



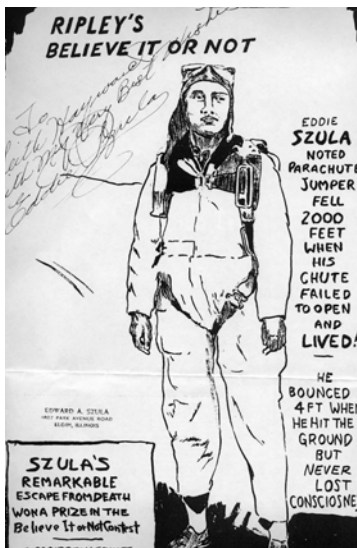
The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 50 NUMBER 4
SEPTEMBER 2013



26th Annual Cemetery Walk Sept 22

Laura Stroud, Board Secretary



Eddie Szula

A reminder that the 26th annual cemetery walk is coming up on Sunday, September 22, 2013 at Bluff City Cemetery. Six former Elginites will be portrayed and there will also be two vignettes. You will hear from Mary Stewart, Edward Szula, Levi Tennant, Louis Blum, Polly Rutland and Annie Tallent. The vignettes will be about Dr. Benjamin Browne, founder of Judson University, and the common grave site were many were moved from Channing Cemetery. We have

an interesting story about this move. So come enjoy an afternoon of history and entertainment and don't forget to wear those "comfortable" walking shoes.

Tickets may be purchased online at http://www.elginhistory.org/events_cemetery_walk.html

or by mailing a check to the Museum at 360 Park St., Elgin 60120. Tickets are also sold at Ziegler Ace Hardware, 258 N. Spring St. or 1158 Lillian St., Elgin.

- Adults, at the gate: \$10.00
- Adults, purchased in advance: \$8.00
- Elgin Area Historical Society Members: \$8.00
- Children 14 and younger, accompanied by an adult: Free

President's Report



President George Rowe

July got off with a bang, thanks to John Arcand, Bill Moring and Anthony Pedoti—In January John came to our appraisal fair with his Riverview Motorcycle collection, consisting of ephemera on the motorcycle races held at Chicago's Riverview amusement park in the 1910s. The collection includes information on the 1913 Elgin Motorcycle Race, the first nationally sanctioned motorcycle race in the country. Mr Arcand encouraged the Museum to honor that date, and we did. Bill Moring and Anthony Pedoti helped locate the trophy in Ohio and John was kind enough to pay for shipping the trophy to Elgin in time for its 100th anniversary on July 4. John Arcand and Bill Moring gave a talk at the Museum in June on the 1913 motorcycle race.

In early July, we entertained a delegation from Chile. Bob Bedard, an Elgin firefighter, was among a group that reached out to Cauquenes, Chile after they suffered a tsunami in 2010. Cauquenes became a sister city of Elgin, and a group including City Councilman Dunne and his wife Judy visited Cauquenes earlier this year. A group of "Bombadierres" (firemen) and other civic leaders repaid the visit to Elgin in July. I reached out to the group and arranged their visit to the Museum. Thanks to a tremendous translator, Mrs Green, all had a nice time.

The windmill is finally ready to be installed! Alan Walters, a board member and sales rep for Benjamin Moore, is our technical advisor on painting the tower. Alan was there the first day with Maury Dyer as the volunteers gathered at Frank Engel's farm. Frank donated use of his barn and equipment. Volunteers

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline October 20, 2013

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

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scraped, encapsulated, primed and painted the tower. Over three weekends volunteers contributed about 150 hours of labor. It was really hot, but Frank's lift allowed us to maneuver all over the tower without a lot of climbing or ladders.

Volunteer Verna Homewood's grandfather worked for the windmill company, and she is looking for a picture of him at the factory. We are very interested in members' stories or photos on the windmill company.

On Sept. 7, it will be erected on the foundation installed in Foundry Park by Lamp Inc. Many thanks to Ian Lamp and Greg Bohlin from Lamp Inc. Jim Bell from the city of Elgin is working on fencing, landscaping and lighting. Take a look if you pass on the 7th while enjoying the Gifford Park Association's house-walk.

In July our friend Jackie Vossler put together a program on artist Margaret Iannelli with Tim Samuelson, the City of Chicago's cultural historian. Margaret Iannelli was a talented artist who was a patient of the Elgin Mental Health Center for almost 30 years. Like so many of our programs, this one brought a completely new crowd to the Museum. Many thanks to Jackie, a huge influence at our Museum and a great influence on me.

Welcome four new life members to EAHS. Chandler Swan, a longtime member and past board member, signed up for life membership with his wife, Pamela. Chan also gave his son Christopher and daughter-in-law Jennifer life memberships. Chandler purchased his lifetime memberships with stock. Thank you to Chandler and his family! Other members have used

this method to donate to the Society, as there are tax benefits to using stock investments in this way. When donating, you may wish to consider donating stock instead of cash. Discuss financial decisions with your broker or investment advisor.

Program Schedule for 2013

David Nelson, Program Chair

Check the website for the latest details.

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

September 15, 1 P.M.: "Bike Chain" bicycle ride past Elgin's museums. No cost.

Meet in Lord's Park, behind the Elgin Public Museum. Join members of the Elgin Bicycle & Pedestrian Advisory Committee on a family-friendly six-mile bike ride, visiting the Elgin History Museum, Fire Barn #5 Museum, Police Museum, and back to the Elgin Public Museum. A representative from each museum will give a brief overview of their museum, and possibly share an artifact. Riders must wear a helmet, and sign a waiver/release. Riders under the age of 18 must have a release signed by a parent or guardian. Minimum age for participants is 10.

September 22, 11 A.M.-3:00 P.M.: Cemetery Walk Bluff City Cemetery

Sept. 26, 2013, 7:00 P.M.: History of Hispanics in Elgin
A panel discussion at the Elgin History Museum

Oct. 1, 2013, 7:00 P.M.: Elgin During the Vietnam War
by Jerry Turnquist
Gail Borden Public Library

October 13, 1-3 P.M.: General Meeting
Program on Thanksgiving with Penelope Bingham

Oct. 30, 2013, 7 P.M.: The Lincoln Funeral Train with Bill Werst & Tom Peterson, Gail Borden Public Library

November 9, 6-10 P.M.: Annual Benefit/Silent Auction/General Meeting.
Elgin History Museum, 360 Park St., Elgin, IL
Program: Captain Henry Detweiler on The Role of Steamboatin' in the Union Victory! with Brian Ellis
\$35 Members/\$45 Non-Members - Advance tickets required
Based on the pilot's logs of Captain Detweiler, Brian "Fox" Ellis immerses the audience in the vital, though unsung role of steamboats in the siege of Vicksburg, the capture of Natchez, and the horrors of Shiloh. Captain Henry Detweiler was there and shares an eyewitness account. He delivered troops and supplies during the Civil War, was a friend of Lincoln and rival of Mark Twain. Fox brings these stories to life in a first person monologue that shares a unique voice in this important chapter of river history.

December 7, 1-3 P.M.: Annual Holiday Tea
A Christmas Musical with Rise Jones, Soprano; Betty Volkening, Violinist; and David J. Nelson, Pianist. At 1:30 p.m. Rochelle Pennington presents "An Old Fashioned Christmas." Refreshments provided!

Thank You Donors!

Board Fundraiser Donors

Thanks for a great response to the Board Fundraiser this year, which was dedicated to the Windmill Project. Funds will be used to install and care for the windmill as well as to support and operate the Museum. Thank you for your help.

Albright, Beatrice	Alft, E.C.
Anderson, Bernice	Anderson, Charlen
Anderson, James and Sara Ellen	Armistead, Betsy and Dwight
Barnhart, Jerri and Ken	Blizzard, Harry and Phyllis
Brandes, James and Rhonda	Briska, Bill and Fran Cella
Brown, Betty	Brown, William H. and Sally
Burke, Christopher and Susan	Burnap, Darlene and Rick
Busche, Leon	Cabrera, Judith
Chevalier, Carol	Childs, Helen
Conley, Ronald and Mary	Crinigan, Linda and Jim
DeMoulin, Barbara	Dieringer, Roger
Dittmann, Charles	Dunning, Terry
Dyer, Maurice	Eder, Linda
Elbert, Marvin and Donna	Elliott, Lucy and Mark
Emmert, Judy	Epping, Hugh
Felicetti, Richard and Sharon	Flaks, Carl and Mary Ellen
Gill, Jeffrey	Greenwald, Barbara
Grimm, Rick and Kathleen	Grosser, Patricia
Hagemann, Geraldine	Hallock, Alma
Handrock, Carole	Hempstead, Jean
Hernandez, Peggy	Hoeft, Elizabeth
Hopp, Donna	Huntoon, Carol
Jocius, Patricia	Lawrence, John
Ludwig, Ernest	Lytle, Miriam
Magowan, Marilyn	Marston, Elizabeth and John
McIntyre, Susan	Miller, Dan and Patricia
Missele, Carl and Chris	Moylan, Susan
Muchow, Stephen	Nelson, David and Dolores
Nichols, Richard	Pellicore, Joyce
Pielin, Don	Redeker, Carol
Reid, Jeffrey and Elaine	Reinert, Coral
Rock, Linda	Rowe, George and Marge
Roxworthy, Dennis	Rush, Carrie
Sayre, Glenda	Schmoldt, William and Margaret
Schnell, Theodore	Schroeder, Kathleen
Siegenthaler, David	Shales, John and Marlene
Smith, H. Jane	Sutton, Raleigh and Kathleen
Turnquist, Jerry and Kathleen	Utt, Norma
Weseman, Margaret and Ed	Whitcomb, Edward
Wilson, Beatrice	Wojciechowska, Miroslawa
Ziegler, Phyllis	

Elgin African American History Project

Thanks to the Seigle Family Foundation for offering a matching grant of \$8,000 to start the research and oral history phase of the project. Matching donors include Rick Jakle, Elgin Heritage Commission, Tom Rakow for the IHC Foundation, Sherman Hospital, Elgin Community College, and the Palmer Foundation.

New Windmill Club Donors

The Society thanks Margaret Krueger for her generous gift to support the Windmill Project. Many thanks to Geraldine Hagemann, Carl and Chris Missele, Lucy and Mark Elliott, Sue and Bill Moylan, Jeff Gill and Family, Susan McIntyre, the Tennison Family, Alan Abell, Bob and Judy Schroeder, Dave Buck, Maurice Dyer, and George and Marge Rowe.

Goodbye to Lucy Elliott

Rebecca Marco, Editor

Though we are all sorry to see her go, we had a great time at the farewell party for former Museum Educator Lucy Elliott at Elgin Public House on July 22. Sara Russell, Museum Educator at the Elgin Public Museum, has assumed the role of Museum Educator. Hannah Walters will take on the duties of collections manager.



Thanks Lucy!

Welcome New Members!

Bob Bedard	Michael and Debra Donahoe
Willard Dulabaum	Phyllis Gerberding
William Kostlevy Family	Juanita Niswonger
Valerie Pector-Eaton	Gail Solovay Family
Bill and Ruth Werst	Vaughnese Williams

Fred Blesse, Elgin Boy: Ike's Doctor

Richard Renner, Board Member

Elgin 100 years ago was a launching pad for many successful lives, including that of Brigadier General Frederick Arthur Blesse. It is appropriate to recognize Fred Blesse on the 100th anniversary of his graduation from medical school and the 70th anniversary of his central role in one of the most notorious incidents of World War II.

Fred was born in Elgin on November 22, 1888. He grew up in the family home at 227 College St. with several siblings and his parents, Henry and Carolina

Wilhelmina Sophia "Minna" Soost Blesse. Henry and Minna came to America in the mid-1870s from Hanerau and Munster in Germany, a country that would have a big impact on Fred's life. They married in Boone County in 1879, and Henry moved to Elgin to find his fortune. He started in the pop business on Gifford street but soon was dispensing harder beverages in saloons and "sampling rooms" on River Street and Douglas Avenue. He was known for his generosity and attachment to his German heritage, serving as an officer and active member of Elgin's Turnverein.



227 College St in the Old Days

This cozy family picture suddenly changed. On the morning of Fred's eleventh birthday, November 22, 1899, his father died of heart disease at the family home. Henry left his wife and five children a personal estate of only \$575. It included a \$100 back bar, a \$50 cash register and stocks of rum, bitters, cigars, and "Elgin" beer. This modest legacy apparently was consumed in paying debts to Phil Freiler and other local liquor interests.

The Blesse family stayed in their College St. home, but Henry's death must have been a hard financial blow. Perhaps this is why it does not appear that any of the children—several of whom would have significant professional careers—graduated from Elgin's academy or high school. As a teenager Fred was employed at the watch factory with his sister and another brother, but the 1910 Census records the 21-year-old in his mother's home and working as a nurse.

Evidently medicine was a greater draw to Fred than watchmaking. On March 20, 1913, with the headline "Fred Blesse Becomes M.D.," the Elgin Daily News reported that the son of Minnie Blesse of 227 College St. was graduating from Rush Medical College after a six-year course. In fact Fred had graduated from the Hahnemann Medical College of Chicago, not Rush.

Fred had married 18-year old Marie Hester on October 1, 1912, and with a new wife and medical degree he seemed set for a rewarding life as a Chicago physician. But on November 23, 1916, Elgin Courier headlines announced "Dr. Frederick Blesse Divorced At Chicago; Wife Is Stage Struck." Fred, described as "well known and esteemed in Elgin," alleged his wife wanted to go on the stage while he "had little use for the stage, practically no use in fact." To seal the divorce, Fred claimed his wife also was "going to the theater with other men."

The next year redirected Fred Blesse's entire life. In April 1917 the United States entered the Great War, and Fred's June draft registration recorded him as a physician in St. Louis where his older brother William was starting a successful legal career. In July Fred enlisted in the Army and was commissioned a First Lieutenant at Jefferson Barracks. He soon was sent to Ft. Benjamin Harrison near Indianapolis, and the end of 1917 found him an Army officer, remarried with a new daughter and posted to Texas. In 1918 he was a Captain in the Medical Corps commanding a Field Hospital with some 40 staff at Camp Travis near San Antonio and facing, like so many doctors, the great influenza epidemic.

After the 1918 Armistice most American servicemen gladly returned to their civilian roles, but Fred had found something attractive in the Army life. He remained in the Medical Corps, and the next 20 years saw him and his family leading the typically peripatetic Army life moving from post to post. Interestingly, as late as the 1920 Census when he was a doctor in the Canal Zone, he still claimed 227 College St as his US address.

His career took him to the Canal Zone, Washington DC, San Francisco, Omaha, the Philippines, and Fort Leavenworth where he buried his second wife, Lila. In these years he remarried and received the Army's best preparation for senior command at its Command and General Staff School, War College, and Medical Field Service School from which he was an honor graduate. In the Philippines he was the medical advisor to the Philippine Government and on the staff of General MacArthur with the responsibility of organizing, training, and equipping the Medical Department of the Philippine Army. He likely encountered another Lt. Colonel on MacArthur's staff serving as an advisor to the Philippine government: Dwight Eisenhower.

As America prepared for war Lt. Col. Blesse was one of the Army's top medical officers. In July 1941 he became Surgeon, General Headquarters in charge of medical plans for all Army US-based and expeditionary forces. In March 1942 he took over the Medical Section of the newly created Army Ground Forces command and assumed responsibility for training medical personnel for the Army's rapidly expanding

stateside units. In December he was promoted to brigadier general and sent to North Africa becoming chief surgeon of the Fifth Army, the first American field army organized overseas. Within months, at the recommendation of the Fifth Army's commander General Mark Clark, Fred was promoted to Chief Surgeon of the North African Theater and deputy chief surgeon of Allied Force Headquarters.

His responsibilities were as big as his titles, managing the medical care of hundreds of thousands of Allied troops and POWs across the Mediterranean and exercising considerable tact with British medical staff. In the summer of 1943 while overseeing medical care for the battlefields on Sicily, Fred also faced the challenges of malaria, malnutrition, dysentery, venereal disease, and in August 1943, Lt. General George S. Patton.

On a morning in mid-August 1943 Fred met with his boss, General Dwight Eisenhower, the Supreme Commander of Allied troops, in Ike's Algiers office. Fred had bad news: Ike's most valued combat general, the leader of his campaign to capture Sicily, had attacked an American soldier in a military hospital.

Patton, visiting a field hospital a few days earlier, had encountered a young soldier shivering but with no visible injuries. Asked why he was in the hospital he told Patton "It's my nerves. I can't stand the shelling anymore." Patton regarded "battle fatigue" as simple cowardice. Screaming that the soldier was "a god-damned coward" and "yellow bastard," Patton slapped him repeatedly, waved a pistol in his face and ordered the medical staff not to admit the man. The staff was appalled. Only a few days earlier Patton had slapped another hospitalized soldier. And far from sharing Patton's skepticism of battle fatigue, Fred Blesse was including psychiatrists in his medical staff and valued their contributions.

The unit's chief surgeon reported the incident up his military chain of command to Patton's subordinate Omar Bradley. Bradley was disgusted by the information but out of loyalty to his commander refused to go over his head and convey it further. Another report went up the medical command. If Eisenhower would get the full story it would be up to Fred Blesse.

Ike initially thought Fred's report was just Patton being Patton. He had known the man for 25 years, knew him to be flamboyant in his dress, actions, and emotions and consumed in his self-conceived destiny of warrior glory. The man called "Old Blood and Guts" just needed a little corrective "jacking up." But as Ike read Fred's information, which detailed the incident slap by slap and curse by curse, he realized he was confronting a public relations nightmare that threatened not only the career of his most aggressive combat general but even his own status and his mission's suc-

cess. He agonized over his course of action, confessing to Fred that for all his difficulties Patton was indispensable to the war effort.



Patton

Concerned to get ahead of the situation, Ike instructed Fred to go to Patton's command in Sicily, investigate the matter further, and deliver a handwritten letter. Patton's diary recounts how "[a]fter lunch General Blesse, Chief Surgeon A.F.H.Q., brought me a very nasty letter from Ike..." The letter acknowledged Patton's "incalculable services" but warned that these did "not excuse

brutality, abuse of the sick, nor exhibition of uncontrollable temper in front of subordinates." Ike threatened that he had such questions about Patton's judgment and self discipline as to "raise serious doubts in my mind as to your future usefulness." Patton's diary records that he felt "very low." He would have no military command in battle for almost a year.

A few days after his meeting with Fred, Ike met with three reporters who were pursuing rumors about the incidents. Ike was prepared, and he exercised his charm and candor so effectively that the reporters did not publish the story despite their desire to see Patton fired. The matter remained out of the public eye until November 21, 1943, when journalist Drew Pearson disclosed a garbled version in his radio program. The affair exploded for days across the front pages of American newspapers including the *Elgin Courier-News*. Public and political outcries against "brutality" and a "cover-up" were joined with Congressional calls for investigations. It took all the power of Secretary of War Stimson and even the White House to quiet the outrage and show that Eisenhower had indeed taken action appropriate to the military situation.

In his Eisenhower biography historian Carlo D'Este writes that "[o]f his many reckless acts committed by Patton in his lifetime, none was to prove more ruinous than his slapping two GIs in Sicily." Yet the careers of Eisenhower and Patton were preserved for their "crusade in Europe" in 1944 and 1945. Arguably, Fred Blesse was the essential figure in the successful resolution of this affair. He stood up against the abuse of his medical subordinates and their patients. He was the one who gave Ike the full facts, helped the Supreme Commander appreciate their seriousness, and was entrusted with delivering Ike's confidential personal censure and warning to Patton. By alerting Ike to the details and full gravity of the incident, Dr. Blesse had helped prepare him for media inquiries and to take strong enough action that he would be able to save his and Patton's careers when the matter inevitably reached the front pages.

Fred Blesse served in the grueling Mediterranean theater until the spring of 1944 when he returned to Washington as Chief Surgeon, Army Ground Forces. He retired from the Army in November 1948, and spent the remainder of his life as a doctor in Richmond, Virginia. Brigadier General Frederick A. Blesse died on June 4, 1954, and is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.



GENERAL BLESSE CONGRATULATING COLONEL BLESSE on receiving the Silver Star.

Remarkably, Fred Blesse was not the only Blesse boy from College Street to have a notable medical career in the military. Fred's younger brother Henry was a much-decorated commander of a hospital unit through the worst fighting of the Italian campaign. A photograph shows General Fred Blesse congratulating Colonel Henry Blesse on his Silver Star for Henry's heroic conduct at Anzio.

The Blesse family's military lineage continued with Fred's two sons who graduated from West Point. His eldest son, Frederick C. Blesse, was an Air Force Major General, a "double ace" in the Korean and Vietnam wars, America's sixth ranking jet ace, and the author of a text on fighter tactics, *No Guts No Glory*, used by air forces around the world. Aged 91 he joined his father in Arlington last year.



Brigadier General Fred Blesse

Elgin's houses have many stories. The next time you visit the Elgin History Museum look across the street to the home at 227 College and remember the immigrant saloon keeper Henry Blesse and his remarkable descendants.

2013 Thunderbird Car Show

Here are some pictures of this year's Thunderbird Club Car Show held at the Museum. Thanks to board member Dennis Roxworthy for setting up this fun and colorful event, and to all the volunteers who gave their time to make it happen.



Classic Thunderbirds on Display



Live Music Provided by Mandy Z and Rural Route 1

General William Lynch, Civil War Hero Part 1

David Siegenthaler

William Francis Lynch was born March 12, 1839 in Rochester, New York. His parents, Timothy and Catherine, had emigrated from Ireland the previous year with their first child, Eugene. The family came to Elgin in 1845. Settling on Elgin's west side, Timothy became a successful general store merchant. The family had seven children by 1854, when William's mother passed away. After attending Elgin public schools, William became a member of the first class at Elgin Academy when it opened in December 1856.

In 1855 in Elgin an amateur militia unit was formed to practice military drills that had become popular after the war with Mexico. The discipline and patriotic fervor of the military were intensely attractive to young William. Samuel Ward, an organizer of the Elgin unit, was from New York and was impressed by the dress of the Albany Continentals, with their colonial garments, cocked hats and plumes. The Elgin unit adopted this

1776-style garb and became known as the Elgin Continentals. Considered Elgin's young elite, they or their families were persons of means who could afford to establish their own armory, engage their own instructor, buy fancy uniforms and participate in performances and competitions.

In 1858 they secured the services of young, talented and charismatic drillmaster Elmer E. Ellsworth, who would become the first Union officer killed in the Civil War. Ellsworth was trained in the "Zouave" method of light infantry drills that awed spectators with their colorful precision drill movements and dashing ferocity. The Elgin men were a highly proficient military unit.

In late 1858, William's father sent him to the University of Notre Dame. One of the reasons appears to have been a wish to get him away from the glamour of the Elgin uniform. However, William's love of the uniform and all that it represented was not diminished. Soon after he entered Notre Dame the University's existing military company was changed to the "Continental Cadets," probably through his influence, and he quickly became its drillmaster. In 1859 William became captain of the Cadets and had the uniform changed to a handsome American Revolution style.

William's love for military work obsessed him even more at Notre Dame than it had in Elgin. His father thought he was giving too much time to the company and, to William's chagrin, ordered him home in late 1859. Back in Elgin, he resumed his connection with the Elgin Continentals, his military passion undiminished. In September 1860 his father permitted him to return to Notre Dame, where he was immediately re-elected captain of the Cadets.

In April 1861, soon after the start of the Civil War, President Lincoln called for 75,000 troops. The citizens of South Bend, where Notre Dame is located, held a public meeting to take action on the request. The many speakers all counseled moderation. William was there, and chafed at what he deemed mere platitudes. He arose, tall and soldierly, his Irish eyes burning. As the *Notre Dame Scholastic* reported it, "The vibrant ring of the first sentence he rattled out above the heads of the good citizens made them catch their breath. In five minutes they were frantic; and when the boy told them at the end how he was going to the front to shed the last drop of his blood if needed for the Union, the audience leaped to its feet; cheer after cheer rang out wildly, and a company of the First Indiana Regiment was organized on the spot."

Though his Cadets were ready to go at once, the University president declared that he had no authority to let any boy under the age of 21 enlist without permission. William and the older boys enlisted as privates in South Bend and were sent to Indianapolis where they remained a month before being sent home because the Indiana quota was filled.

William then went to Chicago and enlisted as a private in the 23rd Regiment Illinois Volunteers (the Irish Brigade) commanded by Col. James Mulligan. William was made sergeant-major but was absent from the unit on a recruiting detail when Col. Mulligan's regiment was captured by Confederate forces in Missouri.

William went to Springfield and boldly asked Governor Yates for authority to recruit a regiment himself. The Governor sought assurances that he could command a regiment. William referred him to Congressman Colfax and Indiana Governor Morton, both of whom he had met at Notre Dame. Receiving positive references from both, the Governor told William to recruit the 58th Illinois Infantry. At 22, William was one of the youngest men ever commissioned to raise troops.

It is uncertain how many Elgin residents enlisted in William's regiment. The Elginites who did enlist were virtually all Irish, with surnames such as Murphy, Hannigan, Kelley, and O'Brian. It also included two of William's brothers: First Lieutenant Eugene Lynch and Captain David Lynch. On December 24, 1861, his regiment was mustered into service.

In January 1862 William was appointed Colonel. Now in command of his own regiment, William saw his first battle action in February 1862, participating in the capture of Fort Donelson in Tennessee, the first major Union victory of the war. It was here that Bartholomew Kelley was killed, Elgin's first battle casualty of the Civil War.

In April 1862 in Tennessee, the bloody holocaust at Shiloh took place. In no other Civil War engagement were so many from Elgin Township on the field and so many casualties among them. Eight Elginites were killed, including Sam Ward, the leader of the old Elgin Continentals. William's regiment was at the center of Grant's line, the very thickest of the battle. His troops were massed in a position so impregnable and with such fierce defenders that it won from the Confederates the title "Hornet's Nest."

Eventually his regiment was forced to surrender, but not before William planned a bayonet charge to cut their way through the enemy. However, an officer from an Iowa regiment fighting with them thought the charge was suicidal and waved a white handkerchief on his bayonet as a token of surrender. William cut it down with his sword but the officer raised it again. By this time the enemy had closed their lines so effectively around them that surrender was inevitable.

Both sides claimed victory. The North remained in possession of the field but the South captured 2,200 officers and men, including William, who was wounded in the mouth and elbow. He was sent to the



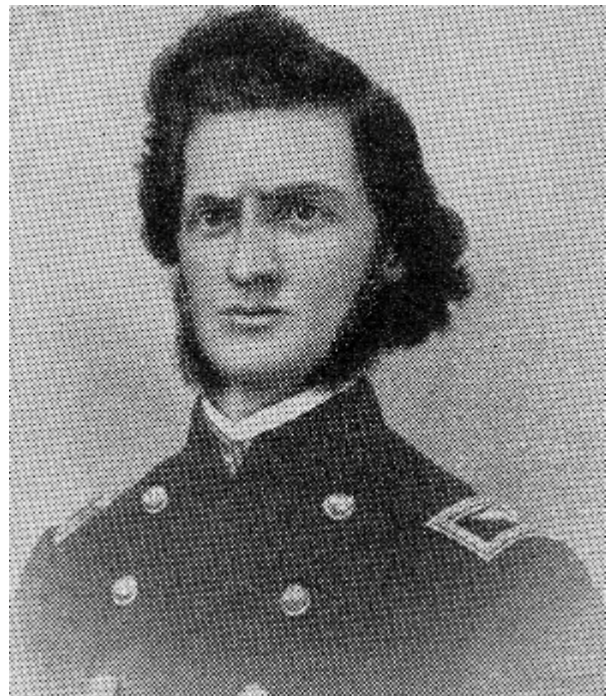
infamous Libby Prison in Richmond, where he remained until he was paroled in October 1862 in a prisoner exchange.

Following his release, William and members of his regiment received a royal welcome from the citizens of Elgin. On October 21, 1862, at a Union rally in Chicago, William declared: "I hardly need tell you that I have always been a strong, uncompromising Democrat...I considered the Abolitionists and Republicans the enemies of the Union. I will not say so now...I was opposed to Abraham Lincoln. I am now opposed to every man who opposes Abraham Lincoln."

Much of the opposition to Lincoln and his emancipation policy centered among the Irish, most of whom were common laborers in the distillery, the tannery and the river mills. The Irish resented the possible competition for jobs from the freed slaves. Though they were not Abolitionists, the Elgin Irish were undeniably patriotic. The pro-Lincoln, pro-Union attitudes of returning Irish veterans, like William, helped Lincoln carry Elgin Township in his 1864 re-election.

To be continued....

Acknowledgements: Mike Alft's newspaper columns; *Notre Dame Scholastic*, Nov. 18, 1899; the Golden Jubilee "History of St. Mary's Parish," (1903); *Chicago Tribune*, Oct. 22, 1862; various other books and references.



General William Lynch of Elgin, Civil War Hero