



The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 51 NUMBER 2

MARCH 2014



President's Report



President George Rowe

As we move into 2014 we have plenty to do as an organization. Currently, the Museum is working on updating the exhibits. Although not doing a major overhaul this year there are plenty of details to attend to, and the exhibits committee is putting in considerable time to polish things up.

2014 will be the last year of my term as president, so I'll be working with the board to ensure a smooth transi-

tion. We have added two new board members this year, Paul Larson and Rick Grimm. Both have shown considerable interest in the museum and we look forward to their involvement.

The African-American history project will be a major focal point for the year. Ernie Broadnax has maintained the vision for a long time, and now that he's partnered with the Society and Grindstone Productions, it's moving forward. Phil Broxham from Grindstone produced the watch factory documentary *Circle of Time* for the Museum in 2004 and has done many projects for the Society since.

Steve Stroud and Bill Briska have been working on the bungalow project along with the Heritage Commission and Mary Lu Seidel from Neighborhood Housing Services. Because Elgin's many bungalows are spread around the city, the intent is to create a flexible historic district to allow non-contiguous homes to be recognized and for bungalow homeowners to be eligible for rehab funds. One task is to define what a bungalow is— not as easy as you may think; architect Eric Pepa has been brought on as a consultant and Eric and Steve have put on programs at the Museum and the library about this exciting project.

Board member Dennis Roxworthy has also been an important resource, having restored many homes in Elgin, including quite a few bungalows.

The Courier-News project is also moving along. The first pass on sorting the files is complete. Beth Narawa was contracted to lead the team of volunteers doing the first round of sorting and she continues with the second sort and categorization/preliminary indexing on her own. Jerri Barnhart, Ricky Harris and Rebecca Marco also spent many hours sifting through countless articles to lead this project to completion. These files offered by the Sun-Times group will prove to be another invaluable resource for the community.

On Feb 22 I went to Lords Park with my lovely wife to feed the bison. The Elgin Public Museum and the zoo teamed up to allow interested individuals to walk along with Dwight Armistead as he fed the zoo animals. We were met at the Public Museum by Sara Russell (who also works part-time at the Public Museum) and Mike McGrath. After a short tour we walked to the zoo area where Dwight took us through the daily feeding process. The zoo now has four elk, two bison, and four deer. Dwight believes three of the elk are pregnant and is looking forward to the birthing sometime in April. Dwight will be retiring this year, after 20 years with the City of Elgin. We wish to thank him for his excellent service and dedication. He is very active with Friends of the Lords Park Zoo (FLPZ). Dwight noted there have been bison at Lords Park Zoo for 110 years and he showed us some trees in the Park that predate European settlement.

The Crackerbarrel

Published bimonthly by the Elgin Area Historical Society
360 Park Street, Elgin, IL 60120
Phone 847-742-4248
e-mail: elginhistory@foxvalley.net




President: George Rowe
Vice President: Terry Gabel
Secretary: Laura Stroud
Corr. Secretary: Ricky Harris
Treasurer: William Briska



Editor: Rebecca Marco

The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline April 20, 2014

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

Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the Society's Board of Directors.
©2014 Elgin Area Historical Society. All rights reserved.

Program Schedule for 2014

David Nelson, Program Chair

Check the website for the latest details.
<http://www.elginhistory.org/events.html>

Votes for Women: The 72-Year Struggle for Suffrage, presented by Leslie Goddard

**March 16, 2 P.M., Elgin History Museum
Free Admission for Members, \$3 Guests**

This illustrated slide lecture explores the struggle from 1848—when the first scandalous call was issued at Seneca Falls—to 1920, when women finally gained suffrage. If voting feels more like an obligation than a privilege, remember that it took 72 years for women to win the right to vote. Learn the stories of the courageous women, including Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Carrie Chapman Catt, and Alice Paul, who fought to win women the right to vote. You will never find voting inconvenient again!

Regretting Mr. Wright: Mamah Tells Her Own Story presented by Elizabeth Carlson

**Sunday, April 13, 2 P.M., Elgin History Museum
Free Admission for Members, \$3 Guests**

Mamah Borthwick Cheney and Frank Lloyd Wright fell in love. They were both married to other people and had eight children to care for between them. Flaunting all social mores of their time and abandoning their obligations, they ran off together. They spent time in Europe and then later settled in Wisconsin where Mr. Wright built Taliesin for Mamah.

While Mr. Wright could depend on society to forgive a man's indiscretions; especially if it also viewed him as genius, Mamah was expected to behave in a carefully prescribed manner. When she did not, she was outcast. She lived what was left of her short life as the female head of household at Taliesin where she died, tragically, in 1914. Mamah returns to our world in this presentation to tell her own story.

**Elgin History Fair
April 27, 12-3 P.M., Elgin History Museum
Free Admission for All Ages!**

Family and friends are invited to enjoy an afternoon in Elgin of long ago. Parent/Child activities include making better butter, grinding field corn, building a cobblestone house, washing monkey socks! This year will include special information and activities on the Civil War in conjunction with the Gail Borden Library Lincoln exhibit. Rain or shine.

**History of Tupperware!
Thursday, May 15, 12 Noon
Elgin History Museum
Free Admission for Members, \$3 Guests**

**International Museum Day and Brown Bag Lunch
Lecture**

Collector Linda Rock discusses the development of Tupperware with examples from her fascinating collection.

May 16, 6:00 P.M.: Channing Park Walk

Join Steve Stroud as he leads a tour of Channing Park, formerly the Elgin city cemetery. Learn about why some but not all bodies were moved to Bluff City Cemetery. Wear comfortable shoes.

May 22, 7:00 P.M.: Bungalow Rally

June 19, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch—Dennis Roxworthy discusses Toy Collecting

June 28: Museum Field Trip to Lake Geneva: Black Point Estate House Museum and Lake Geneva City Museum Details TBD

July 17, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch with Jerry Turnquist

August 21, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch: History of St. Joseph Hospital

September 28: Cemetery Walk, Bluff City Cemetery

October 12, 2:00 P.M.: Abolition/African American History

**November 8, 6:00 P.M.: Annual Benefit/Silent Auction/General Meeting, Elgin History Museum
"Mr & Mrs Lincoln"**

\$35 Members/\$45 Non-Members, advance tickets required.

December 6, 1:00-3:00 P.M.: Holiday Tea, featuring Elgin Opera singers

Fond Farewell

In 2013, several members and friends of the Museum passed away. If you know of other members not listed who have passed away, please let the Museum know.

- Lois Charlton
- Ernest Ludwig
- Marilyn Mann Smith (Mrs. Richard Smith)
- Grace Towner
- Jo Ann Ziegler (Mrs. Gregg Ziegler)

All were longtime supporters and members of the Elgin Area Historical Society.



Ernie Ludwig driving his convertible car in the 2008 Elgin Fourth of July Parade for the Museum.

Welcome New Members

- Babette Colburn
- Jake Fisher and Jef Leary
- Herb and Yaneth Fuqua
- Sarah Towner Helm
- Anne LoCascio
- Linda O'Connor
- Daniel Symonds
- Bob Tighe

Thank You Donors

- Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham sponsored the 2014 Calendar Project.
- Ace Hardware sponsored Foundry Park Windmill Installation.
- General donations from Christopher Burke, Charles Dittman, Phyllis Kaptain, Linda Rock, and Peggy Youngren.
- Support for the Elgin African-American History Project from Raleigh Sutton and Sandra Kirk.

A Successful Effort

The photo below illustrates beautifully how much of a difference the Windmill makes to the Elgin skyline. Thank you to all whose volunteer hours made this happen.



The windmill adds drama to Elgin's night sky. Thank you for the countless volunteer hours that made this happen.

Abraham Lincoln Events at Gail Borden Library

*Stacy Michel, Program Coordinator
Gail Borden Public Library District*

Gail Borden Public Library District is offering several programs to go along with the upcoming exhibit, "Lincoln: The Constitution and the Civil War," from April 2-May 16. On Thursday, April 3, Chris Vallillo will be performing "Abraham Lincoln in Song." On Sunday April 6, Keynote Speaker Dr. Al Gini, professor at Loyola U. School of Business, will speak on Lincoln, Leadership, and Ethics. Following the Keynote, the exhibit will open with a reception with Phil Passen playing period music on the dulcimer, and local civil war re-enactors John Braese and Bob Benedik will be providing soldiers and civilians in civil war dress. Max and Donna Daniels will portray Abe and Mary

Todd Lincoln. Max is a highly respected Lincoln impersonator and has over 180 events scheduled just for 2014.

Other events featured with the exhibit include author Robert Girardi speaking on the Civil War Generals (April 23), "Meet Mr. Lincoln" as portrayed by Dennis Boggs (April 28), and "Abraham Lincoln's Watch" presented by Douglas Stiles (May 6).

These will be great programs. We are in the 150th anniversary of the Civil War and we are very lucky to be able to partner with the library on such a great project.

Larkin Home for Children, 1896-2013:

Part 1

by David Siegenthaler

The Elgin Children's Home Association was chartered on June 24, 1896, "to care for and to provide the wants of destitute, abused or neglected children under 14 years of age as a charity without pecuniary profit." On October 18, 2013, the Larkin Center was officially taken over by Lawrence Hall Youth Services, a Chicago-based not-for-profit welfare agency for at-risk youths.

The Larkin Home's story began in May 1893 when Henry Degener's wife Mary died only days after giving birth to twins. Henry could not care for the children by himself and had no relatives who could take them. Conrad Ackemann, an undertaker, arranged to have Miss Mary Peabody, a 39-year-old watch factory employee, care for the infants in her apartment at 463 St. Charles Street. The 1894-95 city directory lists her occupation as "home for babies."

Mary Peabody was born October 1, 1853 in Canada. Her parents, New Jersey natives, returned to New Jersey when she was a child. Her dad was a watchmaker and brought the family to Elgin in 1869, when he was hired as an engraver at the watch factory. The 1870 census shows 16-year-old Mary working at the watch factory, along with her dad and older sister. Mary worked there until 1893, when she became a caregiver for homeless children. By about 1898 Mary had returned to work at the watch factory and was eventually employed at the National House, the watch factory's boarding house, before retiring. She passed away in 1934. In 2002 the Larkin Center established the Mary Peabody Award to honor those who exemplified her commitment and dedication to children and families in need.

In December 1895, Police Officer William Swift's wife, Lionia, died only days after giving birth to a daughter. Conrad Ackemann again asked Mary Peabody to care for the infant and she consented. In January 1896 Ackemann and other concerned Elginites began discuss-

ing the feasibility of establishing a home for orphan, neglected and abandoned children. A public meeting was held, an organization was established and a systematic canvass of the city was made to identify all the children in need of such a home. This resulted in the incorporation of the Elgin Children's Home Association in June 1896. Eliza Lovell, widow of Vincent, who had a large home at 600 Margaret Place, offered financial assistance as well as the use of her home. The 1896-97 city directory shows the "Elgin Children's Home" located there, with Mary Peabody as the matron. This home soon became overcrowded and in about 1897 a large home at 685 East Chicago Street was rented. The 1897-98 and 1900 city directories show the "Elgin Children's Home" there, with Mrs. Mary Tuttle as the matron. As many as 30 children were housed there at a time.

In January 1902, Cyrus H. Larkin, a wealthy farmer, donated a large home at 352 South State Street to the Children's Home Association as a memorial to his mother Sarah, who died in 1887. It was specified in the deed that the property shall be known as the "Larkin Home for Children." The gift was gratefully accepted, as it freed the Home from paying monthly rent, a big financial burden for an organization that relied on charity for its existence.



The Larkin Home at 352 South State St.

The Children's Home moved to 352 South State Street in April 1902. Its former home at 685 East Chicago Street was destroyed by fire only nine months later.

Cyrus Larkin was killed in a tragic accident on his farm in May 1902 at age 72. He fell from an 80-foot-high windmill platform while attempting repairs. Though the Larkin Home is no longer in existence, Larkin's name remains immortalized in the names of a busy avenue and a large high school.

The Larkin Home at 352 South State Street was overcrowded almost from the beginning. Its maximum capacity was about 25 children and there was virtually no play area. In 1909, May and DuBois Hoornbeek bought the big lot adjoining the Home to the south and presented it to the Larkin Home. May was the daughter of Cyrus Larkin. Plans were made for a major expansion that would double the capacity and add indoor and outdoor play areas. However, the directors eventually decided that it would be more practical to build a larger, more modern home especially designed to be a children's home.

In April 1911 the Larkin Home directors purchased a large 3.5-acre lot just west of the city limits and just east of the Elgin Road Race course. The site just happened to be along Larkin Avenue only two blocks east of Cyrus Larkin's farm. Architect George Morris was engaged to draw up plans and a \$15,000 building fund campaign was begun. In May 1911, Elgin National Watch Company President Charles Hulburd kicked off the fund drive with a personal \$500 donation and by July 1911 nearly \$7,000 had already been raised.

The new Larkin Home opened on June 10, 1912 at 1212 Larkin Avenue. About 1,500 visitors that day were impressed with the sparkling and spacious 2-story and basement dark red solid brick building with white stone trimmings. The cheerful and homelike appearance of the building was no accident—the directors insisted that it was to be a “home” and not an institution or an orphanage. All furnishings were brand new donations. Large basement play rooms and three acres of grounds provided plenty of space for activities. Each child had his or her own bed with a “sanitary box” placed at the foot for individual use. Washington School was less than a mile to the east and the Highland Avenue street car line ran just to the north. The entire planning, fundraising and building operations were skillfully directed by a 16-member all-woman board, led by President Mrs. Andrew Hawkins. The former Home at 352 South State Street was converted into a 6-apartment house in 1940 and is still standing.



The Larkin Home that opened in 1912, at 1212 Larkin Avenue

In 1926, through a gift from two prominent Elgin couples, a 1-story brick infirmary building was built in back of the main building. Initially used to house quarantined children with infectious diseases, it has served varied purposes over the years. In 1934 a small east wing was added to the main building to allow the kitchen to be remodeled. Due to the tragic 1958 fire in the Our Lady of the Angels School in Chicago, state fire codes were updated, requiring the Home to make a number of costly structural changes in 1960.

There has always been confusion as to whether or not the Larkin Home, in its early years, was an orphanage. From the beginning the organizers wanted to dispel the notion that this would be “an orphan asylum or a dumping place for charity waifs,” but rather a real home, albeit a temporary one, until the child could be adopted or until the surviving parent could again provide proper care. During the fund drive for the new Larkin Home in 1911, one board member stated: “One of our greatest difficulties is in convincing people that the Larkin Home for Children is not an orphanage. It is an institution for all children whose parents are not able to care for them properly. Orphans are accepted as inmates and cared for, but the majority are little ones whose father or mother is living...”

The Larkin Home was not an orphanage if “orphan” is narrowly defined as a child who has lost both parents to death - though it did include such children. However, the term “orphan” is imprecise and often includes children with only one deceased parent. Sometimes the term is broadened to include any child whose parents are unable or unwilling to care for them. By this definition the Larkin Home was an orphanage.

By the middle of the 1900s the need for orphanages and children's homes lessened. Better health care reduced the mortality rate of adults with young children. Expanded social services, welfare, foster care, adoptions and extended family living arrangements all helped to provide suitable homes for vulnerable children and families. However, there were often children with severe emotional disorders who needed more than a private home could offer. They needed therapeutic care that only a professionally-trained staff could provide.

To be continued...

Acknowledgements: Mike Alft's newspaper articles; various other newspaper articles and sources.

Car Show to Celebrate the Mustang

Rebecca Marco, Editor

2014 marks the 50th anniversary of the Ford Mustang and to celebrate, the Museum will be holding a bigger and better car show this summer. Thanks to board member and car enthusiast Dennis Roxworthy, this year's show will be something special. Dennis has partnered with Mustang Restorations to bring some rare and beautiful cars to the Museum parking lot, including Mustangs, Thunderbirds, Model Ts and others. The show will be sponsored by the Chicagoland Thunderbird Club and the Model T Car Club. It is still in the planning stage but it promises to be even better than last year's, with live music, refreshments, and of course the cars! Plans are to shut down Park St. to provide more space for cars to be displayed.



Scene from Last Year's Car Show

Elginite Jane Petersen Added to Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame

Topic Suggested by Jeff White

Jane Petersen, born in Elgin, will soon be inducted into the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame on May 1. She graduated from Elgin High School in 1894. She attended college in Brooklyn, New York and made quite a name for herself after moving there. Louis Comfort Tiffany was among her close friends.

Born as Jennie Christine Peterson, she changed her name to Jane in 1909. Following her first major American exhibition at the St. Botolph Club in Boston. With her family's support and encouragement, Peterson attended the Pratt Institute in New York. While there, she studied under Arthur Wesley Dow. Peterson's mother, proud of her daughter's talent, gave her \$300 toward enrollment at the institute—a significant investment at the time. After graduation in 1901, Peterson studied oil and watercolor painting at the Art Students League in New York City with Frank DuMond. By 1912, Peterson was teaching watercolor at the Art Students League and eventually became the Drawing Supervisor of the Brooklyn Public Schools.

Jane Petersen traveled extensively in Europe. While studying in Paris, she became friends with Gertrude and Leo Stein, attending the sibling's gatherings where the guests included Pablo Picasso and Henri Matisse.

In 1916, Peterson exhibited work, featuring scenes from the Pacific Northwest, which she had painted while traveling with Louis Comfort Tiffany. She completed many floral subjects, which were inspired by the gardens of her summer home in Massachusetts. Many of her beach and pier scenes were from painting trips to artist colonies along the Massachusetts coast. During World War I she painted war-oriented subjects for the benefit of Liberty Loans and the Red Cross.

In 1925, Peterson married Mortiz Bernard Philipp, a lawyer twenty-five years her senior. After her husband's death she resumed her studies and travels abroad. In 1939 she married James S. McCarthy, a New Haven physician, but they separated within a year, and then divorced.

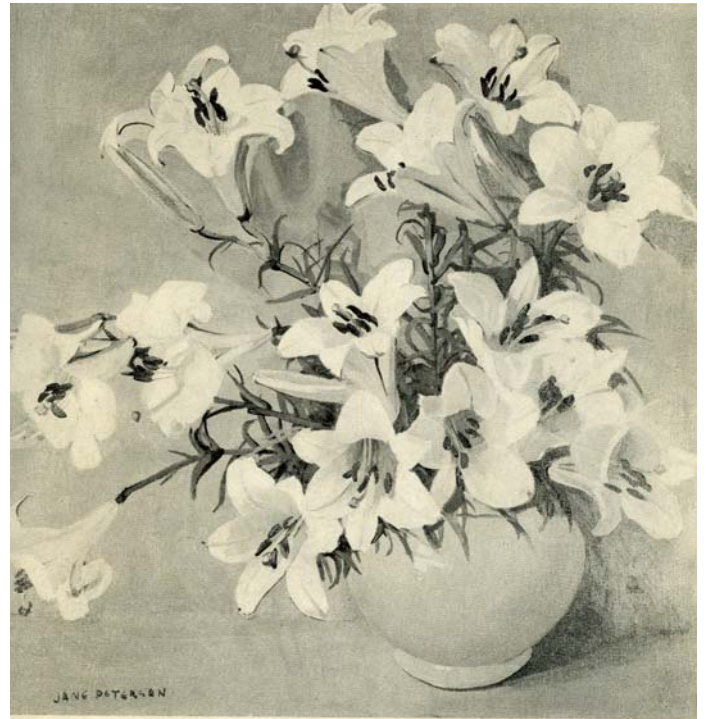


Elgin Artist Jane Petersen, 1876 - 1965

Jane suffered from arthritis which had crippled her hands to such an extent that by the 1950s she painted infrequently. She spent the last five years of her life with her niece in Kansas, who took care of her until she died on August 14, 1965.



Petersen's "Harbor Scene"



White Easter Lilies in a white bowl. Sketch in flowers, leaves and vase in their predominating colors. Paint background with attention to variety in color and value. Paint the shadows of the objects and on the background finish by giving more brilliance and detail to near flowers.

Example from one of Jane's art instruction books.

In 1938 the American Historical Society named Peter-son the "most outstanding individual of the year." Jane was one of America's most innovative artists, and she was a remarkable woman who lived a life of inde- pendence and adventure that was not common among her contemporaries. Her work blends traditionalism with the avant-garde.

The induction ceremony for Jane Petersen and dinner will be held at Villa Olivia in Bartlett on May 1. Cock- tails begin at 5:30 and dinner is at 6:30, with the indu- ction of new members to follow.

If you are interested in receiving an invitation to the Fox Valley Arts Hall of Fame dinner, please contact Nancy S. Hopp, 175 S. Westers, Aurora IL 60506 or email her at nhopp8771@sbcglobal.net.

Acknowledgements: www.questroyalfineart.com



Jane Petersen, The Red Cross Center, about 1917. Gouache and charcoal on paper