

# Grand Island Historical Society

PO Box 135, Grand Island, NY 14072

[Isledegrande.com/historicalsociety/historicalsociety2019.php](http://Isledegrande.com/historicalsociety/historicalsociety2019.php)

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## Spring 2019 Newsletter

### 2018-19 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 the PRESIDENT**

On January 26th, 2019 the first annual "Footprints Winter Festival" was held In Beaver Island State Park. The Historical Society, State Parks, the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, as well as many, many other groups and organizations participated. The festival started at 9am at the Beaver Island Clubhouse where we had a historical display. Snowshoeing, a dog sledding demo and bird watching were just some of the activities. At about 3pm River Lea opened up for tours, bluegrass music and a chili dinner, along with a blacksmith demo and a bonfire outdoors on the front lawn. Over two hundred people toured River Lea!! Many thanks go out to ALL of our volunteers, especially the Shipman family, for seeing the value in this event in our park.

We will be a part of this event next year.

Curtis Nestark, President



**It's *NOT* too late to sign up!**  
**GRAND ISLAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

The Grand Island Historical Society Education Committee is busy preparing  
**“Explore GI History – Part III”**  
for five Wednesday evenings in March and April.

**Our class begins on March 13 and runs through April 10** so you still have time to register. Registration can be done in three different ways and is very easy: Register 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 flyer at River Lea at the March 7 program, fill out the form and mail your registration; **OR** visit the GI High School, 1100 Ransom Road, Monday-Friday, 8 am – 3:30 pm to register in person.

This year's session will highlight the many islands surrounding Grand Island, the Resort Era and Agriculture. Presenters will use 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 10 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 a previous class to enroll for 2019! Please spread the word about this class!

**Assembly Member MORINELLO Visits River Lea**

NYS Assembly Member Angelo Morinello, whose district includes Grand Island, spoke with members of the Historical Society and had a tour of River Lea on February 9. The deplorable condition of the outside of the house was discussed, as well as future plans for a first floor restroom and restoration of the front porch. Representative Morinello pledged his help to work with us & State Parks.



Left to right, seated: Joe Macaluso, Arlene Ehde, Jeri Benzing, Sharon Nichols; Standing: Mary Cooke, Morinello, Curt Nestark and Town Historian Jodi Robinson.



Left:: Peeling paint, insect nests and webs on River Lea. Right:: River Lea in the 1930s before the fire that resulted the removal of the porch. Both shared with Assembly Member Morinello at February's Meeting.

### **Programs, Events & Open Houses: March 2019-June 2019**

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. All programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments are served. Bring a friend!

**Thursday, March 7, 2019**--7:00 pm general meeting and program. Our guest speaker will be Rose Ann Hirsch with a power point presentation, *"Allan Herschell and the North Tonawanda Carousels"*.

**Sunday, March 17, 2019**--**OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA**--2:00-4:00 pm.

**Thursday, April 4, 2019**--7:00 pm general meeting and program. Our guest speaker will be Jason Buckley with a presentation on "Mapping the Frontier -A Study of 18th Century Surveying and Mapping Techniques".

**Sunday, April 14, 2019** --**OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA**--2:00-4:00 pm.

**Thursday, May 2, 2019**--7:00 pm general meeting and program. Our guest speaker will be Jim Pace, president of the West Seneca Historical Society, with a presentation, *"West Seneca Ebenezer Society, Community of True Inspiration"*.

**ALSO:** Sign up for our May 10th field trip.

**Friday, May 10, 2019**-- Field trip to Babcock House Museum in Barker, NY. Arrive at Babcock House at 10:30 for a tour of the historic cobblestone house. Dutch treat lunch at Gordy Harper's at noon following the tour. See notice elsewhere in the newsletter.

**Sunday, May 19, 2019**--**OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA**--2:00-4:00 pm.

**Thursday, June 6, 2019- 6:30 pm**--Members only-Installation of Officers and catered dinner at River Lea. Please call Carolyn Doeberl at 773-2643 for dinner reservations by May 30, 2019. Our program, *"June with June!"* will be presented by one of our members, June Crawford, speaking on Frank Lloyd Wright's *Graycliff*. See notice elsewhere in the newsletter.



## **RIVER LEA LIBRARY LINES, WINTER, 2019**

From Barbara Birt

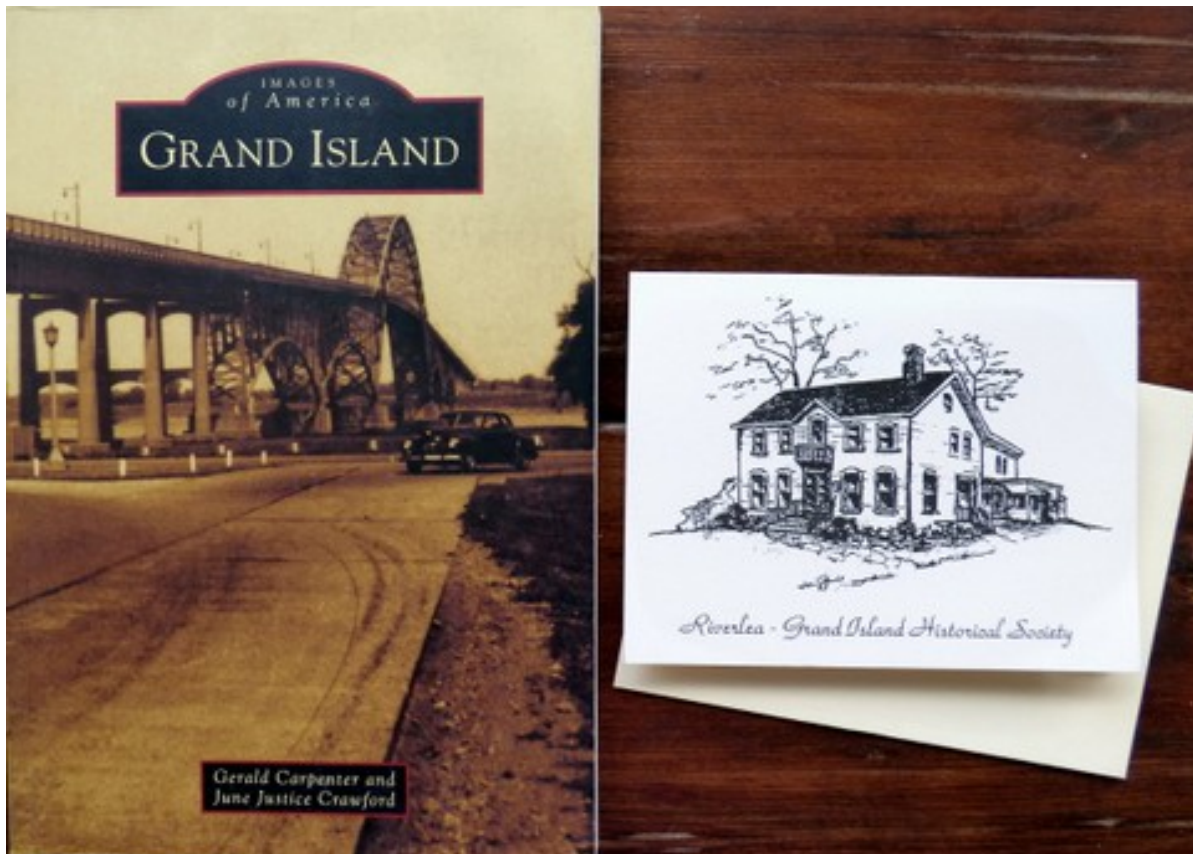
There were no library activities over the holidays, although the Country Store in our space did well. In the fall, we continued to sort and file. We will also have to catch up on accessioning. If only we could have more space!

The hope was that we would put together a plan for proceeding on the use of the grant money, but that is still a work in progress. Although the room is cleared of Christmas, because this is such a brutal and unpredictable winter, we will not start back to work for awhile. Tentative work dates for the spring are: **Tuesdays, April 2, 9, 16, 23 & 30; May 7, 14, 21 & 28, June 4, 11, 18 & 25.** One or two of the May days may be pre-empted by school tours.

Thanks to all the committee for their work this fall, and to Sandi Russo for providing us with an excellent contact to assist in the computerization process. If anyone is interested in being a part of the library group, please let me know by e-mail to [birtgrisny@gmail.com](mailto:birtgrisny@gmail.com)

### **GET THEM NOW!**

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!



## **YOUR HELP NEEDED: 4th GRADE TOURS of GRAND ISLAND**

Each spring the 4<sup>th</sup> graders from Huth, Kaegebein and St. Stephen's Schools (and sometimes home schooled students) 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 explain his connection to Grand Island, which is what saved River Lea from demolition in the early 1960s when NY State wanted to tear it down to make room for the Beaver Island Golf Course.

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 helpers; you need not be a member so please ask your friends! 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 Robin Shipman, 912-6590 or [robinshipman1969@gmail.com](mailto:robinshipman1969@gmail.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! Mary and Robin look forward to hearing from you!

## **MEMBERS ROAD TRIP – FRIDAY, MAY 10**

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 ***Babcock House Museum*** at 7449 Lake Rd. in Barker, New York. This beautiful cobblestone house was built on a large farm around 1848 by Jephtha Babcock. The two story house is of the Greek Revival style. We will have a tour of the house at 10:30 am followed by Dutch treat lunch at Gordy Harper's Restaurant after the tour. If you are interested in going on this field trip please contact Adele Upton at 773-5847 to reserve your spot. There is no charge for the tour. The group will meet to carpool; directions will be given when you make your reservation. Join us for a great spring outing, and see how other societies present their history.





### **NEW TO THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY COLLECTION**

Sharon Nichols, chairman of the Collections Committee, reports that several items, pictured below, have recently been donated. **Curt Nestark** found the drawing of the South Grand Island Bridges, signed by artist Elaine Olafson Henry, at the Linenfelter Estate Sale. It is inscribed: "To Marion Klingel – In appreciation of many years of competent service as Buffalo Evening News reporter and Town Historian. The Grand Island Taxpayers Association, Inc." The Palmer Method Handwriting Book and butter churn were donated by **Jean McDonald**. **Bill and Maryanne Kemp** donated the spinning wheel. Thank you!



**The Christmas Country Store**, opened during the Holiday Luncheons and Open House, was filled to the brim by many generous donations. **Guyanne Schiffhauer and Joe Macaluso** offered many holiday decorations that helped the Society have a very successful fundraiser this year in the Country Store. Thank you very much!

### **Installation Dinner - Mark your Calendar and Make your Reservation!**

The Installation of Officers for 2019-2020 will be held on **Thursday, June 6** at 6:00 PM at River Lea. A delicious buffet dinner will be served by our caterers Collette and Dennis. Cost \$16, and payment is needed to reserve your spot. This event sells out so don't be disappointed!

**Reservations by May 30 by calling Carolyn Doeber, 773-2643.**



***GRAND ISLAND HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
MEMBERSHIP FORM***

**Membership Year September 1 – August 31**

(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**