



The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 52 NUMBER 3

MAY 2015



Project 2-3-1 Premiere April 26

Rebecca Marco, Editor

The documentary film and accompanying exhibit *Project 2-3-1, A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage*, premiered to a full house at the Blizzard Theatre at Elgin Community College. The documentary's debut was the culmination of several years of work by the Historical Society, Grindstone Productions, lifetime Elgin resident Ernie Broadnax, and many others in the community.

A gala held before the premiere was highlighted by the appearance of State Senator Michael Noland, Elgin mayor Dave Kaptain, and president of ECC, Dr. Sam. The exhibit, which was constructed and donated by Fabric Images, was well-received and informative. The documentary received a standing ovation. Many thanks to the Illinois Railway Museum in Union IL for providing the boxcars and sites where the first part of the documentary was filmed.

The film covers the African-American history of Elgin in three parts: Part 1 provides Civil War background and history of the human "contrabands," enslaved people seized by Union Army forces to undermine the South's ability to wage war against the North. Part 2 covers the three-block Fremont St. neighborhood on Elgin's east side where the contrabands were allowed to live and where they formed their own community. Part 3 covers the struggle for civil rights in Elgin up to the present day.

Many people contributed money, time and effort to make this project a reality. We thank executive producer and lifelong, 7th-generation Elginite Ernie Broadnax for tirelessly pursuing his dream to record the history of his neighborhood, Phil Broxham of Grindstone Productions for creating this well-made film, Marco Alvarez of Fabric Images for producing and donating the portable exhibit to the Society, and the Illinois Railway Museum. For generous financial contributions, we thank the Grand Victoria Founda-

tion, the Kane County Riverboat Fund, the Seigle Family Foundation, Elgin Cultural Arts Commission, Hope for Housing Center, Gail Borden Library Foundation, Elgin Community College, Judson College, Advocate Sherman Healthcare, Rick Jakle, Doug Tomsha, Raleigh Sutton, IHC Foundation, Prezel Hardy, Pratha Entertainment/Tish Powell, and Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks. *Thank you.*

The Society would also like to thank Mike Alft, Peter Alter, Joy Bivins, Darrell Dexter, Gretl Kramer, Museum Director Elizabeth Marston, David Siegenthaler, Tim Smith, and Jerry Turnquist for their time spent doing historical research for the film.



Sue Moylan, Elgin Chief of Police Jeffrey Swoboda, Ernie Broadnax, and Museum Educator Sarah Russell at the Premiere Gala on April 26

We would also like to thank the people who were interviewed for the film and/or provided content such as old photos, documents, and reminiscences. We have listed them elsewhere in this issue.

This documentary will make a lasting and valuable contribution to Elgin history, the Elgin community, and American history in general. Your membership and ongoing support for the Elgin History Museum made this film possible and the Board of Directors wishes to thank every one of you.

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



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



Editor: Rebecca Marco

The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.

Next deadline June 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>

May 7, 10:30 A.M.: Music of the 1920s with David Nelson at Elgin Academy Theater

May 11, 7:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library
Steve Stroud will give a talk about bungalows.

May 13, 7:00 P.M.: "What Were They Thinking: Aberrations in Architecture" with Rebecca Hunter

May 14, 6:00 P.M. A Walk in the Park with Steve Stroud. Meet at Channing School parking lot.

May 16, 1:00-4:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library. Asian-Pacific American Heritage Month Celebration
The Museum will have a table.

May 17, 2:00 P.M.

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

May 18, 7 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library
Music of the 1940s with David Nelson

May 19, 7:00 P.M.: Project 2-3-1 Elgin's African-American History shown at Gail Borden Public Library

Our new documentary will be shown free of charge. The public is invited. Commentary and discussion will take place after the film for those interested.

May 20, 7:00 P.M., Gail Borden Library
History of Elgin Mental Health Center with Bill Briska

May 21, 12:00 noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Elgin Women's Club with Linda Rock

May 21, 7:00 P.M., Gail Borden Public Library:
"The Ranch Comes of Age: Mid-Century Modern Architecture in Elgin" with Rebecca Hunter

May 23, 9:00 A.M.

Tour of Elgin Mental Health Center Cemetery with Bill Briska: meet at Hickory Stick restaurant, east parking lot, Elgin Sports Complex.

May 25, 11:00 A.M. Bluff City Cemetery
Memorial Day ceremonies

May 26, 4:30 P.M. and 6:30 P.M.: Elgin Planetarium,
corner of Watch St. & Raymond St: Presentation by Peggy Hernandez of school district U-46

May 28, 7:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library
History of Elgin National Watch Company with Jerry Turnquist

May 28, 7:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library
Fireside Interview with Yvonne Mayes: Civil Rights in Elgin 1960s-1970s

May 31, 3:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library
Fireside chat about Elgin's past with historians Mike Alft and Jerry Turnquist

June 14, 2:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library
Music of the 1950s with David Nelson

June 18, 12:00 noon: Brown Bag Lunch
The Underground Railroad with Marge Edwards

July 19 10:00 A.M.-3:00 P.M.
Antique and Vintage Car Show at the Museum

June 27, 1:30 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library
Fireside Interview with Betty Brown: Civil Rights in Elgin 1960s-1970s

June 27, 2:00 P.M. Fox River Paddleboat Tour
Register with Museum. \$7.50

August 20, 12:00 noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Toy Soldiers with Don Pielin

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

\$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. holiday treats, punch, and tea will be served.

Welcome New Members

- Robert Brault
- Luke Engen
- Julio Flores
- Pam Hiser
- Valerie Howells
- Bob Langlois
- Tom and Maureen Lee
- Lou Stotts

General Donations: Thank You!

- Betty Brown
- Valerie Howells, AT&T Matching Grant
- Julia Langlois
- Miriam Lytle

Toward Glorious Heights: Young Elgin in 1915

by Richard Renner

Elgin has been a notable source of young talent. Its newspapers from the spring of 1915 captured five remarkable young people about to set off on adult lives having significant impacts on Elgin and the world at large.

Madeline Sadler



Madeline and her Northwestern Magazine staff

produce a special women's edition of the student newspaper, the *Daily Northwestern*. An Elgin newspaper sought her opinion when one Northwestern professor complained that too many college interests were "bound up in petticoats" and that the men should pay more attention to their studies and less to the women. Diplomatically, Madeline responded that such diversions may interfere with athletics but never with studies.

At Northwestern University 21-year-old Madeline Sadler was finishing a busy senior year. The daughter of former Elgin alderman Walter Sadler, she had developed her writing talents at the school and served in school literary societies and as an editor of the *Northwestern Magazine*. She had also been selected as one of twelve coeds to

After her graduation, Madeline returned to Elgin, marrying Ernest C. Waggoner who would be a popular and longtime science teacher at Elgin High. But she never gave up her literary interests, publishing in 1958 *The Long Haul West*, a well-received history of America's 1817-1850 canal era which one reviewer praised for its "brisk, vigorous, warm and often jaunty narrative." (Sadly, there's no longer a copy at Gail Borden.) And Madeline Sadler Waggoner should always be remembered as one of the founders of the Elgin Area Historical Society.

Jeffrey Metzel and Walter Ansel

Meanwhile, at Elgin High the Class of 1915 was saying its farewells. Two young members had already departed. Jeffrey Metzel and Walter Ansel had received appointments to the Naval Academy and, accompanied by Jeffrey's mother, were attending a private school in Annapolis to prepare them for qualifying tests. Their Elgin classmates had given "Jeff" and "Walt" a memorable farewell party.



WALTER ANSEL
"Watch out for my torpedo"

Freshmen Debating Club; Winner Freshmen-Sophomore Declamation Contest; Winning Team Junior Exhibition Debate; Associate Editor Annual; Mirror Board.

The two boys, sons of a local banker and grocer, had already worked together as members of a high school debating team. They had argued for maintaining the Monroe Doctrine as part of American foreign policy – an appropriate stance for boys whose careers would support the global extension of national power in the so-called "American Century."



JEFFREY METZEL
"Mother intended me for a bachelor, but I guess I can't fool her much longer"

Freshman Debating Club; German Play '12; Basketball 2nd Team '12; Class Basketball '13, '14, '15; Class Track '14, '15; Football 2nd '13; Comedy Concert '12; Glee Club '15; Editor-in-Chief Mirror.

Both boys indeed passed their Academy entrance exams and graduated from Annapolis with the Class of 1918. Jeffrey Metzel served with distinction on the Washington staff of Fleet Admiral Ernest King during World War 2 and retired as a Rear Admiral. Walter Ansel was a pioneer in amphibious warfare and commanded several ships during World War 2. After his retirement as a Rear Admiral he started another successful career researching and publishing on German military operations during the war.

The boys' studies in the spring of 1915 were the start of two notable maritime dynasties. One of Admiral Metzel's sons graduated from Annapolis, commanded America's first nuclear submarine, the USS Nautilus, and retired as a Rear Admiral. Admiral Ansel also had a son who graduated from Annapolis and another son, a grandson, and a great-granddaughter who have had notable careers as shipwrights.

James Eppenstein

Back at the high school, James Eppenstein seems to have been thoroughly enjoying the end of his senior year. In the 1915 yearbook he left a poem that recalled "the four bright happy years we spent, Old Elgin High, with you." The son of one of the owners of the Illinois Watch Case Co., James would turn 16 only weeks before his graduation but already displayed an enthusiasm for society and the arts. At his junior class exhibition he had been selected to perform "The Boy Orator of Zapata City" by Richard Harding Davis, and he was "Mr. Newte" in the senior class play, "Fanny and the Servant Problem." At a time when high school dancing was still controversial, he was the president of the school's Elite dancing club and preparing for the club's evening masquerade party.



JAMES EPPENSTEIN

"Of all my father's family I love myself the best"

Glee Club '15; Chimes of Normandy; Junior Exhibition '14; Honorable Mention in Debate & Essay Contest; Class Play Cast; Freshmen Debating Club.

James left Elgin High for Cornell University, returning after graduation for management positions in the watch case company. In 1928 he left Elgin for another path, studying architecture at Michigan, Harvard and Berlin and starting his own Chicago firm. Many of his projects remain around the Chicago area, and one of his most remarkable designs—for the colorful, streamlined "Electroliner" train that served the North Shore Line—is in the collection of the Illinois Railway Museum at Union.

Anson Luman Clark



Finally, in the spring of 1915 many Elginites were enjoying the tenor voice of young Anson Luman Clark. As a result of his father's many business interests Anson had spent much of his youth outside Elgin, but he was an Elgin native with deep local roots. He

shared the name of his grandfather, a surgeon in one of Elgin's Civil War units who had died in 1910 after an honored career as an Elgin physician.

At Cornell University "Pink" Clark studied mechanical engineering, but was president of the school's Combined Musical Clubs and a three-year member of the glee club and advanced choir. In spring 1915 he was back in Elgin singing at his Universalist church and several other venues. His audiences must have been disappointed to learn that he would soon return to Cornell to assist its music department in its annual May festival.



Anson plans an "aerial circus" with other WW1 pilots

It seemed a musical career was in Anson's future, but after service in the Great War as a military aviator, he took a different direction, commencing, in the current words of The University of Texas, "a highly unusual and successful career" through which he "amassed a sizable fortune." From mechanical engineering he moved on to medicine, developing a friendship with Charles Mayo, a founder of the Mayo Clinic where Anson served as a professor in the 1930s. The Clinic's Anson L. Clark professorship in urology honors his service there. From medicine in Minnesota, he moved on to banking and the oil business in the southwest, leading an oil company named for his alma mater Cornell. Through the Anson L. Clark Foundation much of his wealth is distributed to the Clark Scholars Program at Texas Tech and to the University of Texas at Dallas where an annual memorial lecture, a research program, and scholarships in his name all commemorate his life.

In the 1915 Elgin High yearbook James Eppenstein's valedictory poem concluded with words capturing the spirit he and so many of his contemporaries shared:

And let's keep right on working hard,
And fight a good, stiff fight;
And climbing ever higher, reach
At last a glorious height.

The McClures of Elgin – Part 1

by David Siegenthaler

The McClure family was another of Elgin's most prominent early families. A McClure was a founding member of both the first church in Elgin and the Elgin Academy. A McClure was responsible for establishing the first post office in the Elgin area. A McClure was the first white bride in the Elgin area. A McClure built the first ice house business in Elgin. A McClure started the first milk route in Elgin. A McClure helped to re-organize and lead the Elgin Packing Company into a major industry. A McClure co-founded a lumberyard that lasted for about 67 years. A McClure-built Queen Anne home remains one of Elgin's most magnificent mansions. And two Elgin streets – McClure Avenue and Vincent Place – are named for the family.

George A. McClure (1770-1851) and Finla McClure Jr. (circa 1773-1853) were born in Londonderry, Ireland, sons of Finla McClure Sr. (born 1739) of Scotch-Irish descent. Finla Sr. immigrated to America in 1793 with his family and settled in New York.

George McClure was married in New York to Eleanor Boles about 1795 and they had four children – Finly, Mary, James and Sarah. Sarah (1803-46) became a teacher and died in Elgin. Eleanor may have died around 1805 and George married Sarah Welles (1787-1873) in 1808. George and Sarah had nine children – George Welles, Eleanor (Mrs. Stephen Tourtellot), Julia, Mary Eliza, Benjamin Welles, William, Henry (died in infancy), Henry Clay and Margaret (Mrs. Nathan Boynton; later Mrs. D.W. Harding). Most of these children lived in the Elgin area for a time before moving on. Three of them moved to the town of Wyoming, Iowa, and their mother Sarah joined them there after George's death. Henry Clay went to California during the 1849 gold rush. George Welles, the eldest child, was a graduate of West Point Military Academy and died on a government expedition during the Blackhawk War. Mary Eliza married Captain Louis Jamison, a Fort Dearborn commander, in November 1837, the first wedding in the Elgin area.

George and his family lived in Bath, Steuben County, New York. There he became a militia commander and received the commission of Brigadier General, a position he held until the close of the War of 1812. While living in Bath, George served as Steuben County Sheriff for four years, postmaster for eight years, and was a member of the state legislature for three years. By occupation he was a miller and had also studied law.

In 1835, at age 64, George came west to Illinois and claimed a tract of land that today would be part of the McGraw Wildlife Preserve on the west side of Route 25 about a half-mile north of the Milk Pail Restaurant. George established the first post office in the Elgin-

Dundee area on this site, which he named McClure's Grove, in 1836. The opening of a post office was once the first official recognition of a settlement's existence. In May 1837 James T. Gifford's application for a post office in Elgin was denied because it was too near McClure's Grove. Two months later, however, the decision was reversed and Gifford was appointed postmaster in July 1837.

On May 12, 1836, when the Congregational Church was organized in James T. Gifford's cabin, George McClure, his wife Sarah and daughter Julia were among the founding members. Though the McClures were Presbyterians, the Congregationalists in the group outnumbered the Presbyterians by one, so it was resolved that the form of the church government be Congregational. The two denominations worshiped and worked together in unity of purpose until 1853 when the Presbyterians formed their own church in Elgin.

In 1839 George McClure was one of seven community leaders chosen by James T. Gifford to comprise the Board of Trustees of a proposed private school called Elgin Academy. He served in that capacity until his death from cholera in 1851 at age 80. George was named by an early Dundee historian as one of the three most distinguished men who ever lived in Dundee—second, perhaps, only to the legendary detective Allan Pinkerton.

George's brother, Finla McClure Jr., married Hannah Carpenter (1788-1865) in 1808. Settling in Bath, New York, Finla Jr. and Hannah had eight children, four of whom came to live in Elgin, along with their parents – Vincent (1815-95), Caroline C. (1818-71), Finla Lawrence (1823-1900) and Hannah Amelia (1829-95; Mrs. Otis Jenne).

In 1846 Finla Jr. and his family came west to Elgin, probably at the urging of his brother George. Finla Jr. and his son, Finla L., bought much land, mostly in the northwest part of Elgin. Finla Jr. died in 1853 at age 80 and his wife Hannah died in 1865 at age 76.

Vincent C. McClure was a doctor who received his medical education at Berkshire College in Geneva, New York. Vincent married Caroline S. Graves in New York in 1846 and later that year came west to Elgin. Vincent and his parents lived on Elgin's east side, while his brother, Finla L., farmed on the west side. Vincent dealt with the cholera epidemics in Elgin in 1848 and 1854, as well as one in Chicago in 1866. In 1893 he published an article in the Chicago Tribune entitled "Cholera, as treated by an old physician."

Vincent and Caroline had five children: Charles R. (1846-1923; Civil War veteran; postal clerk), Edward, Dr. Finla McClure (Salida, Colorado, physician for over 40 years; also mayor of Salida; died 1921), Kate and Jessie. Vincent moved to Chicago in 1863 and died

there in 1895, a practicing physician until two weeks before his death. His wife Caroline died in 1899 and both were returned to Elgin for burial.

While in Elgin, Vincent served as an alderman in 1858-59, and in Chicago served as county physician in 1866-67. Vincent Place, a street in northwest Elgin, was probably named for him by his brother, Finla L. However, it is also possible that Finla named it for his son, Charles Vincent ("Vinnie").

To be continued...

Acknowledgements: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; Kane County histories; Autobiographies of Fox Valley Pioneers (1981); Dundee Township: 1835-1985 (1985); newspaper articles; city directories; federal censuses; City of Elgin death records; etc.



General George A. McClure in uniform of the War of 1812 while serving with the New York State militia. Photograph from an oil copy of the original given to the Dundee Township Library by Fred Hall. Now displayed at the Dundee Township Historical Society Museum.

In 1887 Vincent, like his brother ten years earlier, was persuaded to run for mayor and was elected. Two incidents during his term as mayor revealed him to be a man of principle and integrity. In early 1888 Sherman Hospital was planning to open at the corner of Channing and North streets. However, neighbors protested, fearing it would become a nuisance and lower property values. The City Council agreed and passed a resolution forbidding it. Mayor Lovell then vetoed the resolution, thereby saving the hospital, a much-needed institution. A short time later Mayor Lovell clashed again with the City Council over their refusal to approve his appointments for city marshal, unacceptable to some liquor licensees, and superintendent of streets, a key figure in the patronage system. On June 4, 1888, Vincent resigned in protest, the only Elgin mayor to resign his office. Like his brother, Vincent also served as a director of the public library.

Thank You to Project 2-3-1 Participants

We especially wish to thank those members of the community who were interviewed for the film and who provided personal photos, documents and memorabilia used in the film.

To pre-order a copy of the *Project 2-3-1* DVD, visit www.elginhistory.org or call the Museum at 847-742-4248. The cost is \$15 if picked up at the Museum or \$20 shipped.

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|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| • Art Green | • Ben Downs |
| • Betty Brown | • the late Robert Gilliam |
| • Carolyn O'Neal | • Traci O'Neal |
| • Cecil Smith | • Don Mapes |
| • Eary Isabue | • James Marks |
| • Glennette Tilley Turner | • Charlene Hunter |
| • Gloria Hunter | • Ina Dews |
| • Jeanne Angel | • Joyce Fountain |
| • Larry Daly | • Pastor Edmond |
| • Pastor Barry and Ruby Jones | • Paul Rouse |
| • Rage Ledbetter | • Raleigh Sutton |
| • Steve Green | • Velma Sept |
| • Yvonne Mayes | • Don Smith |
| • Karen Schlack | • Jeff Swoboda |
| • the Box Car Kids | |



Phil Broxham of Grindstone Productions, Marco Alvarez of Fabric Images, and Elgin Mayor Dave Kaptain



Executive Producer of the documentary Ernie Broadnax and Phil Broxham of Grindstone Productions



Benjamin Downs in front of the Project 2-3-1 display provided by Fabric Images. Benjamin grew up in the Settlement neighborhood, one of nine children of Jacob and Ruby Downs, and went on to graduate from University of Illinois and earn a master's degree from the University of Oregon.



Ernie Broadnax delivers opening remarks prior to the premiere of Project 2-3-1 on April 26th



Collections Corner

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

Peter Veerhusen, a descendant of Elgin's founding Gifford family, recently donated a Lady Elgin pocket watch, the third produced in 1868 and given as a gift to James Gifford's daughter, Caroline Gifford Davidson. Her husband, Orlando Davidson, was an important board member and stockholder to the Elgin National Watch Company. Many, many thanks to Peter Veerhusen, and other Gifford descendants for donating this amazing watch to the Elgin History Museum.



Caroline and Orlando's daughter, Stella D. Ainsworth, wearing the watch.

