



The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 52 NUMBER 1

JANUARY 2015



Incoming President Bill Briska (left) and George Rowe

President's Report

Term limits have brought an end to George Rowe's successful four years as President. I am going to step in to fill that office and hope that George will serve as President again in the future. In the meantime, he is going to take over my role as Treasurer, a post I have enjoyed for the last 14 years. I look at this switch in positions as cross-training because George and I have worked closely together for a number of years. Over the years it has been a pleasure to work with a great team of volunteers and staff to see the museum grow and remain financially sound.

A big part of our success is due to the governing board of the Historical Society. Consisting of the organization's officers, board of directors and selected committee chairpersons, the governing board has been the core of the Museum's volunteer and donor base. The board consists of 22 individuals. That may seem like a large number of people for a modest-sized organization such as ours, but it has been the one of the secrets of our success. The board members, with

their wide variety of skills, have helped with just about every aspect of Museum operations. Many board members are also subject matter experts on important aspects of Elgin history. The board also makes up some of the Museum's most generous financial supporters. The board's donations of time and money have allowed us to serve the Elgin community well.

Good leadership inspires others to join the effort. As a result the Museum enjoys the benefits of many non-board supporters. Collectively, the museum's volunteers help us to keep costs down and make the work of our professionally trained staff go so much further. As a group they are among the most pleasant people you will ever spend time with.

Next time you see a board member ask them about their role at the Museum. And, thank them for contributing to its success. Just in case you do not know them all, here are their names.

Jerri Barnhart, David Nelson, Alan Walters, Steve Stroud, Dennis Roxworthy, Jerry Roller, Don Pielin, Rebecca Marco, Paul Larson, Rick Grimm, Tricia Grosser, Maury Dyer, Barry Danielson, Alisa Corsi, Harry Blizzard, Miriam Lytle, Jim Anderson, Ricky Harris, Laura Stroud, Terry Gabel and George Rowe.

Welcome New Members

- Ron and Carolyn Barclay
- Jessica Di Nella and Chester Samiec
- Dann and Nancy Farquhar
- Cindy Garand
- Brian and Tracy Holtane
- Melissa Lane from Gail Borden Public Library
- Jamie Trewartha

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Treasurer: George Rowe



Editor: Rebecca Marco

The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.

Next deadline February 20, 2015

 **Visit our website www.elginhistory.org**

Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Society's Board of Directors.

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Program Schedule for 2015

David Nelson, Program Chair

Events are held at the Museum unless otherwise noted. Check the website for the latest details.

<http://www.elginhistory.org/events.html>

March 15, 2:00 P.M.:

**Alfonso Ianelli, Chicago Architect
with Tim Samuelson**

April 12, 2:00 P.M.:

The Berlin Airlift with Annette Isaacs

May 3, 12:00 noon: Elgin History Fair. Free admission

**May 6, 7:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library: Barry
Baumann speaks about "The Conservation of Paint-
ings: Historical and Technical Discoveries."**

May 17, 2:00 P.M.

**The Ups and Downs of Dining a la Downton
\$25.00, includes High Tea**

May 21, 12:00 noon:

Brown Bag Lunch: Elgin Women's Club

May 21, 6:00 P.M.

A Walk in the Park with Steve Stroud

June 18, 12:00 noon:

**Brown Bag Lunch: the Underground Railroad with
Marge Edwards**

July 16, 12:00 noon:

Brown Bag Lunch with Jerry Turnquist: topic TBD

July 19 10:00 A.M.–3:00 P.M.

Antique and Vintage Car Show at the Museum

August 20, 12:00 noon:

Brown Bag Lunch: Toy Soldiers with Don Pielin

Sept. 17, 12:00 noon:

Brown Bag Lunch, topic TBD

Sept. 27, 11 A.M.–3 P.M.

Cemetery Walk at Bluff City Cemetery

Oct 11, 2:00 P.M.

Spirit of Motown with Jesse Sandoval

November 7, 6:00–10:00 P.M.

**Annual Benefit/Silent Auction/General Meeting,
Daniel Burnham as presented by Terry Lynch**

\$40 Members/\$50 Non-Members, advance tickets required. The Benefit will feature Terry Lynch as famed Chicago planner and architect Daniel Burnham, the main force behind the 1893 Columbian Exposition and the lakefront plan for the City of Chicago. Appetizer refreshments, silent auction and cash bar.

December 5, 1:00-3:00 P.M.

Holiday Tea

**Marshall Fields History featuring Leslie Goddard
FREE Admission**

Learn about Christmas at Marshall Fields and the store's history. Enjoy Old Main dressed up for Christmas. Delicious holiday treats, punch, and tea will be served.

Donors to Project 2-3-1: The Story of Elgin's African American Heritage Documentary and Exhibit

- Jerri and Ken Barnhart
- Compuman, Inc.
- Fish Fry Fundraiser
- Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks
- Joyce Fountain
- Marian Gamble
- Laborers' International Union
- Bob and Carolyn Malm
- Rose Martinez
- Anna and Marc Moeller
- Brigitte and Martin Nobs
- Clare Ollayos
- Cliff and Becky Olson
- Julie O'Neal
- Martini Room/Pratha Entertainment
- Citizens for Tish Powell
- Janet Real-Miller
- Still Book Club

General Donations: Thank You!

- James and Sara Ellen Anderson
- Jerri and Ken Barnhart
- Bill Briska
- Cindy and Larry Drafall
- Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks, Youth Education Fund
- Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham
- Wayne Heinmiller, donation with a matching grant from AT&T
- John Huber
- Margaret Krueger
- Don Pielin, Linda Rock, and Jerry Turnquist donated speaking honoraria
- Mary Roberti
- Guy York
- Peggy and Steve Youngren

2014 Benefit

On November 8, 150 people attended our annual benefit at the Heritage Ballroom. We watched President and Mrs. Lincoln as portrayed by Max and Donna Daniels. The appetizers catered by American Catering were all delicious, as were the many desserts provided by several local bakeries. Including silent auction proceeds, the Benefit generated \$14,000 for the Museum thanks to the generosity of many sponsors. Thanks to all who participated. We were pleased that Steve Bartholomew, great-great-great-great-grandson of Elgin founder James T. Gifford and new member of EAHS, was also able to attend the Benefit.



The Daniels Portray the Lincolns at the 2014 Benefit



Wine bags were popular items. Here Marge Rowe receives a handmade wine bag from Hannah Walters.

Holiday Tea Recap

Rebecca Marco, Editor

The 2014 Holiday Tea performance by the Bravissimo Singers was well-attended and enjoyed by all. The trio of singers were very impressive and entertained the crowd with a mix of holiday and winter-themed songs old and new. The performance was capped off by a sing-along of Silent Night. All enjoyed the treats, punch, tea and coffee. Many thanks to the volunteers who baked/brought treats and decorated the Museum for the occasion, everything looked lovely.



Bravissimo Singers performance at the Holiday Tea

Grandfather Gifford's Letter from Elgin

The following is a letter written by Elgin founder James T. Gifford during his first trip to the Elgin area in April 1835, down from Wisconsin through Chain O' Lakes. The letter was donated to the Museum by Gifford's great-great-great-great-grandson, Steve Bartholomew. What a great addition to our collection!

We followed down this until toward night we came to another branch running south. This we concluded to be the Fox. We kept down the eastern shore till near sunset when we met three Indians, each in a canoe with a rifle, spear and some traps and fine fish, in each. They could understand no English and we no Potawatamie but we induced them to ferry us over the river. Proceeding a few miles down the West side we came to a very beautiful stream coming in from the West which we concluded to be the Pistaga from the map. This we forded and found about its mouth one of the most attracting spots we had seen in Wisconsin. Here had been an Indian village – many mounds and places where they had buried corn. Near this spot by a pretty little brook we encamped for the night, if encamping it could be called to kindle up a fire and lie down by it in the open air without blankets. I never relished food better than our slice of broiled pork and piece of bead. We rested, however, well and were unconscious of the presence of any inhabitant of terra firma except a prairie wolf who came near and barked at or fire. We began to be suspicious that we were still a distance from white settlements and our supply of provisions being small, put ourselves upon allowance,

the whole being not more than sufficient for a meal, parceling it so as to allow each a little, till the next night, by which time we thought certainly we might reach settlements. The next day after leaving the Indian mounds a few miles, we began to get among marshes and small lakes, some of them extending miles into the country East and West of the river, which made our route very circuitous. Many marshes we crossed, wading through them for miles, where doubtless human feet never had trod. Some streams we had to ford in the marshes, there being no materials for building a raft, in one instance stripping off all our clothes and carrying them over our shoulders. The make of the country rendering it very improbable that we should reach settlers that day, we still more shortened out allowance the latter part of the day, to have a little left for the next morning, taking each a bit of bread about the size of a cracker. The river the latter part of this day itself expanding into lakes in several places, of some miles in extent, interspersed with islands covered with timber. About sunset we saw evidence of barbarism among the Indians, which I did not expect to see East of the Mississippi. Noticing some little pens near the river laid up of split legs, about four feet by six, we supposed persons had been there and made claims, but turning up one of the puncheons by which they were covered, we found they contained each a full grown corpse, placed in a sitting posture, a blanket wrapped around it, and nearly rotted off the bones. This was to us an evidence that we were still at a distance from settlers and our prospects were this night rather gloomy. Near sunset we seemed to have passed the lakes and marches principally, the river

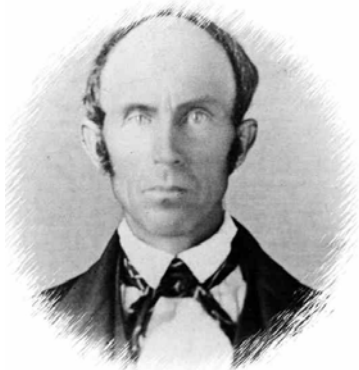


Fox River Scene

being confined within handsome dry banks. We rose upon an elevated extensive prairie. Seeing a grove ahead apparently about two miles we laid our source for it, in order to encamp in it. We found owing to the deception of distance on the prairie we had much underrated it, as we had to travel considerably in the evening and at least five miles to reach it. This evening a storm appeared evidently to be gathering and as we were cutting wood for our fire, it commenced raining, which continued a great proportion of the night accompanied at intervals with much thunder and lightning. This night Hezekiah who had uniformly encountered hardships and privations with resolution, appeared rather disheartened, the uncertainty of reaching settlers soon, out of provisions, no arms but pocket pistols, and no apparatus for taking fish, he began to regret we did not return to Chicago from _____.

"Ah!" said he, as we laid down on the wet ground, for we were very much tired, "if our wives knew where we are tonight they would not sleep much." I told him we were under the care of the same kind

Providence with them in whom we should trust and I felt confident we should be provided for. I was confident from the geography of the country and the distance we had passed, that we must have crossed the Wisconsin line, and if in Illinois, I knew we must reach settlements the next day. I did not for a moment regret taking that route. The following morning was clear and pleasant. As we took the last of our scanty allowance, sitting on the bank of a little brook, I observed a tear standing in brother H's eye. "Oh", said I, "Hezekiah, I can travel yet a fortnight and live on oak buds and frogs." We traveled fast, as we had done all the time since leaving our horses, at least I think forty miles per day. About noon we discovered something white a distance before us, near the bank of the river, which appeared to be in motion. A sensation was felt by each of us, I presume similar to that of a shipwrecked mariner floating in the ocean on a plank, on discovering the first glimpse of a sail. It was some time before we could satisfy ourselves what it was. Our step as it were unconsciously quickening, and our eyes intently fixed upon the object, we tripped over the smooth prairie, until at length we discovered it to be a man, swinging maul, splitting rails. If ever a wanderer on the deserts of Africa, on finding water, or a lost seaman on discovering a light house, felt joy, we felt it at this moment. It was truly cheering to us to again meet



James Gifford

a white man and one who could speak English. Archy conducted us up a ravine to the house of his employer, a Mr. Gilean, who removed to this place last fall from Virginia and is now the highest settler on the Fox. We stayed until the next day and were treated with true Virginia hospitality. At Mr. Gilean's we saw the first white woman after leaving Chicago. It was truly grateful to us to again experience the sympathetic kindness of woman. What then would have been our feelings, could we have here met our own dear wives. We came down to this place fourteen miles south of Mr. Gilean's Friday, April 3rd. Hezekiah has gone down to meet Mr. Ingraham and as we are very well pleased with this vicinity, I have been exploring and surveying since, making it my home where I now am, at Mr. Welches. I have made selections on the river, about four miles north of here, 32 miles from Chicago, and nearly in a direct line from that place to Galena. A bill has passed the Legislature to survey a State road between those two places.

The Lovells of Elgin – Part 1

by David Siegenthaler

The Lovell family of Elgin was responsible for producing two mayors, a state legislator, a county judge, a city attorney and a Civil War captain. The family may have had the first business in Elgin. A Lovell was one of the organizers of the Elgin Academy, the Elgin public library and the Elgin board of education. A Lovell was indirectly responsible for the establishment of Sherman Hospital by vetoing a City Council resolution against it. And a Lovell was responsible for providing the original Elgin Children's Home to care for homeless children. Three Elgin streets—Lovell Street, Margaret Place (Vincent Smith Lovell's wife Eliza's mother) and Watres Place (Edward's wife Carrie's family)—were named for the family.

Vincent Seller Lovell was born February 10, 1810, in Yorkshire, England, to Vincent and Frances (Coultas) Lovel. He immigrated to America with his family about 1824 and settled near Utica, New York. One of 12 children, six of whom would eventually live in Elgin, Vincent Seller came to Elgin in 1837 and claimed about 150 acres of land north of Jefferson Avenue and east of the Fox River. In his early years in Elgin he spelled his name "Lovel" but added a second "L" at the end after some of his business papers got mixed up with those of Amasa Lord's.

Almost immediately upon arriving in Elgin Vincent became a merchant, having a store built for him in June 1837 at about 13 Villa Court. Though early histories differ as to facts, the Elgin Advocate newspaper, in a special historical edition published in 1883, says: "About the first place in Elgin that could be dignified

by the name of a business house was a sort of general store conducted by the Lovell Bros., the late Vincent S. Lovell...and John Lovell...This was the only business house here in 1838."

Vincent, a strong advocate for education, was one of seven leaders appointed by Elgin founder James T. Gifford to comprise the Board of Trustees for a proposed private school which he called the Elgin Academy. Vincent served as a trustee from February 22, 1839, when the school was granted a charter, until 1841. That year he returned to New York and married Lucy Smith, who was born August 24, 1806, in New York. The couple returned to Illinois and settled in Chicago, where Vincent was a merchant for three years. Their first child, Edward Coultas, was born in Chicago on July 18, 1842.

In 1844 Vincent moved back to Elgin with his wife and son. On May 2, 1845, their second and last child, Vincent Smith, was born. Vincent Seller Lovell joined his nephew, Demarcus Clark (1819-1871), in the operation of a general store and also became one of the first town clerks. Vincent was raised a Methodist but later embraced Swedenborgianism, a faith Lucy was never able to appreciate, and was one of the organizers of the new church in Chicago. Lucy taught her sons to respect all religious beliefs, though she did not have any church affiliation.



Lucy Lovell

Vincent Seller Lovell died at age 42 in 1852 of tuberculosis, leaving Lucy with two small boys, ages seven and ten. Lucy was determined to keep the family together and to provide the boys with the best education possible. A teacher by profession before her marriage, Lucy also taught private school in Elgin and gave her sons their first lessons. They attended Elgin public schools, Elgin Academy and, finally, the University of Michigan.

It is not clear where the Lovells were living in Elgin in the early years. Viola Swanson, in her Lovell family research, suggests they may have lived at 115 Lincoln Avenue. This was near the southern boundary of the Lovell claim and the southern edge of a beautiful area, popular with picnickers, known as Lovell's Woods. By the turn of the century, when the area was being subdivided, it became known as Elgin's "Gold Coast," an area that eventually would include many exclusive and aristocratic homes.

The 1855 map of Elgin shows "Mrs. Lovel" living on the north side of Fulton Street (420 Fulton), between Gifford and Channing streets. Vincent bought this property from James T. Gifford in January 1849 and he may have built the home later that year. This frame home was directly across the street from a brick home (423 Fulton) built in 1855 by Lucy's nephew, Demarcus Clark, who initially lived there but lost it during the economic crash of 1857. By 1860 Clark and his family were living with Lucy and her sons at 420 Fulton Street. Clark had lived with the Lovells for many years prior to that as well, ever since arriving here in 1837 with the Lovells at age 17.

By the mid-1860s Clark had returned to New York and Lucy and her sons had moved to Ann Arbor, Michigan. The home at 420 Fulton Street remained in the family, however, and when the Lovell boys completed their education at the University of Michigan, the family again lived there during the 1870s. In 1902 this home was sold to the Swedish Lutheran Church, which used it as a parsonage for a few years before replacing it with a new parsonage in 1907. The brick home at 423 Fulton Street is still standing.

Edward was a member of the first class at Elgin Academy when it opened in December 1856. He attended the Academy at least through 1857. In 1858, at age 16, he may have enrolled at the University of Michigan. In the spring of 1862, while still a teenager, Edward became principal of Elgin's "New Brick" high school, at the northwest corner of Kimball and Center streets, where he also taught. He continued as principal-teacher there through 1864.

In February 1864 the Lovell property became a Civil War training site when barracks designated as Camp Kane were built near the rail line along the east bank of the river. Camp Kane was first occupied by the 52nd Illinois Infantry Regiment, here on furlough to reorga-

nize. It then became a training ground for the 141st Illinois, which was mustered for 100 days service in June 1864. Edward was adjutant of that unit, which mustered out in October 1864. Because Edward was also still principal of the high school, the school's opening was delayed that fall. In February 1865 Edward became a captain in the 153rd Illinois, which mustered out in September 1865. Edward saw no battle action, his activities consisting mainly of guard duty and detached service as inspector-general.

Following the war, in late 1865, Edward re-entered the University of Michigan. He pursued the prescribed course and in 1868 graduated from the literary department. Years before this he had determined to enter the legal profession and to that end read law with General John S. Wilcox. After completing his college course in 1868 he entered the University of Michigan law department, from which he graduated in 1870. After graduation Edward returned to Elgin, opened his law office and was immediately successful as a practicing attorney.



JUDGE E. C. LOVELL

Edward Lovell

Vincent's health was always fragile and this precluded his service in the war. At age 14 he began learning the printing trade in Chicago and subsequently secured a position in the abstract office in Geneva. In 1862 he was a compositor at the Elgin Gazette newspaper. In the mid- to late-1860s he joined his brother Edward at the University of Michigan. Their mother Lucy rented a home in Ann Arbor for the several years that her sons were students there and took care of their house-keeping and finances so they could focus on school-work. In 1870, the year Edward graduated from law school, Vincent graduated from the literary course.

Following graduation, Vincent pursued a career in journalism, becoming an editor for an Albany, New York, newspaper. He suffered from hemorrhage of the lungs and was forced to give up his job and return to Elgin to regain his health. In 1874-75 he worked as an editor for the Chicago Post & Mail, but failing health again caused him to abandon his newspaper career.

In this era, an extended "grand tour" of continental Europe was considered a finishing course in the education of young men of the English upper class. Both Edward and Vincent, maintaining their English traditions, made extended trips abroad in the mid-1870s, but not together.

In March 1872 the Illinois state legislature passed a law providing for the support, by taxation, of a public library in each town, city or village. In April 1872 the Town of Elgin voted to establish a public library and Edward was elected one of the directors. In 1875 he made his tour of Europe and, while there, was directed to expend a certain amount for the purchase of library books. He bought 1,500 volumes that covered almost every subject.

While in Italy, Edward visited his second cousin, Eliza Ann Hadwen (born April 12, 1844), an accomplished pianist who was there studying sculpture. When Edward returned to Elgin he told Vincent, who was planning his own tour, to be sure to visit Eliza. In 1876 Vincent visited Eliza in Rome and it was love at first sight. They were married in August 1876 in Germany.

By late 1876, after Vincent had returned to Elgin with Eliza, the family all lived together—Vincent, Eliza, Lucy and Edward—in their Fulton Street home. Vincent now became a partner in Edward's law office, where he became a conveyancer of real estate.

To be continued...

Acknowledgements: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; Viola Swanson's unpublished Lovell family research (1988); Kane County, Illinois, Early Families, 1833-1885. (1991); The Elgin Advocate, December 22, 1883; obituaries; city and county histories; censuses; city directories; etc.



Collections Corner

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

Don Hoke, a former curator at the Milwaukee Public Museum, donated several different 1950s-'60s Elgin Watch advertising displays from his collection of Elgin Watch materials. Look for some of them soon on exhibit! Thanks Don!

