

# Grand Island Historical Society

PO Box 135, Grand Island, NY 14072

[Isledegrande.com/historicalsociety/historicalsociety2017.php](http://Isledegrande.com/historicalsociety/historicalsociety2017.php)

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## Fall 2017 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 I write this presidential letter to you, I am reminded of what it takes to host the fourth-grade tour. One word that comes to my mind is 'Collaboration.' A lot of hard work by a lot of people all coming together make the fourth-grade tour a reality. This includes the Beaver Island State Park Staff, Parks Police, GI School System, the Fourth-Grade Teachers, all three elementary schools, our Historical Society Members, GI Town Hall, GI Town Court, The P.T.A, and the New York State Police. These groups enable the fourth graders to learn and experience the history of Grand Island. I want to thank ALL our volunteers for their commitment in making and keeping the fourth-grade tour going year after year. I am one of the volunteers who rides the Huth Road school bus. I am always thrilled at watching the children's reaction of what this tour opens to them, the depth of history that they are exposed to, their reaction to seeing town hall business, the New York State Police Office, Town Court and how court works, and most of all the adults that want these children to learn about their community and Grand Island's history. We are truly privileged to live in a community that hosts such a wonderful tour for our children.

The Board of Trustees has planned some exciting and informative programs for the fall. Please find the time to volunteer to help keep our historical society running, and to keep our museum, River Lea, in Beaver Island State Park always ready for the next group of visitors.

## *DeGlopper Park Expansion Project*

In your travels past the corner of Baseline Road and GI Blvd. you've seen the progress that has been made since Memorial Day at DeGlopper Park: removal of vegetation, installation of asphalt and ongoing site work. The Grand Island Historical Society has joined in the fundraising effort by purchasing a paver (\$175) for the pathway that will eventually be installed. Get more information at [degloppermemorial.org](http://degloppermemorial.org) or on Facebook at DeGlopper Memorial. The Town's Historic Preservation Advisory Board has a new photo display in the lobby at the Library, explaining Charles' heroism and showing the plan for the DeGlopper Park expansion.



Charles DeGlopper's Dad Leonard receiving the Medal of Honor at a ceremony at Grand Island's Trinity Evangelical United Brethren Church from Major General Leland S. Hobbs. Boys in front include current Island residents Ray DeGlopper on the left and brother George on the right.

### **CAN YOU HELP???**

The Historical Society table at the Taste of Grand Island can use YOU! Contact Curt Nestark at 773-6068 or [cnestark10@hotmail.com](mailto:cnestark10@hotmail.com) to volunteer to help. It's on Saturday, September 23 from 12 noon – around 6:30 or 7 pm. The Taste runs until 8 pm, but we close when it begins to get dark. Even one hour of your time is a most appreciated contribution!

### **“TRIVIA QUEST GRAND ISLAND” COMING NEXT YEAR**

The Historical Society is working with Island Business Owner Shannon Zaccaria (she owns Popular Graphics and Everything Grand Island) on this exciting and informative project. 650 questions are needed for the game, and you can help! Categories include history, sports, politics, business, history---anything Grand Island. The mission of the project is 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. 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.



### **EXTRA HOLIDAY ITEMS????? GIHS WANTS THEM!**

The Historical Society is seeking donations of gently used (new is also fine) Christmas and winter holiday items for use and sale during the holiday luncheons. Bring any donations to a meeting or call Robin Shipman at 912-6590 for drop off instructions. All donations are needed by October 6. THANK YOU!

### **DECORATING FOR CHRISTMAS**

River Lea house decorating days will be set in September. Dates and times will be sent via e-mail. Please join us if you are able! Even one hour of your time is a great contribution and there are jobs suitable for everyone. No experience necessary! Many hands make light work! And how better to get and spread Christmas spirit than by decorating beautiful River Lea?? Thanks in advance for helping to make the

Holiday Luncheons a big success! Hope to see you at River Lea in November to lend a hand!

**Grand Island Historical Society**  
**Programs, Events and Open Houses**  
**September 2017 - December 2017**

Please join us for our monthly meetings and interesting lineup of programs and speakers. All programs are free and open to the public. Refreshments served.

**Thursday, September 7, 2017- 6:00 p.m. -POTLUCK PICNIC--** Please bring your own place setting and a dish to pass. Beverages and desserts will be provided. Save a stamp and bring your membership check to the dinner, too! Our program will be a slide show of Grand Island homes, churches and businesses presented by our own Sharon Nichols and Jodi Robinson.

**Sunday, September 17, 2017- OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA-2:00-4:00 PM**  
Costumed docents will greet you for a tour of the historical farmhouse.

**Saturday, September 23, 2017- TASTE OF GRAND ISLAND**

**Thursday, October 5, 2017 - 7:00 p.m.,** general meeting and program. Our guest speaker will be John Koerner speaking on his book, "The Secret Plot to Kill McKinley: Conspiracy, Curses and Ghosts of WNY".

**Sunday, October 15, 2017 -OPEN HOUSE AT RIVER LEA 2:00-4:00 PM.** Costumed docents will greet you for a tour of the historical farmhouse.

**Thursday, November 2, 2017 - 7:00 p.m. SPECIAL EVENT!!** Back by popular demand...Franklin Delano Roosevelt will make a return visit to speak about Pearl Harbor. **PLEASE NOTE: Our meeting location is changed for this event** and will be at **Historic (Old) St. Stephens Church at 2100 Baseline Rd.,** Grand Island, N.Y 14072.

**Saturday, Dec. 2, 2017 -Members' holiday party, 6:30 P.M.** Please bring an hors d'oeuvre to pass and a fun, inexpensive, small wrapped gift if you wish to participate in our Christmas game. Back by popular demand: The River Lea Bell Ringers!

**Sunday, December 10, 2017- CHRISTMAS OPEN HOUSE-1:00-4:00 PM.** Come and enjoy the decorations and sounds of the season in our historic farmhouse. Shop in our boutique and enjoy some refreshments while listening to holiday music by a harpist. Costumed docents will be on hand to share information about the house.

**Holiday Luncheons-** Tuesday, Dec. 5, Friday, Dec. 8 and Saturday, Dec. 9 at NOON. \$25.00. **Reservations required.** Call Carol Moore, 773-3817, after Oct. 1for reservations. Program TBA.



## **GRAND ISLAND COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

For the first time in over 20 years, the Historical Society offered a local history class for the spring 2016 session of Grand Island Central School's Community Education Program. On five Wednesdays in March and early April, nearly 30 very enthusiastic students gathered to learn and discuss various aspects of local history. Four sessions met in the GI High School with the final class at River Lea. Included in the tuition was an offer for membership in the Historical Society for the remainder of the 2016-17 season, which many students gratefully accepted! The planning team and presenters included Mary Cooke, June Crawford, Carolyn Doebert, Alice Gerard, Curt Nestark, Robin Shipman, George Smith and Adele Upton. Given the great reviews, and requests for more, we will offer a program in March 2018. Planning must begin in September. Please contact Curt Nestark, [cnestark10@hotmail.com](mailto:cnestark10@hotmail.com), 773-6068, 864-8697 or Mary Cooke, [maryscooke@roadrunner.com](mailto:maryscooke@roadrunner.com), 255-5838 if you'd like to be part of this effort! We welcome your ideas on topics, guest speakers and anything else that will help make this a great program!

### **"CRUISE SHIPS TO CARRIERS"**

**The public is invited on Friday, October 6, beginning at 7 pm in the Hospitality Room at St. Stephen's Church, 2100 Baseline Road, to the program "Cruise Ships to Carriers."**

The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941, ushered in a new era in naval warfare. Never again would the tide of battle on the high seas be determined solely by the might of a nation's surface fleet. Instead it would be aircraft—launched from aircraft carriers—that would play the preeminent role in naval warfare. Since the end of the Second World War, this role has only expanded as the nuclear carriers of the U.S. Navy are now able to protect American interests by projecting military power anywhere on the globe.

While far removed from the world's oceans, Western New York played a significant role in several milestones in the evolution of naval aviation. Not the least of these involved the conversion of a pair of Great Lakes luxury cruise ships to aircraft carriers in 1942-43. This important, but little-known event will be the topic when **historian Douglas DeCroix** visits St. Stephen's on October 6. In his presentation, ***Cruise Ships to Carriers***, he will discuss the rationale for the conversion, as well as shed light on the project and its aftermath. As part of the presentation, he will share numerous "before and after" images of the ships, along with a few notable individuals whose skills were honed on them.

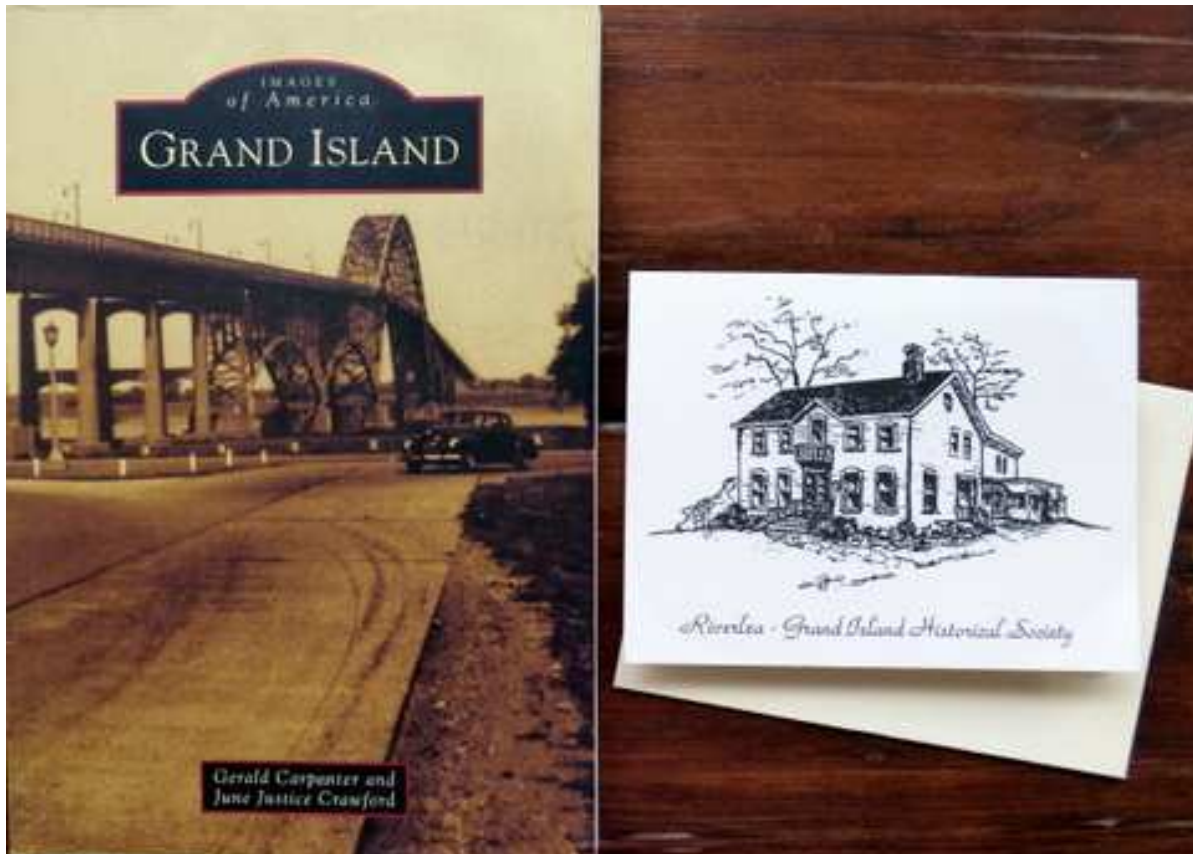
Douglas DeCroix currently serves as Executive Editor of Western New York Heritage, Inc., the not-for-profit publisher of *Western New York Heritage* magazine. He holds degrees in history from the University of Illinois and Miami University of Ohio, and achieved Doctoral Candidacy status at Bowling Green State

A native of Chicago, Doug came to Western New York in the early 1990s. Since then, he has made significant contributions to numerous nationally-aired historical documentaries produced by WNED-TV and The History Channel. He oversaw production of the three-volume commemorative series on the War of 1812, published by Western New York Heritage, and was one of the scholars selected to contribute a chapter for the *Routledge Handbook of the War of 1812*, published by the Taylor & Francis Group in late 2015. For his contributions to regional history, Doug was selected to receive the prestigious Owen B.

Augsburger Award by the Buffalo History Museum in October 2015. He continues to collaborate with a variety of cultural and educational organizations, working to celebrate the region's rich history while seeking creative ways of bringing that history into the classroom and into the lives of the region's inhabitants.

### **ITEMS FOR SALE at RIVER LEA**

Just in time for holiday shopping, River Lea notecards are again available! Packages of 10 are priced at \$5. Copies of the book *Images of America Grand Island* are \$21.99. Both can be purchased anytime you are at River Lea, and at the Historical Society table at the Taste of GI on September 23. Also available for purchase are duplicate newspapers, books and other printed material, from the work in the Historical Society Library. Check out the display in the living room on your next trip to River Lea.



### **BUFFALO LAUNCH CLUB – GRAND ISLAND HISORICAL SOCIETY PROGRAM**

Mark your calendar for Saturday, January 27, 2018 for an interesting night out at the Buffalo Launch Club, learning all about the clubs that once dotted the shoreline of Grand Island. Several speakers are on tap,

with plenty of photos and stories. The collaboration between the two groups is being led by Launch Club Historian Tom Frauenheim and Historical Society President Curt Nestark. Watch the *Island Dispatch* and [isledegrande.com](http://isledegrande.com), as well as the GI Historical Society's Facebook page for details. Don't miss out!

### **12<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PADDLES UP NIAGARA**

July 29, 2017 found GI Historical Society members and friends up early and at Beaver Island State Park by 6:30 am to welcome, feed, visit with and discuss Island history with the early paddlers.



Historical Society President Curt Nestark visiting with Paddles Up participants at Beaver Island State Park.



At left, Society members Denise Dewey and Patty Beauchamp selling muffins, scones and coffee.





Chef Phil Nestark at the Historical Society omelette station at Paddles Up.

### ***HISTORICAL SOCIETY ROAD TRIP***

The Niagara Aerospace Museum was the 2017 destination for the annual Historical Society Road Trip, with lunch afterwards at Four Points Sheraton where the group had a lovely view of Buckhorn Park as they dined. At the museum, the group was informed and entertained by very well-versed and experienced tour guides. We learned that 300,000 planes were produced by the United States during WWII; 22,500 by Curtiss and 28,000 by Bell. High school students worked nights and weekends in the factories. Once they knew we were from GI, our guides were thrilled to show us Island resident Al Rowswell's beautifully restored civilian version of a Curtiss Fighter Plane that was donated to the museum around 2011. The spring newsletter will contain information about the 2018 road trip. Hope you can join the group!



One of many historic posters at the Niagara Aerospace Museum.





Front, L-R: Jeri Benzing, Carol Rogers, Alice Gerard, Suzanne Pilon; Back, L-R: Mary Cooke, Sharon Nichols, Curt Nestark, Don Hoke, Barbara Birt and Wayne Nestark.

### **TOURING RIVER LEA**

Spring and summer brought requests for tours of the River Lea Museum by the Jaguar Club and Grand Island Boy Scout Troop 630. President Curt Nestark organized members to conduct tours on June 3 for the car club and on August 19 for the Scouts. Visitors from both groups were treated to an outdoor blacksmith demonstration by Bryce Shipman and tours of the house and refreshments that included Snickerdoodle Cookies, said to be a favorite of President Grover Cleveland and his family.



Bryce Shipman showing blacksmithing techniques while a member of the Jaguar Club acts as his horse. On the right, Curt Nestark explaining River Lea history to Scouts and adults from Troop 630.



A sampling of the Jaguar Club cars.

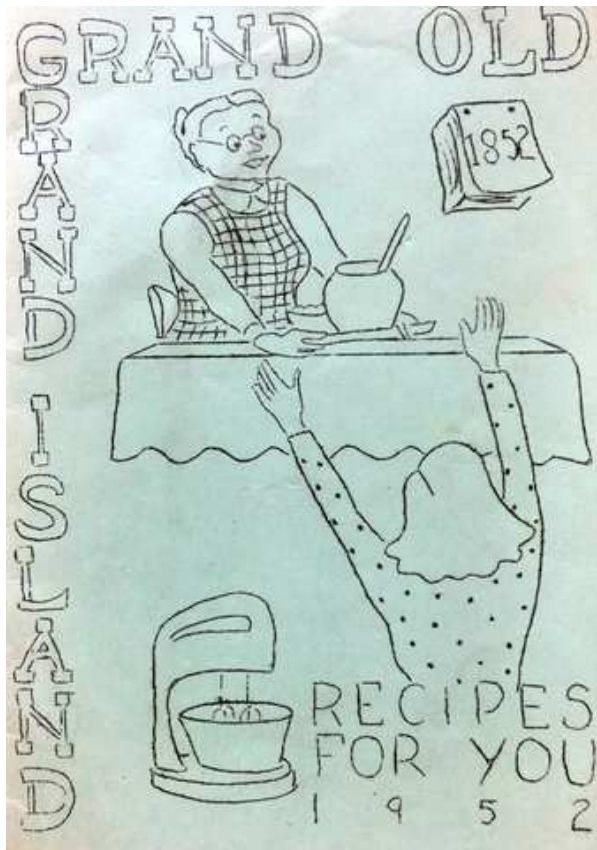
### **RIVER LEA LIBRARY NOTES**

Considerable progress was made through the winter and spring on bringing our library up to snuff. The goal is to eventually have the files, books and other materials in a form to be digitized. There is a long way to go, but every hour helps. Files are being weeded, in an effort to discard duplicates, and to eliminate anything that is not Grand Island related. Duplicates are being given to the Town Historian for her use.

Many thanks go to the dedicated crew of Barbara Berry, Mary Cooke, Shirley Luther, Trudy O'Connor, Jodi Robinson and Katharina Weinzler who worked Tuesday mornings through June, and one day in July. At that point it was too hot and stuffy to continue, although some hearty souls were willing to try. Now it's time to get back to work! The fall schedule will be **Tuesdays, 10 am - 12 noon, September 5, 12, 19 and 26 and October 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31.** Days in November will depend on when the Christmas crew needs the room. If anyone is interested in helping, or would like to work at a different time, please let me know. Thank you! Barbara Birt, Library Chair, [birtgrisny@gmail.com](mailto:birtgrisny@gmail.com), 773-5300

### **SOMETHING NEW AT RIVER LEA**

Society member Ehde Beth Parrish, a former Island resident who now lives in Kentucky, recently sent a note along with a copy of the Souvenir Booklet of Recipes compiled by Grand Island Home Bureau for the Island's Centennial in 1952.



GRAND ISLAND CHOWDER

15 lbs. beef plus additional soup bones  
 30 lbs. chicken  
 1 bushel potatoes, diced  
 8 qts. diced celery  
 8 qts. ground onions  
 8 qts. ground carrots  
 8 qts. peas  
 8 qts. corn  
 12 qts. tomatoes  
 250 clams, scrubbed, steamed, and removed from shells

Cook the beef, soup bones and chicken until done, remove meat from bones and grind. Then add the vegetables and ground meat to liquid from cooked meats. Add salt and pepper to taste.

Cook slowly about 10 hours. About one-half hour before serving add clams.



**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**