



The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 45 NUMBER 2
MARCH 2008



President's Report

Mary Hill, President



Hello members and readers. The Board has a secretary! The Board of Directors at the January meeting unanimously voted in favor of Laura Stroud, who volunteered to be secretary. She is also part of the Steve and Laura Stroud team who are co-chairing the Cemetery Walk. She will complete a 2-year term at the end of 2009. We are both grateful and delighted to have Laura serve the Society—what a great volunteer.

As we welcome Spring and turn our thoughts to the outdoors, think about the Artifact Garden underway outside of Old Main. Eric Pepa, architect, has designed an attractive structure to display the Watch Factory bell. A small committee is working with Eric to refine and finalize the design and the design for other items. Items to be included are the concrete road marker from the Elgin Road Races, building plaques from various Elgin businesses, and the restored windmill.

Sara Ellen and Jim Anderson generously “planted seeds” for the Garden by donating \$5000 toward its development. Thank you Sara Ellen and Jim. If you wish to plant a seed to make the Artifact Garden grow or to sponsor an artifact, contact Liz Marston at the Museum.

Those who attended the first General Membership Meeting of 2008 on March 16 saw the **NEW! FUN! EXCITING!** exhibits in the Meeting Room, some of which are interactive. If you haven't seen them, I encourage you to stop in for a visit!

Plan on coming to the April 20 Titanic presentation, and meet Laura Stroud, Educator Lucy Elliott, Program Chairperson David Nelson, and new Board members Jim Anderson, Barry Danielson, Barb DeMoulin, and Smilin' George Rowe.

Upcoming Programs

by David Nelson, Program Director

Mark your calendars for these great programs coming this spring!

- **Sunday, April 20, 2008, 2 p.m. at the Museum.**

Violet Jessup: Titanic Survivor

Leslie Goddard will perform a first-person interpretation of Violet Jessup, an ocean-liner stewardess who survived the sinking of the Titanic and the sinking of the Titanic's sister ship, the Britannic. Free Admission. Supported by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council.



- **Thursday, May 15, 2008 at the Museum International Museum Day**

11 a.m.: Historic tour of Elgin Academy

12 noon: Brown Bag Lunch—Mayor Ed Schock speaks on “Elgin Preservation: Past, Present, and Future.”

1-3 p.m.: Mike Powers Book Signing and Museum Behind-the-Scenes Tours. **Admission is free.**

- **Saturday, May 17, 2008 8:30 a.m. - 2 p.m. Glessner House/Clarke House Architectural Bus Trip**
\$35 Historical Society Members, \$45 Non-Members



Tour the beautiful Prairie Avenue Glessner House in Chicago and also visit neighboring Clarke House—the oldest house in Chicago. Trip includes guided tours through both museums, bus, and lunch. For reservations call the Museum at 847/742-4248.

For information on the Glessner House, visit www.glessnerhouse.org

The Crackerbarrel

Published bimonthly by the Elgin Area Historical Society
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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline April 20, 2008

 Visit our website www.elginhistory.org

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Society's Volunteer Luncheon Enjoyed by All

by Rebecca Marco, Editor

The Elgin Area Historical Society held its annual volunteer luncheon at the Museum on February 9, 2008. The lunch was attended by 45 members and guests. Following the lunch, Mary Hill discussed the new exhibits for 2008 and the bright future of the Artifact Garden and other ongoing projects. The luncheon featured delicious apple pies baked by Mary herself!

New Exhibit: Piano in the Parlour

by Carl Flaks

Before there were home entertainment centers and/or flat screen wall televisions, a different sort of entertainment center existed. It was the piano in the parlour. At the turn of the 20th century many American homes had a piano in the parlour. Here the family gathered and was entertained by a talented family member. Piano sheet music was a booming business with Tin Pan Alley turning out thousands of tunes annually.

The new museum exhibit, *Piano in the Parlour*, brings the viewer back to this day. The exhibit is a chance to see an Elgin-made Seybold piano in a parlour setting. The colorful world of sheet music is on display and viewers can learn about the piano and music business here in Elgin.

In August, a brown bag lunch program will focus on Tin Pan Alley and the music industry. You do not want to miss this new exhibit which opens March 16th.



An assortment of sheet music from the early 20th century

Other New Museum Exhibits Debut

by Rebecca Marco, Editor



In addition to the *Piano in the Parlour* exhibit, the Museum also has a new exhibit entitled *At the Ballet: Lisa Boehm's Nutcracker* about the Lisa Boehm Dance Studio. The dance studio staged productions of *The Nutcracker* for 33 years and provided ballet education to hundreds of students through the years. The exhibit draws upon material from the studio, including original costumes.

The third new exhibit is *100 Years of Wing Park Golf* commemorating this year's 100th anniversary of Wing Park golf course, which has the distinction of being among the oldest municipal golf courses in the country. The exhibit features an interactive putting mat and provides information on the course's architect, who also designed Medinah Country Club, Villa Olivia, and courses in Scotland and Mexico.



These exhibits made their debut March 16 at a well-attended Grand Opening. The guests were a panel of experts on the Lisa Boehm Studio, who answered questions about the studio.

We encourage you to visit the museum and learn about the leisure pastimes of Elgin while enjoying these three new exhibits.

A Great Tragedy 96 Years Ago

Elginites settling into their easy chairs with the Daily Courier of April 15, 1912, may have noticed one of the headlines on page two: *Steamer Titanic Strikes Iceberg; Passengers Safe*. If they felt like such a modest story merited further study, they would have read that “[a]ll the passengers were taken off the liner in the lifeboats early today and wireless dispatches state that the giantess will probably be able to make port under her own steam.” A representative of the Titanic’s ownership expressed “absolutely no fears for the safety of the passengers or for the saving of the Titanic.” “[S]he is virtually indestructible and would float indefinitely even with her bow smashed.” “The Titanic will not go down. We are sorry for the inconvenience to our passengers.” (*continued*)



Only later would Elginites learn that these first reports were, so to speak, just the tip of the iceberg. In one of the most notorious tragedies of the new century, the Titanic, the largest steamship in the world and yet without adequate lifeboats, sank to the bottom of the North Atlantic with some 1,500 lives. Eighteen-month-old Eleanor Ilene Johnson, however, survived that horror to spend much of her life in the Fox Valley. She worked at the watch factory, saw the blockbuster movie “Titanic” in Elgin, and when she died in 1998 the New York Times remembered that “the living room of her tidy little house in Elgin had what she called her Titanic Corner.”

2007 Annual Report

by Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

Introduction

The Elgin Area Historical Museum and the Elgin Cemetery Walk celebrated its 20th anniversary in 2007. *The Jewish Experience in Elgin* exhibit traveled all over the community and the Society entered its third year partnering with School District U-46 on the American History Project. *There Used to Be, Volume 2* was published, the annual Board Fund-raiser again exceeded expectations, and a generous donor contributed to several different Society projects. 2007 was also the year that George Albee, the Society’s longtime Crackerbarrel editor, passed away.

Membership

By Carl Flaks, Membership

In 2007 the Society had 286 membership units broken down as follows:

- 151 Individual \$25
- 63 Family \$40
- 15 Sponsor \$60
- 19 Century \$100
- 3 Donor \$500
- 5 Life \$1000 Total Life Membership is now 35 units.

While Individual memberships are the largest membership category, they are only responsible for 21% of the dues income. The five other categories bring in almost 80% of the dues income of \$14,950, 11.5% of the Society’s income.

Treasurer’s Report

by Bill Briska, Treasurer

The Society finished 2007 in good financial shape. Revenue of \$166,000 was higher than anticipated due to three large and unexpected sources of income. First, we received a \$10,000 grant from the Grand Victoria foundation in 2007 that we thought would be coming in early 2008. Second, our partnership with U-46 to train teachers to use local history to supplement a traditional classroom curriculum was extended for one more year. We received an additional \$5,000 to provide this training. Lastly, we received a \$25,000 gift from an anonymous donor, \$15,000 of which went to our endowment fund and the remainder toward the artifact garden. Revenue from most other areas was on target or up slightly.

It takes about \$100,000 a year to operate the Society and Museum at its current level. We need to raise that amount each and every year. Where does that money come from? Over the last several years we have worked hard to develop several different revenue streams. One obvious source is dues. This generates about 10% of the revenue, but much of that is spent providing member benefits such as the *Crackerbarrel*, programs and mailings. Donations, such as the Board Fund-raiser in July, on average, make up about 15% of the total. Some years it has been as low as 10% and others as high as 24%.

Grants are a highly variable source of income, ranging from as low as 7% of total revenue to a high of 50%. Grants are almost always tied to specific projects. These included some of our major projects, such as the *Jewish Experience in Elgin* exhibit and the video documentary, *Circle of Time*. Smaller grants have helped us with “behind the scenes” needs such as archival supplies and new computer equipment. Grants do not usually support basic operational expenses such as insurance, salaries, office supplies, etc. They are the icing on the cake. Other sources of income must provide the basic necessities.

Earned income is the key to successful growth. The term “earned income” refers to revenue from the sales of goods and services, admission fees, interest, rentals and use of photographic images. This category makes up about one-

third of all revenue. It can, however, be as high as 50% in some years and as low as 25% in others. By far the largest source of earned income has been from our book and video publishing efforts. Since 2001, net earnings from publishing exceeded the combined net revenue from Cemetery Walks, educational programs, gift shop sales, admissions, photo reproductions and research fees.

Over the last 10 years the Society has done its best to develop a widely diversified income base. This insures financial stability and has given the Society opportunities for growth. Good financial stewardship, generous volunteer efforts, and solid backing from the membership allows the Society to carry out its mission of local history preservation and education.

Museum Programs and Events

By David Nelson

The following events took place in 2007:

- **February:** Volunteer "We Love You" Luncheon
- **March:** Exhibit openings: remodeled and updated Watch Factory Room, Coffee Percolators, Sports Hall of Fame, and Elgin Choral Union.
- **April:** Tim Malone's Blackhawk War presentation with slide show.
- **May:** 20th Anniversary Ice Cream Social; Brown Bag lunch/Ernie Ludwig speaking on the dairy industry in Elgin; Spring/Douglas walking tour with Steve Stroud and David Jurina.
- **June:** Bus trip to Cantigny Park in Wheaton; Mary Hill's Architectural walking tour of West Elgin; Brown Bag lunch/Betty Brown speaking about hats.
- **July:** Spring/Douglas walking tour with Steve Stroud and Eric Pepa; Brown Bag lunch/George Albee's presentation of the Gifford Letters
- **August:** Brown Bag lunch/Steve Stroud Volume 2 of *There Used To Be*
- **September:** 20th Annual Cemetery Walk.
- **October:** 4th Annual History Fair at Lord's Park, Illinois Brass Band Concert
- **November:** Annual Meeting featuring Dr. Clyde Ellis' presentation on Indian lore clubs in the 20th century. Silent auction and election of officers.
- **December:** Holiday Tea/Elgin High School Madrigal Singers.

Total attendance at all programs and events was 1,629 persons. Another interesting and informative year!

General Museum programs are organized by the Program Team, which includes David Nelson, Marge Rowe, Janet Burkart, Maurice Dyer, Carl Flaks, and Lucy Elliott. Other program volunteers include Bill Briska, Steve Stroud, Mary Hill, Eric Pepa, Linda Rock, David Jurina and student interns.

Outreach

The Society presented programs in the Elgin community including the Elgin Rotary, several programs at Sherman West Court, and Lowrie School and the U-46 American History Project.

Community events the Society participated in include Elgin Preservation Month and the Mayor's Awards, Fourth of July Parade, City of Elgin Image Awards, Gail Borden Public Library Volunteer Fair, Elgin Historic Housewalk, Dundee Township Cemetery Walk, Elgin Academy Homecoming, Taste of Elgin at Providence and at Elgin Del Webb Edgewater, Elgin Author's Fair and a variety of professional museum conferences and workshops.

The Society assisted several organizations with technical and exhibit projects including Elgin High School Archives and History Club, the South Elgin High School Archives, and the Elgin Police Department Exhibit Team. The Society reached out to approximately 1,964 people in 2007.

Collections

Hundreds of items relating to Elgin history were given to the Museum by 90 different donors in 2007. Indexing continued on the Courier News negatives. David Siegenthaler started indexing the negatives with names five years ago and started at December 1950. He is now up to 1971. Two summer interns processed many items into the collection, accessioning, marking and storing the objects and archival materials into exhibits. Many volunteers help with accepting, processing, organizing, and exhibiting items donated to the Museum. They include the Collections Committee: Carol Zamie, Fran Alft, Dana Olson, Jerri Barnhart, and Ricky Harris. Other valuable volunteers are Mary Hill, Barb Mulliken, David Siegenthaler, Steve Stroud, Dave Buck, and Carl Flaks.

Communication

- Media Committee

This new committee, started in 2007, reviews and recommends media-related projects for the Board of Directors. The committee looked at the Society's logo relating to organizational advertisements, stationery, invitations, and the website. The Committee also approved the publication of Mike Alft's new book, *Elgin: A Woman's City*.

- Crackerbarrel

5 issues were published during 2007. The November issue was not published this year.

- Website

The website redesign plans are underway. The domain name registration was transferred to GoDaddy.com when the Gail Borden Library discontinued their website hosting services for nonprofit organizations. GoDaddy.com is now the registrar for the domain name and the site hosting service. An additional domain name, www.elginstories.org, was also regis-

tered with GoDaddy.com for the Jewish exhibit's website. The website was updated and maintained by Rebecca Marco during 2007.

Museum Store

The Store sold \$2,370 of merchandise with expenses of only \$325 for a net profit of approximately \$2,000, not including taxes. Publication sales are tracked separately and make up a large part of the Museum Store's sales.

Exhibits

The Society updated the Elgin Watch Room with 75 additional Elgin watches. The Choral Union: 60 Years of Singing, Perk Up Your Coffee: Percolator Collection, and Elgin Sports Hall of Fame all opened in March. *The Jewish Experience in Elgin: Immigration, Identity, and Assimilation* opened at the Museum in 2006, but traveled in 2007 to the Gail Borden Public Library in February, Schaumburg Township Library in June, and Elgin Community College in the Max Von Isser Gallery in October. The Jewish exhibit ends its tour in 2008.

Education

Lucy Elliott started in 2007 as the Museum's first professional part-time educator in 2007. 1,010 students of all ages enjoyed 53 programs, up from 27 programs in 2006. Programs include:

- 4 Grandma's Kitchens
- 21 Scavenger Hunt Tours
- 4 Children's Architectural Programs
- 11 Watch Programs
- 1 Hiawatha Program
- 3 Pioneer Programs
- 3 Adult Tours
- 3 Elgin Architectural Tours
- 3 Speakers Bureau

Many Museum volunteers make the Education programs possible including Joyce Pellicore, Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks, Jerry Roller, Jan Embree, Harry Blizzard, and Jim Anderson.

Board Fundraiser Donors

Carol Abbott	Joye Albee
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Board Fundraiser Donors (Continued)

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Other 2007 Donors

Jim Anderson	Warren Anderson
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Ron Lange	George and Margaret Rowe
Walter Rust	Judy and Bob Schroeder
Barbara Thurnau in memory of George Carlson	Peggy Youngren

Jane Addams: Ahead of Her Time

The following article, submitted by Medina Gross, is reprinted from the Elgin Daily Courier, Jan 20, 1899. A program on Jane Addams is coming to Gail Borden library; information is included following the article.

JANE ADDAMS' VIEWS THE FOUNDER OF HULL HOUSE SPEAKS

*A Woman Whose Work is to Elevate Mankind and
Who is Doing It*

Miss Jane Addams of Hull House, Chicago addressed a large audience Thursday evening at the First Congregational church. Her subject was "The Relation of Women to Trade Unionism."

She spoke for about forty-five minutes and her address was full of interest to those concerned with the working people, especially the ladies.

She said, in part, that the ten principal trades, such as weaving and building, were originally monopolized by women. The men furnished the raw material and the remainder of the work was performed by women. At one time all that the

men were in the habit of doing was the felling of the timber, the killing of game and such work. The women went after the wood and food and took it to the home. All the work of preparing the food, the clothing, and other necessities of life was performed by them. It was not until the factory system was established that they lost their position of equality, if not superiority to men, in the industrial world. At that time it was said that men who were engaged in weaving and who refused to go into the factories were known to have perished of starvation. They were industrious, honest, competent and sober people, but could not put their product on the market at a price that would compete with the goods manufactured in the factories. People must face the problems of the present and keep abreast of the times.

For a period women lost her place in the industrial world and was relegated to home duties exclusively. It is interesting to wonder on what the results would have been had she retained the monopoly of the trades she originally possessed. Would she have had less interest in the rearing of her children and many other lines of kindness and goodness for which she is loved and respected?

An old gentleman had stated that he disliked the works of George Eliot and did not care to read the life of a common mechanic like Felix Holt, but preferred to read Sir Walter Scott's production, which told of kings, queens, and knights. The old gentleman was living in the past. He did not realize that the one was a portrayal of the past; that kings, queens and knights no longer swayed the world and the mechanic was a living personage of the present age who was claiming the attention of all

It had been said that the factory owner's position was a peculiar one. If he asked of the state that it build him machinery of the finest and most intricate pattern and give it to him for his own private use, he would be refused. What if he desired to cast it away when it was useless and demanded of the state more machinery?

But he asks of the state that it rear him human beings, educate them in the public schools, train their minds and hands to be most skillful, that they may be of the greatest possible use to him. When they are worn out they are cast aside and he demands more human beings to be treated as the others were. That is the English version of the situation.

The Federation of Women's clubs at its last meeting, at Denver, decided to appoint a committee to form an organization for the protection of women, and in so doing followed the example of trades unions of thirty years ago.

Consumers' leagues are being formed in many cities and a federation is now in session in Boston to adopt a label. It has a white list of the stores in each city where the help is best treated, where seats for women, summer vacations, and shorter hours of labor are allowed. These people refuse to purchase the products of the sweat shops and demand cleanliness in factories where goods are made. They are doing what trades unions have been doing for years.

It has been said that woman has not quite as much interest in the welfare of the community as man. The woman who works must have not only a personal and family conscience, but a community conscience as well. She must not forget her fellow workmen in her desire to earn money that she may

wear better clothing, have better furniture at home, or live on another street in a better home. It is said that woman does not interest herself in the organization and protection of labor as does man: that she is apt to work in a factory for shorter periods and in her eagerness for gain is more liable to injure her fellow workmen.

It was with great pleasure that she had learned that such conditions do not exist here; that women are an important and interested factor in the labor union in this city, which is known as a grand manufacturing center the world over.

It was with genuine satisfaction that she heard that the president of the largest factory here is in close touch with the workmen.

Miss Addams came here under the auspices of the Watchworkers' union and her address was interesting and logical throughout. The audience contained many business men and society people who were well pleased.

W.D. Kee, president of the Watchworkers' union, introduced Miss Addams to the audience.

Jane Addams Program Coming to Gail Borden Library

A Tapestry of Freedom

Tuesday, April 1, 7-8:30 p.m., Community Rooms

In collaboration with the Elgin Area Branch of the American Association of University Women, presents Louise Knight discussing "Jane Addams and the Potential of Women: Her Growth as a Social Reformer"



Louise W. Knight, author of *Citizen: Jane Addams and the Struggle for Democracy*, will trace how Addams' early struggles with failure during an era of limited opportunities for women shaped her ideas about women's potential and her social reform activism. Refreshments will be served. Book sales and signing follow the program. Please register after March 1, in person at the Adult Services Information Desk, by phone at (847) 429-4680, or online at www.gailborden.info.

100 Years Ago

In our enlightened age when a single lit cigarette may attract the full majesty of the law it is hard to imagine a time when the law ignored even the smokiest chimney. And yet 100 years ago Elgin had no ordinances against smoke. Elgin newspapers and other voices of civic virtue were claiming it was time for the city council to act. But such steps would take time, and as Elginites of 1907 and 1908 peered outside their windows into the winter gloom many of them must have felt they were living in the real "dark ages."

Museum Director Marks 10-Year Anniversary

Mary Hill, President

In March 1998, Elizabeth Marston took the position of Museum Director, after Ann Macon Smith who was hired in 1995. In the past 10 years, Liz has determinedly steered the Museum forward, helping transform it into the viable and vibrant facility it is today. Join the Board of Directors in congratulating Liz as we celebrate her first 10 years! Your emails welcome at EAHS@efoxvalley.net.




**Congratulations
Liz!
Thanks for
10
Great
Years!**

Relics of Old Elgin

Ever wonder about the strange concrete construction just west of Route 31 south on Chicago Street? Visible from the Elgin train station and Route 31, this platform is all that's left of a water tower built to service trains on the "High Northwestern" tracks west of Route 31.

At one time there was a Chicago & Northwestern passenger station on Crystal St., on the hill near the intersection of Route. 31 and Chicago St. Known as West Elgin, the passenger station was torn down in the early 1970s. A staircase led down from the tracks to Chicago Street.

The tracks were originally laid by the Chicago and Galena Union Railroad, which eventually became part of the Chicago & Northwestern. The line reached Elgin in February 1850. The line ran from downtown Chicago to Galena. James T. Gifford, founder of Elgin, was instrumental in bringing the railroad to Elgin and led the celebration when the tracks finally reached Elgin, two years after construction of the railroad line began. The West Elgin passenger station was the oldest depot on the entire Chicago & Northwestern system.



Water Tower Platform west of State Street



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Or, fill out this form and mail or bring it to the Museum:

Elgin Area Historical Society
360 Park St.
Elgin, IL 60120

THANK YOU



Welcome Springtime