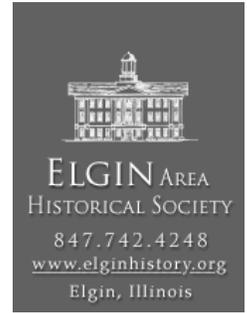




# The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 51 NUMBER 3  
MAY 2014



## President's Report



President George Rowe

We have been very busy, so here's the scoop:

Recently, Elizabeth Marston, my wife Marge and I were treated to a trip to Chicago's Field Museum by Bill Briska and his wife Fran Cella. It was members-only and we could tour any part of the museum we wished—even areas normally closed to the public. Docents explained and guided. We saw insects not usually on display and meteorites usually kept in

drawers. A docent showed us some of the finest fossils the Field Museum owned. It was a real treat, especially appreciated by people who have labored to put together our own exhibits at the Elgin History Museum. Thank you Bill and Fran.

May is Preservation Month, but we started early this year with some great Lincoln programs at Gail Borden Library, which is currently exhibiting "Lincoln and the Constitution." Folk music historian and performer Chris Vallillo presented an excellent "Songs of Lincoln" program including many songs Lincoln would have heard in his day. Professor Al Gini from Loyola University gave a talk on "Lincoln and the Constitution" and I also attended Rob Girardi's talk "General Impressions of the Civil War." I encourage you to take advantage of the tremendous programs available right here in Elgin.

David Nelson is keeping pace; the Museum opened the year with "Regretting Mr. Wright: Mamah Recollects Frank Lloyd Wright." Over 80 people attended! Many programs are coming up in May so check the calendar on our website at [www.elginhistory.org/events](http://www.elginhistory.org/events).

Several hardworking board members will receive Mayor's Awards this month: Steve Stroud for his research on Elgin architecture, David Nelson for his excellent work bringing the best programming to the Elgin History Museum, and Ricky Harris's group who have been doing archive work at Elgin High School.

I also attended the Elgin Image Awards early in April. Chan Swan works on the committee that has to evaluate so many worthy projects and find the ones that stand out. He did a great job this year: The Friends of Lords Park Zoo received an award for helping to reopen the Zoo and adding new elk and bison. Terry Gabel (Vice President of EAHS Board) and Jerri Barnhart (membership chair for EAHS) were prime movers of that effort. Rick Grimm (EAHS Board member) accepted the award for "The Wall That Heals," an event sponsored by Gail Borden Library, for which Rick co-chaired the committee.

Want to enjoy history with a beverage? Board member Don Pielin is putting together a history of Elgin breweries. Don has learned of eight breweries that operated in Elgin through the years. One may have started brewing beer as early as 1847. We are familiar with the Eagle Brewery and the National Brewery, but there is more to the story, so plan on joining us at this special presentation to be given at Elgin Public House, 219 E Chicago St., June 14, 1-4 p.m.

Wow, we've got a lot going on! Hope you're taking part. See you at Old Main!



## The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.

**Next deadline June 20, 2014**

 **Visit our website [www.elginhistory.org](http://www.elginhistory.org)**

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

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## Program Schedule for 2014

*David Nelson, Program Chair*

Check the website for the latest details. We have included all Preservation Month activities in our calendar, even those not sponsored or presented by the Museum.

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

### 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 9: U-46 Planetarium Public Shows

**Elgin National Watch Company Observatory,  
312 Watch Street**

**Doors open at 4:30 P.M. and close at 8:00 P.M.**

**Shows begin at 5:00 p.m. and 7:00 p.m.**

Two 1-hour presentations will include a sky show plus an in-depth history of the Observatory and the Elgin National Watch Company. Elgin Heritage Commission Chairman Bill Briska is guest speaker. Self-guided tours available before and after both shows. \$3.00 per person (credit cards are not accepted).

Contact/RSVP: Peggy Hernandez 847-888-5324

**May 10, 9:00 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.**

### Walking Tour: Elgin Mental Health Center Cemetery

The EMHC cemetery is more than a burial ground. It is an artifact of a bygone era's social safety net and healthcare policy. Tour this little location with Elgin Mental Health Center historian Bill Briska. Meet at Hickory Stick Restaurant parking lot, Elgin Sports Complex, 875 Sports Way, Elgin, IL 60123  
Contact/RSVP: Bill Briska, 847-421-4022

**May 10, Lords Park Zoo, 1:00 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.**

### Continuing the Heritage, Friends of Lords Park Zoo

Help celebrate the 4 new elk (and maybe even baby elk) added to Lords Park Zoo and this summer's reopening of the farm animal zoo. Family oriented fun in the farm animal zoo area of Lords Park. Live music, popcorn, refreshments, washable animal tattoos, souvenirs and more.

Contact: Terry Gabel, 847-888-2348

### 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 18, 3:00 P.M. - 4:30 P.M.**

### 9th Annual Fireside Chat about Elgin's Past

**Gail Borden Public Library, 270 N Grove Avenue,  
2nd Floor, River Room**

Come share your memories or just to listen during an informal discussion about various aspects of Elgin's past led by Elgin historians E.C. "Mike" Alft and Jerry Turnquist. Attendees are encouraged to bring memorabilia to share with the audience. Sponsored by the Gail Borden Library.

Registration requested. Visit [gailborden.info/register](http://gailborden.info/register); 847-429-4597

**May 21, 6:30 p.m. - 8:00 p.m.**

### Walking Tour of Historic Elgin

**Meet at First Congregational Church,  
256 E. Chicago St.**

Learn about Elgin's rich history during this walking tour of the near east side with Elgin historian Jerry Turnquist. Visit the site of the city's first log cabin, learn about its religious heritage, and see various historical and architecturally notable buildings.

Contact: Jerry Turnquist, 847-431-2472

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

Elgin has more than 2,000 bungalow-style homes built between 1910 and 1930. If you live in a bungalow or just love the style, attend this rally with information on architecture preservation, renovations, and local history from the experts.

Contact: Elgin History Museum, 847-742-4248

## May 24: Fox Trot Walk for a Cause

Please help the Elgin History Museum and sign up today to Walk for a Cause on Saturday May 24. The Walk is held in conjunction with the Fox Trot race. If 50 or more people sign up and select the Museum as their Cause, the City of Elgin will donate an extra \$500 bonus to the Museum. A portion of the entrance fee also goes to the Museum. Register today for \$13 at <http://www.cityofelgin.org/index.aspx?nid=1684>

May 26, 11:00 a.m.

## Memorial Day at Bluff City Cemetery 945 Bluff City Blvd

An Elgin tradition since 1868, this year's program pays tribute to the Illinois National Guard as part of the 75th anniversary of the Elgin Armory. Included will be an address by SGM David Owlsey, the Elgin Choral Union, and the Elgin High School Band.

Contact: [www.elginmemorialday.org](http://www.elginmemorialday.org)

May 27, 3:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m.

## 75th Anniversary: Open House Tour of Elgin Armory 254 Raymond St.

Tour the longtime home of the Illinois National Guard, an Art Deco building completed in 1939 as part of a Works Progress Administration project.

Contact/RSVP: SFC Terry O'Neill, SSG Michael Stuckert, or SSG John Yaeger at 847-741-3697

## 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 Elgin Racing with Maurice Dyer

## September 11, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch: History of St. Joseph's 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"

\$40 Members/\$50 Non-Members, advance tickets required.

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

## Welcome New Members

- Stacey Baker
- Tish Calhamer
- Ted Heise
- Phred Hollister
- Richard H Jones
- Betty & Jim Kimmey
- Tom Krebsbach
- Sandi and Dennis McClure
- Bob Smelser/Jessica Parsons
- Downtown Neighbors Association

## Thank You Donors

- Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham donated toward the Mass Grave Marker at Bluff City Cemetery.
- Grand Victoria Foundation Grantworks Program Grant
- Don Ansel and Illinois Tool Works Matching Grant Program
- Alan Walters and Benjamin Moore Matching Grant Program
- Wayne Heinmiller and AT&T Matching Grant Program
- Maurice Dyer donated funds toward Museum exhibits.
- Richard Nichols donated general funds
- Carol Cowles, Barb Evans, and Karen Maki for the Elgin African American History Project

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

## Larkin Home for Children, 1896-2013: Part 2

*by David Siegenthaler*

The last half of the 1900s saw an increase in what one Larkin Home director called "orphans of the living" – children whose home lives were turbulent and dysfunctional. These were youths with severe behavioral or emotional disorders who could not or should not remain in their own homes. Some were angry, unruly and disruptive. Others were suicidal, withdrawn and depressed. Many were too difficult for foster care or adoption. Often, sexual abuse was involved. In 1989, the Larkin Home director estimated that 50 to 60 percent of Larkin Home youths had been sexually abused. The Larkin Home's mission thus changed over the century from custodial care for homeless children to treatment care for emotionally-disturbed children.

The first step in this transition occurred in 1951 when the board hired Miss Joan Havercroft, an Elgin native, to be its first director with special training in the fields of sociology and psychology. All subsequent directors would have such training and experience, reflecting a new emphasis on therapeutic care at the Home.

By the 1960s the Larkin Home's transition to a treatment facility was apparent. In 1966 the Home's staff included a director, assistant director, part-time social worker, psychologist and psychiatric consultant. The director at the time, Spencer Allen, said they would like to have two full-time social workers. Other staffers included a secretary, cook, housekeeper, janitor, laundress, seamstress, five house couples and four Peace Corps volunteers. All this to serve 30 children. Defending his large staff, Allen said, "...if we cut out even one of them it would severely damage our theory of group care."

In 1966 the Larkin Home opened its first group home, courtesy of the McGraw Wildlife Foundation, which donated a house in East Dundee. In 1971 the Larkin Home opened the Clara Thatcher Center, named for a donor, on Melrose Avenue behind the main building. This included a group home in a more institutionalized setting. Over the next 30 years several more group homes were opened: 150 College Street, 113 Plum Street, 59 Park Row, 510 and 518 W. Highland Avenue, 9N987 Koshare Trail and 455 Shady Oaks Drive. Each group home, managed by a full-time staff, accommodated up to seven youths. Some were co-ed, others segregated by gender. By about 1980 the main building at 1212 Larkin Avenue had been converted entirely to administrative offices, with residents all living in group homes.

In 1970 the Larkin Home opened a school with two part-time teachers assigned to tutor a few children. As the school program grew during the 1970s, mobile classrooms were set up behind the main building. For the first time, the Larkin Home began serving non-residents: day students with learning disabilities or other issues that prevented them from succeeding in a normal school environment. The school became a day-care program for mostly non-residents and in 1981 expanded to include a site in Carpentersville.

By the mid-1990s the schools were overcrowded and a new school was needed. Fortunately, there was an ideal school building for their purposes sitting vacant in Elgin, with the only cost being the nearly \$2 million required to fix it up. Funds were raised and the former Elgin Mental Health Center school was leased for a nominal fee from the city, who had leased it from the state. The school, at 515 Sports Way, on the northern edge of the Mental Health Center campus, was renovated and opened in September 2001.

Diversification continued as the Larkin Home changed to meet needs. In 1981 a transitional living program was begun to help older teens with mental illnesses to live independently. This evolved into a program for adults. Outpatient family counseling and a variety of programs for at-risk youths were developed to serve residents and the community at large.

By the late 1980s, the Larkin Home for Children became known as the Larkin Center for Children and Adolescents, a name that better reflected the variety of services offered. In 1990 a sign with the new name was installed on the front lawn, the first sign ever to identify the building at 1212 Larkin Avenue. The sign was meant to promote the Center's services and to help it become more visible in the community. In 1993 the Board of Directors voted to officially change the name of the "Larkin Home for Children" to "The Larkin Center."

Fundraising was always necessary for maintaining the Larkin Center's services, particularly in the early years before contracts from government agencies and school districts provided substantial and reliable funding. Initially the Home relied on the charity of individual citizens and organizations along with whatever support the surviving family could contribute. House-to-house canvasses, street fairs, bazaars, a published cookbook and a variety of other benefits were some of the early fundraisers. In 1918 the Home became affiliated with Associated Charities, and in 1924 with the Elgin Community Chest (now the United Way). A Larkin Home Auxiliary was established in 1964 to help with fundraising and programs. The Marine Corps League began selling Christmas trees on the front lawn of the Larkin Home in the late 1950s as a fundraiser for the Home. This tradition has continued ever since, though the Marines ended their involvement about 1976. Beginning in February 1997, an annual Sweetheart Auction became the Larkin Center's main fundraiser.

By the 1990s about 98 percent of the Larkin Center's income came from taxpayers. Most of that money was contractual aid and Medicaid distributed by the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services for each case of child abuse and child neglect it referred to Larkin, and by the Illinois Department of Mental Health for each child with severe mental or emotional problems it referred to Larkin. School districts also paid fees for each child referred to the Larkin Center's school. The other two percent of Larkin's income was generated through donations, fundraising benefits and investments from an endowment fund.

Increasing financial struggles over its last few years led to the closing of the Larkin Center in 2013. Some of the factors: The depressed U.S. economy reduced the amount of donations and investment income; the state placed restrictions on how long children could remain

in group homes; two group homes were temporarily closed for repairs, reducing the number of children served and thus, the number of government contracts; and a steep and unexpected rise in insurance costs. When 18 months of negotiations to merge with Lawrence Hall Youth Services broke down, the Larkin Center was over \$2 million in debt and could not afford to pay for insurance.

The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services asked Lawrence Hall Youth Services to take over some of the Larkin Center's programs. Lawrence Hall agreed to take over four of Larkin's group homes, as well as the Larkin Center school. The remainder of the group home residents were transferred to a Lawrence Hall home with the same staff that had taken care of them at Larkin. Most of Larkin's staff were re-hired by Lawrence Hall, though without the benefit of union membership they had had since 1989. The Ecker Center for Mental Health agreed to take over Larkin's adult counseling and housing programs at the request of the Department of Human Services. Making the transition as seamless and inconspicuous as possible for the clients was a priority for all of the organizations.

The future of the former Larkin Center building at 1212 Larkin Avenue is uncertain at this point. This Colonial Revival-style building, designated a local historic landmark in 2004, will always be a reminder, as long as it stands, of the children's home that was there for 101 years.

*Acknowledgements: Various newspaper articles and other sources.*



*The Larkin Home*

## Larkin Home History Addendum

In Part 1 it was noted that the Larkin Home's story began in May 1893 when Henry Degener's wife Mary died only days after giving birth to twins, who were taken in by Miss Mary Peabody. EAHS member Carol Hecht found information on what became of the Degener twins. Eliza Lovell, widow of Vincent, became the legal guardian of Harry and Fred Degener while they were babies. Eliza and Vincent had no children of their own. Eliza's home at 600 Margaret Place was the original site of the Larkin Home, then called the Elgin Children's Home. Eliza, a native of England, was wealthy and owned homes in England and Switzerland. She arranged to have the twins live overseas, where she lived for most of the remainder of her life. By 1916 both twins had returned to Elgin for visits, where their father and two married older sisters were still living, and soon settled in Elgin. Harry had become a book binder and Fred was a cabinet maker. Their father, Henry, had remarried in 1899 and died in 1924. Eliza died in Pennsylvania in 1928. Her obituary noted that her adopted son Henry (Harry) survived her, but didn't mention Fred. Harry married Ethel, had two sons, and died in 1929. Fred, a longtime employee of the Rinehimer Bros. Mfg. Co., last appears in Elgin city directories in 1951. While in Elgin he was married and divorced three times and had no children—in each case his wife left him within months. Coincidentally, the Larkin Home had a director in 1967-68 named James Degener, presumably no relation.

Carol also has an interesting theory as to why Mary Peabody might have given up a good job at the watch factory, where she had worked for 23 years, to care for the infants. In 1893 a severe economic depression was sweeping the country, causing the Elgin watch factory to lay off half of its workforce in July 1893. Though Mary left the watch factory in May 1893, perhaps she saw the writing on the wall. She returned to work at the watch factory about 1898, just when the depression was easing and the factory started hiring again.

For those interested in researching former Larkin Home residents, there are a couple of sources that may be worth checking. The federal censuses, beginning in 1900, include the names of all residents at the time the censuses were taken. Also, surviving records given to the Elgin History Museum last fall include packets of documents (monthly reports, board minutes, etc.) for 1933 through 1952 and 1966-68. These reports and minutes often include the names of admissions and discharges, as well as miscellaneous comments regarding the residents and their families.



*Jerri Barnhart, Sue Moylan, & Elizabeth Marston represent the Elgin History Museum at the recent Volunteer-a-Palooza*

## **Museum Acquires Ziegler “Flying Mile” Trophies**

*George Rowe, President*

In late February Brian Ziegler contacted the Museum, indicating that he might want to donate the trophies his father Gregg won at Daytona in 1960 and 1961.

I was very excited about this and contacted board members Maurice Dyer and Dennis Roxworthy to see if they would be able to meet with Brian. Maury and Dennis are both car collectors and I had mentioned Gregg and the car that won the trophies to them previously.

The Ziegler family donated four trophies: two from 1960 and two from 1961.

Gregg first went to Daytona Speed Week in 1956 and was immediately hooked. Of the many events held, Gregg became fascinated with the flying mile. It was run on the beach, no track, using a stock car from the current year. Gregg saw that the fastest cars were the Chrysler 300s and that is what he came back with the next year, and the next and the next. He kept coming back until they quit running the Flying Mile event.

In 1960 he was able to get a specially prepared car from Chrysler. He had made some friends at the factory and they called him one day and asked if he would like a Chrysler 300 F GT Special. He immediately said yes. Before the car left the factory they installed a unique French four speed manual transmission. That made it one of a kind. Gregg not only won the race in 1960 but he also set a record that would never be broken, going almost 145 mph (144.943).

Gregg received the car from Chrysler in January 1960 and according to those who know, he broke it in on I-90. He had the car for only two weeks before he left for Daytona after work one Saturday. At Daytona there was some minor tuning to be done; he was very particular about the spark plugs he ran. Unlike today, this race was run on the beach. Contestants were given a mile and a half to get up to speed, then they entered the timed portion for the next mile, and were provided another mile and a half to slow down. Contestants then turned around and ran the same course the opposite way, and the official time for each contestant was determined by averaging the time for each run.

Gregg knew that he could not race this car again the following year (it had to be a current year car), so he sold it to someone in Bloomington IL, where it sat until 2011. Gregg owned the car for only about three months, but he kept an eye on it for the rest of his life, and the record he had set would never be broken. Gregg won again in '61, but did not break his own record, and in 1963 they ran the “Flying Mile” at Daytona for the last time.



*The Gregg Ziegler Daytona Trophies*

## **Elgin Area Historical Society Assists with Signage for Barclay Park**

The Museum is helping Gifford Park Association prepare signage for Barclay Park, the small triangular plot of land bordered by Dundee Avenue and Center Street. This land was donated to the City of Elgin as a park in 1906 by David F. Barclay.

His home, built about 1865, still stands across Dundee Avenue as part of the Madison Funeral Home. Barclay was a Scottish immigrant who became a very successful manufacturer of dairy equipment, such as milk

cans, cheese vats, and steam boilers and engines. In 1874 he was elected to his first of four terms as Elgin mayor.

From 1919 to 1983 this park was filled with playground equipment and the happy voices of children. A fence kept the youngsters safely inside once they arrived, but they had to cross heavy traffic to get to and from the park. In 1983 the playground was removed due to safety concerns.

Gifford Park Association plans on erecting the sign in May.



*Barclay Park in 1954*

## **Morris Puklin and the American Dream**

*by Raleigh Sutton*

Morris Puklin was one of two children born to Mayer Puklin and Rose Bellen. He was born October 24, 1874 in Moscow. His family name, Puklin, comes from the Russian "pukli," meaning "having curly hair." At the time of Morris' birth, Alexander II, Emperor of Russia, King of Poland and the Grand Duke of Finland, was Tsar. He ruled from 1855 until his assassination in 1881.

When Morris was not quite sixteen years old he left Russia for the United States to make his fortune. In July of 1890 he arrived in New York City and went directly to New Haven, Connecticut which had a large Jewish population. He was among the 1,562,000 Jews who left Imperial Russia for the United States between 1881 and 1910. Additional Jewish immigrants came from Western Europe to the United States. A million more settled in South America, South Africa, Ireland, Palestine and even China.

The first thing Morris did after he arrived in New Haven, CT was find a job. He started working at Strouse-Adler Company for six dollars a week. Strouse-Adler manufactured corsets. After finding a place to live, he went to night school and took English classes.

In 1893 he started his own business selling cigars retail at 191 Meadow Street, New Haven. He soon outgrew his store and moved to 184 State Street and changed

from retail to wholesale business. He outgrew the new location in two years and then moved to 723 State Street, switching to a wholesale stationery business.

Morris' children were Edward Puklin, Dr. Marvin Puklin, Herbert Puklin, Sadie Puklin, and William Puklin, all born in New Haven. Edward was born July 27, 1907. Edward married Evelyn Schwartz, who was born October 6, 1910 in New York. Sometime after marrying, they moved to Chicago, where their son Barry was born May 17, 1936.

Edward and Evelyn's son grew up to become Kane County Judge Barry E. Puklin. Edward died July 20, 1986 in Elgin. Evelyn died February 23, 2004 in Aurora.

Morris' idea of the American Dream and his hard work translated to his children-Morris' granddaughter Lisa Wisdom is in real estate here in Elgin.

## **History Fair Fun!**

*Sara Russell, Museum Educator*

The 10th annual Elgin History Fair was held Sunday, April 27 at the Museum. Activities included old fashioned games, early chores on the farm, a little school house, butter making, a radio play, making Elgin High E's for your sweater, Grandma's kitchen tools, and a giant-sized Elgin Road Race map with cars to race. Thanks to the Blue Tulip Wranglers for providing wonderful music, to Elgin Public Museum for bringing Native American items, to the Friends of Lords Park Zoo for providing information about the elk and bison, and to the Elgin Fire Barn Museum for driving over their old fire engine for children to explore. The History Fair was organized with the help of Linda Rock, Tricia Grosser, Jerri Barnhart, Don Pielin, and Laura Stroud. Many thanks to Ken, Diana, and Beth Gough for creating a Civil War encampment and demonstrating how to spin thread along with Beth Hudson.

Ricky Harris and her granddaughter, Kilee, along with Sue Blakely and Kilee's friend, popped popcorn and poured root beer with an Elgin Eagle Brewery reproduction label. Marge and George Rowe greeted visitors, handed out I Spy Scavenger Hunts, and talked about the Elgin Windmill Company. Alisa Corsi and Peggy Hernandez from the Elgin Observatory explained the history of Elgin watches in the watch exhibit and supervised the handling of small watch parts. Doug Tomsha, John Marston, and Paul Larson helped with the outdoor games and farm activities. Also thanks to Lucy Elliott for preparing snacks for volunteers. It was a great day with a couple of hundred people in attendance!



*Beth Gough spinning thread at the 2014 History Fair*



*Board members Laura Stroud and Paul Larson with a young visitor to the Gifford Cabin replica*