showcases some of the clothing from the collection. Hundreds of volunteer hours are needed to decorate River Lea, serve guests, greet guests, serve as a docent, take reservations, do advertising, clean, prep work, etc, etc..... many more chores necessary to make Christmas at River Lea possible. Volunteers, Volunteering. Thank you to ALL who make this possible!!

The board of trustees has planned our spring/summer events, interesting programs, a road trip to the Van Horn Mansion in Burt, NY, the Community Education Program at the high school, the fourth-grade tour in May, Grover Cleveland's 181<sup>st</sup> birthday celebration in March, and much more.

Please find some time to volunteer to help keep our museum, River Lea in Beaver Island State Park, always ready for new and old guests to visit.

Thank You,  
Curtis Nestark, President

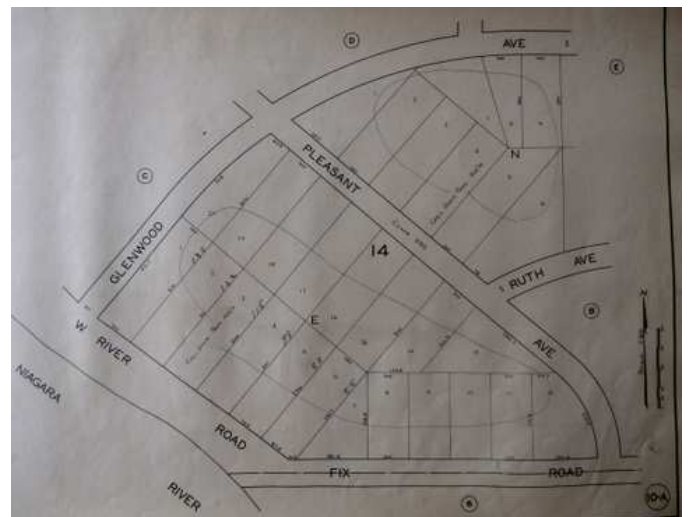


## **GRAND ISLAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

After such an enthusiastic response to the first history offering by the GI Historical Society in over 20 years in the spring 2017 session of Grand Island Community Education, the Education Committee mapped out a 5-year plan and are busy preparing “Explore GI History – Part II” for five Wednesday evenings in March and April.

If your blue *Community Education* insert from The Bridge is long gone, and you’d still like to sign up, we have great news! Our class begins on March 21 and runs through April 25 (no class on April 4) so you still have time to register. Registration can be done in three different ways and is very easy: online at [www.grandislandschools.org](http://www.grandislandschools.org) - click on Departments and Services, click on Community Education and follow the instructions for online registration; **OR** pick up a blue flyer at River Lea at the March program or the March Open House, fill out the form and mail your registration; **OR** visit the GI High School, 1100 Ransom Road, M-F, 8 am – 3:30 pm to register in person.

This year’s session will highlight the growth and development of the Island using maps, artifacts and other resources from the Society’s collection. The first four classes will be held at GI High School and the final class on April 25 will happen at River Lea and allow time to browse in the museum following a short, guided tour. Everyone is welcome – you do NOT have to have been in last year’s class to enroll for 2018!



Above, two panels from the newly accessioned book “Assessors Maps, Town of Grand Island, Erie County, NY” George C. Diehl, Inc. Civil Engineer, Copyright 1929. Note on the right panel that Glenwood, Pleasant and Ruth Avenues never developed! This resource, along with many other maps from the Society’s collection, will be used for the Community Education Class that begins on March 21, 2018.

**Grand Island Historical Society**  
**Programs, Events, and Open Houses**  
**March 2018-July 2018**

Join us for our monthly meetings and our interesting lineup of programs and speakers. Programs are held at River Lea historic farmhouse in Beaver Island State Park unless otherwise noted. All programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments are served. Bring a friend!

**Thursday, March 1, 2018**--7:00 pm general meeting and program. Our guest speaker will be our own member, Carol Rogers, with a power point presentation, "***The 80th Anniversary of the Honeymoon Bridge Collapse***".

**Sunday, March 18, 2018**--**OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA**--2:00-4:00 pm. Help us celebrate the 181st birthday of Grover Cleveland. The Association for a Buffalo Presidential Center will co-sponsor this event. There will also be ephemera (printed material such as programs, posters, booklets, postcards, maps, etc.) for sale from the files of River Lea library.

**Thursday, April 5, 2018**--7:00 pm general meeting and program. Our guest speaker will be John Montague with a power point program entitled "***Buffalo Steam Yachts from the Gilded Age***".

**Sunday, April 15, 2018** --**OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA**--2:00-4:00 pm. There will be a sale of ephemera from the files of River Lea library.

**Thursday, May 3, 2018**--7:00 pm general meeting and program. Author Roseanne Higgins will present a program "***The Whisper of Bones: The Erie County Poorhouse Cemetery Project***". Rosanne's historical fiction books, *Orphans and Inmates, A Whisper of Bones, The Seer and the Scholar, A Lifetime Again and The Girl on the Shore* will be available to purchase.

**Saturday, May 5, 2018**--**LOVE YOUR PARKS DAY!! OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA**, 2:00-4:00 pm.

**Friday, May 18, 2018**-- Field trip to the historic ***Van Horn Mansion*** in Burt, New York. We will have a private tour of the mansion at 10:00 am followed by lunch at Gordie Harper's Restaurant. Tour-\$5 per person. Reservations necessary. Call Adele Upton at 773-5847, AFTER April 15.

**Thursday, June 7, 2018- 6:30 pm**--Members only-Installation of Officers and catered dinner at River Lea. Please call Carolyn Doebert at 773-2643 for dinner reservations by May 29, 2018. Our guest presenter will be Frank Clement with a display and program, "***The History of Bricks***".

**Saturday, July 28, 2018**--Paddles Up at Beaver Island State Park

## **“TRIVIA QUEST GRAND ISLAND” needs YOUR QUESTIONS!**

The Historical Society is working with Island Business Owner Shannon Zaccaria (owner of Popular Graphics and Everything Grand Island) on this exciting and informative project. **650 questions are needed** for the game! **THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEEDS YOUR HELP!** Categories include history, sports, politics, neighborhood trivia, businesses – which ones were here when you arrived and where were they located? Housing and commercial development, religious congregations, military history, civic group history, school history - both public and private, roads, the river, antics that occurred over the years that others would enjoy learning about, youth organizations, boating,---anything Grand Island! We are trying to create a fun and exciting trivia board game for all ages, with the idea that “You live here, you should know this!” **Questions should be multiple choice with 3 possible answers, including the correct one indicated.** Bring your contributions to any upcoming meeting or send them via e-mail or snail mail to President Curt Nestark at [cnestark10@hotmail.com](mailto:cnestark10@hotmail.com) or 68 Havenwood Lane. To learn more about the game go to [www.TriviaQuestNewYork.com](http://www.TriviaQuestNewYork.com) or on Facebook at Trivia Quest Grand Island New York. Deadline for questions is April 30, 2018.



### **RIVER LEA LIBRARY**

First, a great big THANK YOU to all who worked in the library this fall. We have accomplished a lot in the last year and a half, due to many loyal laborers. It has been interesting, constructive, and even fun! The Christmas Country Store has vacated (thank you, Carolyn and Sharon), and we can be in possession of the library again, although it will take some time to get things in working order. Therefore, I am suggesting the following schedule for the next few months:

**Tuesdays, 10:00 a.m.**

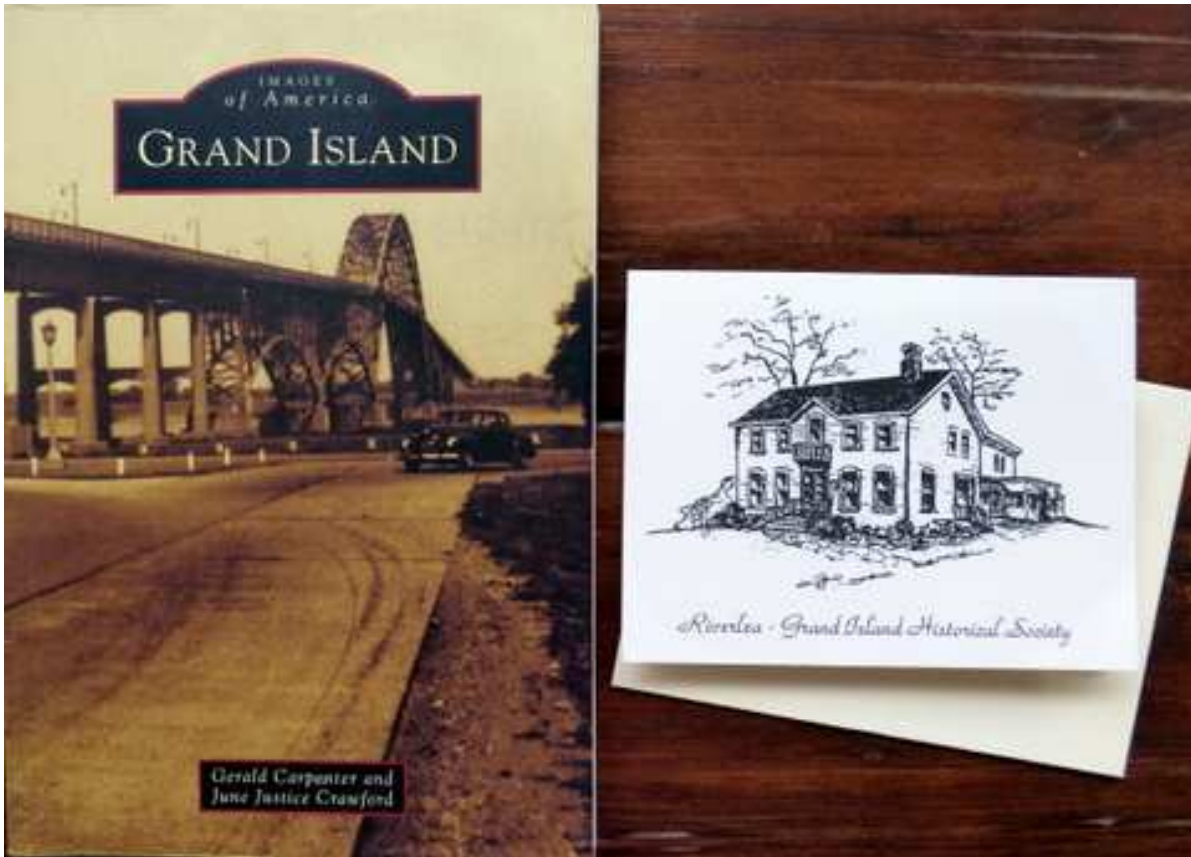
**March 13, 20 & 27; April 3, 10, 17 & 24; May 1, 8, 15, 22 & 30**

Of course, we may have be a couple of snow days in March. It sounds like an ambitious schedule, but there is a lot to do. Somewhere in the future, digitizing is a hope, but we're not ready, yet. One high priority is to work through the files on the history of the Historical Society itself, pulling together records, programs, newsletters, clippings and pictures from prior years. Suggestions are welcome from all members about what you would like to see in the River Lea library of the future.

Barbara Birt, [birtgrisny@gmail.com](mailto:birtgrisny@gmail.com)

## **DO YOU HAVE YOURS YET???**

Copies of the book *Images of America Grand Island* are \$21.99. River Lea notecards are available in packages of 10 for \$5. Both make great gifts and can be purchased anytime you are at River Lea!



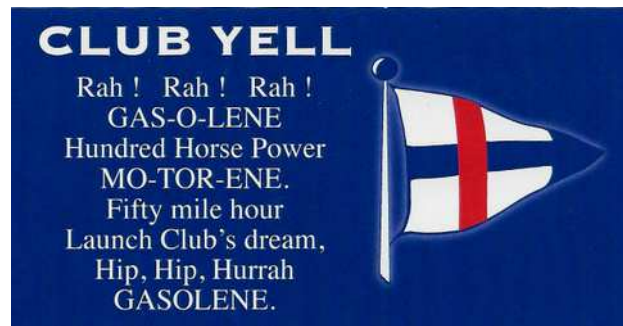
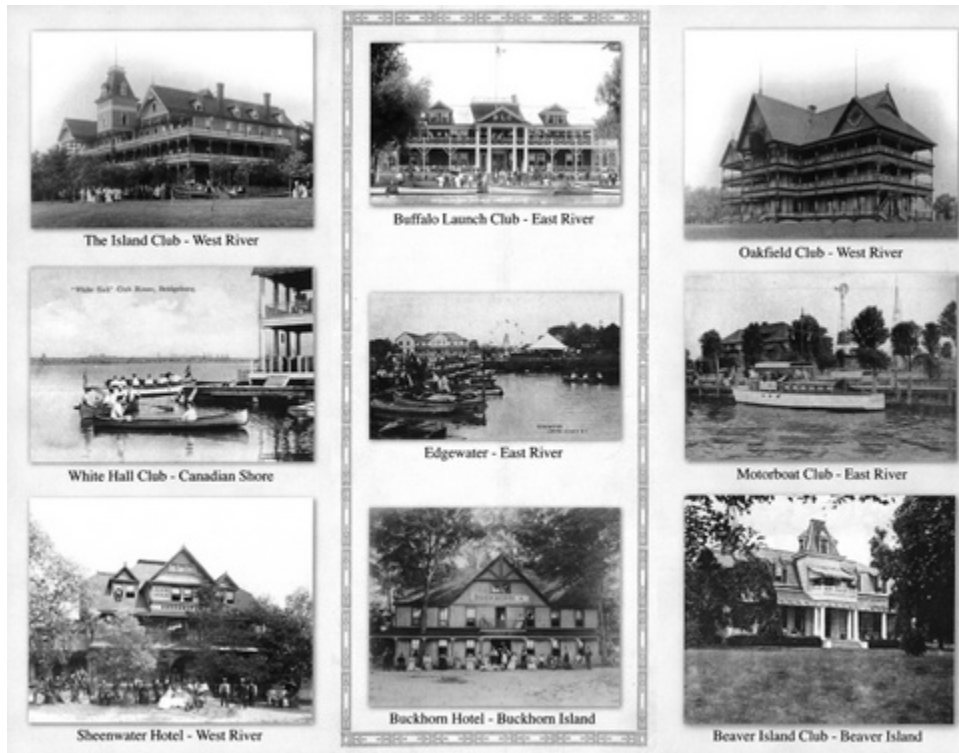
## **4<sup>th</sup> GRADE TOURS of GRAND ISLAND**

Each spring the 4<sup>th</sup> graders from Huth, Kaegebein and St. Stephen's Schools spend a morning learning about their hometown by touring historic sites on a bus, visiting Town Hall and spending about 90 minutes at River Lea. A Society member visits each school prior to their visit to present a PowerPoint about Grover Cleveland and his connection to Grand Island, which is what saved River Lea from demolition in the early 1960s when NY State wanted to eliminate it from Beaver Island State Park.

Teams of volunteers are needed at River Lea to help move groups of students and to tell them about the various rooms and artifacts. Volunteers are needed to ride the bus and point out the historic sites around town and move the groups through Town Hall. All materials are provided in advance to members (and friends – please ask them!) who can help. Are you able to be part of this very rewarding experience? Dates will be determined in early April. Please get on the list of potential volunteers ASAP by contacting Mary Cooke, 255-5838 or [maryscooke@roadrunner.com](mailto:maryscooke@roadrunner.com) for the Bus Trip or Sharon Nichols, 773-2421 or [longnichols@roadrunner.com](mailto:longnichols@roadrunner.com) for River Lea. All volunteers will be contacted once dates are firm, and we understand that conflicts may arise once you know the dates. Getting on the list of potential volunteers DOES NOT commit you to anything—it simply lets the organizers know you have an interest in this project and that you will help if the dates are convenient to your schedule. It is not necessary to commit to all three dates, even helping one day is a huge help. Thanks in advance for considering this worthwhile project!

**BUFFALO LAUNCH CLUB – GRAND ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**COLLABORATIVE PROGRAM**

“The Clubs & Resorts of Grand Island 1850 to 1920 – The Lost and Forgotten Gilded Age on the Niagara River” program on Saturday, January 27, 2018 was a huge success! The event sold out (240) and there was a waiting list of over 50. The attempt to record was aborted when it was determined that the effort was using too much band width, causing the screens to go down. There is talk of having another session, possibly in the warm weather so it could be held in one of the outdoor venues at the Launch Club. Watch the Island Dispatch and isledegrande.com for an announcement. The Dispatch did a great cover story about the event in their Island-wide edition on February 9. Shown below are the back of the placemat, a coaster and the Launch Club Yell card that were printed especially for the guests to enjoy and take home.



## **MEMBERS ROAD TRIP – FRIDAY, MAY 18**

Each spring the Historical Society plans a road trip to check out a local historic site and enjoy lunch. As noted in the program list, this year we are heading to the Van Horn Mansion in Burt, NY and having lunch at Gordie Harper's in Newfane. The 16-room mansion was built in 1823 on the east bank of Eighteen-Mile Creek and was gifted to the Newfane Historical Society in 1987. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and many think it is haunted. Our tour begins at 10 am, costs \$5 and reservations are required. Call Adele Upton at 773-5847 after April 15 to reserve your spot. The group will meet to carpool; directions will be given when you make your reservation.



The Van Horn Mansion, Lockport-Olcott Road, Burt, NY

## **EPHEMERA FOR SALE!**

Ephemera (singular: ephemeron) are any transitory written or printed items not meant to be retained or preserved. The word derives from the Greek *ephemeros*, meaning "lasting only one day, short-lived." Collectible ephemera include pamphlets, greeting cards, postcards, advertising pieces and bookmarks. After two years of work in the River Lea Library (and more to come!) many duplicates of printed material as well as interesting items not related to Grand Island have surfaced. These books, magazines, newspapers and ephemera will be on display and for sale at the March 18 and April 15 River Lea Open Houses, and for the final Community Education class at River Lea on April 25.

We're hoping you'll find something interesting!

## **A WINTER PHOTO**

The swans were passing through near River Lea during the snowstorm on December 23.







**GRAND ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP FORM**

**Membership Year September 1, 2017 – August 31, 2018**

(Please Print)

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Individual membership @ \$20 per person

\_\_\_ Couples @ \$35 (married couples)

\_\_\_ Family membership (3 or more persons residing at same address) @ \$40

\_\_\_ Lifetime membership (one-time dues payment) @ \$250

\_\_\_ Business/Professional membership @ \$100

\_\_\_ Student membership @ \$10 per person

Return form with check/money order (made out to: Grand Island Historical Society) to:

**Jeri Benzing, Membership Chair  
Grand Island Historical Society  
2136 Baseline Road, #225  
Grand Island, NY 14072**