



Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 45 NUMBER 3

MAY 2008



President's Report

Mary Hill, President



Dear Members and Readers,
Preservation of our past has become so important that it is no longer celebrated during one week, but has expanded to the entire month of May! To know who we are and where we are going, we must remember where we came from, and the Elgin Area Historical Society and Museum serves that purpose.

During May, we can reflect on James Gifford standing on land above the Fox River and looking around...thinking...thinking..."hmm, maybe right here." We can reflect on those who founded the Historical Society; those who had documents, photos, artifacts, and ideas..."hmm, maybe we should gather all this stuff into one place and hang on to it." We can reflect on those who continue to process donations, to develop and build exhibits, to educate children on Elgin's history, and to tell the story of Elgin to visitors..."hmm, this Museum is a great place and I am proud to be a part of it."

Take a moment this Preservation Month, to reflect...

Also, we owe it to you the members to give an accounting of how your money is spent and of what the Society is doing; hence, the March issue of the Crackerbarrel was an annual report of activities. Dry as toast?! Once each year, you will receive an annual report in the Crackerbarrel. The rest of the year, the Crackerbarrel will be the usual collection of stories, news, tidbits, and photos in a larger font for your reading ease. The annual report also serves an important function—to use when applying for grants to help fund our operating expenses. A little jelly on your toast?!

April's Titanic Survivor Program

Rebecca Marco, Editor



Despite unseasonably beautiful weather, the April program at the Museum featuring Leslie Goddard as Titanic survivor Violet Jessop was very well-attended.

Ms. Goddard, in character as Violet, vividly described life as a servant aboard the Titanic and her sister ship Britannic. As the only survivor of both ships' sinking, Violet Jessop led a remarkable life, and Leslie Goddard did a remarkable job portraying her. Despite the pleasant day, the audience could almost feel the icy water that night in April 1912 when the "unsinkable" ship went down.

Exercise of Yesteryear

Chuck Emmert

I discovered a 1938 article from the Courier News: "A Maywood housewife played 154 holes in one day to prove that mens' marathon golf was the bunk." She played the route in 783 strokes and lost *eight pounds*. She did say, "It beats housework." In 1938 there were no golf carts. How many caddies did she wear out, or could she have carried her own clubs?

The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline **June 20, 2008**

 Visit our website www.elginhistory.org

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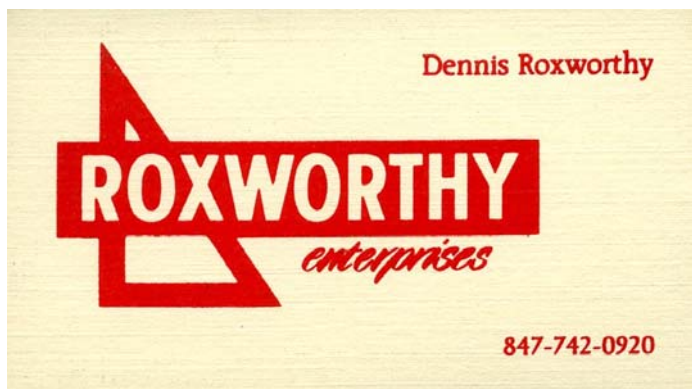
Cemetery Walk Thank You!

by Linda Rock and Marge Rowe

For the past seven years (2001-2007) Linda and I co-chaired the Historic Elgin Cemetery Walk. We want to take this opportunity to thank all the volunteers and financial donors who helped and supported our efforts. Without the help of all of you, we couldn't have continued the fine tradition started by Jerry Turnquist; continued by Rebecca McNaab and now we are passing the torch to Laura and Steve Stroud. We hope you will continue your support.

In the 2007 booklet we included the websites and phone numbers of our donors and inadvertently forgot Roxworthy, Inc. Quality Restorations (847-742-0920). Our sincere apologies to Mr. Roxworthy.

We look forward to seeing all of you on September 28 at Bluff City Cemetery for the 2008 Walk.



Upcoming Programs

by David Nelson, Program Director

Mark your calendars for these great programs coming soon!

- **Thursday, May 15, 2008 at the Museum**
International Museum Day
Free Admission
11:30 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.
- **Saturday, June 14, 2008 at the Museum**
Garden Party/Bell Dedication
- **Thursday, June 19, 2008**
12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch – Ron Lange
Elgin Sports Hall of Fame
- **Thursday, July 17, 2008**
12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch – John Fenzel & Dog
Hampshire German WWII POW Camp
- **Thursday, August 21, 2008**
12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Old popular music and Tin Pan Alley
- **Sunday, September 28, 2008**
Cemetery Walk/Bluff City Cemetery Noon - 3 PM
- **Sunday, October 5, 2008**
Elgin History Fair
Lord's Park Pavilion, 12:30 - 4 p.m.
- **Sunday, November 9, 2008**
Annual Dinner/Auction
Program: History of Elgin Mental Health Center
Bill Briska, speaker
- **Saturday, December 6, 2008**
Annual Holiday Tea
Program: Elgin Choral Union and talk on Frank Kratkey, ECU's co-founder, 1947

Expanded Civil War Exhibit Highlights Weaponry

by George Rowe

Recently I met Ken Gough at the museum, and Ken asked me if we had room to expand our Civil War exhibit.

Well, we had just finished the exhibits for the year, and I thought I was done. Then Ken mentioned he had an original Elgin Civil War musket.

The musket, shown below, is a flintlock engineered into a percussion style—common in 1860, as the government was attempting to “up armor” their existing stockpiles of weapons. There are initials carved into the stock, so the weapon can be identified with a particular soldier, and Ken’s research shows this gun came from the St. Louis armory.

Ken has also compiled a history of the 7th Illinois, the first regiment to come out of Elgin. originally a militia unit known as the “Continental.”

The exhibit now includes a dress that may have been worn to Lincoln’s second inauguration; a Union greatcoat; a reinforced knapsack actually carried by Frank Perkins, an Elgin man; some hardtack (still looks appetizing); the musket; and some other Civil War artifacts. (Look closely; some are modern-day reproductions.)

Many thanks to Ken, Diane, and Beth Gough for contributing their artifacts, and to Carol Zamie for her particular skills.



Under the Cupola

by Lucy Elliott, Education

Grant for Scholarships!

The First Congregational Church of Elgin awarded the Society a \$6,000 grant toward the Museum’s children’s programs. In late 2007, a grant request was submitted to the Mission Grants Committee of the First Congregational Church of Elgin for the purpose of making Museum programs accessible to at-risk children in the community. The grant will allow the Museum to extend the Elgin History Fair for three additional days in the Lord’s Park Pavilion so that area schools are able

to access the authentic early Elgin experiences. Monies will also help offset costs for other area groups to visit the Museum during a time when many are financially strapped.

Those who reside in the area are well aware of First Congregational’s mission to serve in the community and beyond; EAHS shares their concern for all to be full members of our community and thank them greatly. Special thanks to Carl Flaks for linking us to the opportunity!

Elgin Junior Tour Guides



Along with regular school class visits, the Museum is working closely with nearby East Side schools to make the program experience more meaningful. Channing School participated in a new Museum program concentrating on the development of Elgin. Fifth- and sixth-grade students spent four mornings discovering Elgin landmarks, designing a floor-sized diorama, and sharing their new-found information with others. The flurry and fun ended with a TimeKeepers Pledge to care for, respect, and share our unique Elgin heritage!

Volunteers

The Museum enlisted the help of six Elgin Academy students to help with hands-on programs; they are giving up their study periods to lend two hands. It’s a partnership where the young people benefit greatly and transportation is not a problem! The Upper School students are Malory Wodka, Sally Mosely, Henna Khemani, Amy Alvine, Eleanna Mathoudis, and Maddy Stone. We are delighted they share their energy with us.

ARCHES Initiative Seeks to Preserve Local Historic Sites

by Lucy Elliott



At a time when abundant land serves the new suburbs so well, old river towns are threatened by rapid growth. Towns that manage to survive and thrive do so by nurturing their unique setting, reviving significant buildings, and embracing their history.

Concerned citizens of Elgin are uniting to support that notion. They see the "sustainable" value of Elgin's rich past and are determined that it not be lost to rapid growth. Several organizations in our community oversee the preservation of history and housing stock; however, there exists a gap to oversee the preservation of significant landmarks and commercial sites. ARCHES (Advocate to Revitalize Cultural and Historic Elgin Sites) is an initiative hoping to fill that gap and is committed to helping preserve the "jewels" that make Elgin so unique.

ARCHES is an outgrowth of the Northeast Neighborhood Association's (NENA) effort to stop the demolition of the D.C. Cook Publishing building on North Grove Avenue. While the watch is not over, it is clear that other historic/cultural concerns are deserving of the same energy.

The ARCHES initiative intends to heighten awareness of lesser known or threatened sites, share strategies for proactively addressing those concerns, insist that adaptive reuse/green technologies be employed where possible, develop webpage ideas that encourage networking, and commit to filling critical gaps—not duplicating the mission/work of others!

A Trip Across the Plains

by Kenneth L. Gough

John McQueen was a student at Elgin Academy. On his graduation in 1857 he became a teacher for two years. He served in the Civil War with the 15th Ill. Cavalry. On muster out he married Martha Eakin. After the trip described in this article, he returned to Elgin to found McQueen's Station (two miles northwest of Udina, IL), a dairy operation with a stop on the Milwaukee Road supplying milk to Chicago Hotels.

Presented here are samples from John's daily log. The complete log is available at the Old Main Library. Few changes have been made in transcribing this text. I've chosen not to correct spelling. John used the spelling he was given or deduced. After all, he had been a schoolteacher.

Bloom, Apr 23, 1866

Monday. Staid at Uncle Mac's with Jackson. A large crowd of friends and relatives came to bid us farewell. Left home about 12 O'clock. Hard parting with those we love. Arrived at Geo Hunters early in afternoon. Jim H., G.H., W.G., M, & G.W. McQueen & several others came with us. Set up our tent to let our friends have the pleasure of getting in it. Drove 8 miles to-day.

Apr 25

Started from Shapleys or town of Troy about 9 o'clock. Passed thru Channahon about 12 o'clock. Passed Morris about 3 o'clock. Canal 5 times to-day. Rained last night. Roads good. Traveled about 23 miles to-day. Mules a little tired. Followed canal & Dupage river all day. Passed Dresden. Paid \$4.00 for lodging.

May 9

Left camp at 7 o'clock. Arrived in DesMoines about 11 o'clock. Met several stages. Roads good to-day. Paid 50 cts for hay. Traveled 24 miles. Art Jackies tongue nearly off. Passed 17 yoked oxen on 5 wagons. Road full of movers. 40 teams to-day is the average of teams passing each day.

May 22

Very heavy thunder shower last night. Pa. Ma Grandma & all the children got wet. Tent blew down. Rob & I sat in the buggie all night. No sleep. Started on our march 8.30. Camped for night at 12 o'clock. Bed clothes all wet. Roads a little soft. Did not travel far to-day. Very heavy hail last night. Folks all went to Robs wagon after getting wet.

June 2

Left camp at 6. o'clock. Camped about 2. Camped opposite Castle Rock in sight of Chimney Rock on the shores of the Platte. Saw quite a number of Indians say about 30 or 40. Judd & I waded the Platte to 4 Islands for wood or brush. Rode the pony nearly all day—rode him to the highest bluff on road to-day. Saw Chimney Rock.

June 5

On the march at 6 o'clock. Quite cold. Rob, Jackson, Pa & I were all walking about 9 o'clock. Willie driving Robs team. Walter trying to get out of the wagon. Fell under wheel breaking left thigh. Father, Mathew, Walter & I drove right thru to Fort Laraine without feeding - 50 miles. I rode the pony. Very tired. Paid \$5.00 to cross & recross the river. The doctor set Walters leg. Indians very plenty here. Wind very high.

June 18

Left camp at 7 o'clock. Marched slowly. Very warm day. Road sandy. Did not sleep 1 wink last night. A little rain with heavy wind. Cap't Smith shot an antelope. He shared all round. Father shot a sage hen camped on the Platte about 4 o'clock.

June 29

Left camp at 7 A.M. Made a good fore noon drive. Camped on very good grass - the first since we passed South Pass. Splendid roads & splendid weather. Crossed Little Sandy River. Middling deep fording. Felt pretty well to-day. Camped on the Little Sandy River. Good grass close by a fort. Pa pulled a tooth for the operator*.

July 9

On the move as usual. Came to a settlement to-day - Mormon. Quite large. Camped close by. Grass poor. Came over 1 awful mountain. Bot cheese .40 cts per lb. Butter 50 cts came pretty nearly getting into a rumpus with them about wood.

July 11

Left camp at 6.30 Spent about 2 hours in Soda Springs. Camped for noon. 1 mile west of the city. Not much of a place. Some call it 900 miles to the Dalles yet. Grand-Pa very poorly - very discouraging to us. Camped by a creek about 10 miles west of the Springs. Water & grass in plenty. Plenty of Indians. Road & weather good.

* At this point in time military surgeons were grouped into specialties. The best of these were those who did the cutting. They were called "Operators." This is where the term "having an operation" comes from.

July 16

On the move at 7 o'clock. A. Gogne elected Cap't. All sage brush & no grass to-day. Passed another ferry in afternoon - some 20 miles from the other ferry. I went down to the ferry. We should have taken the right hand road. Did not get far out of the road. Camped within about 12 miles of Gibson's ferry. Where we think our mail lies. Good grass. No water.

Aug. 1

On the move as usual. Roads very dusty. This the warmest day to me we have had yet. Sweat hard sitting on my seat. Crossed Weiser River about 10 o'clock. Forded it. Camped on Snake river by a spring. No grass. Jackson left Mary & May out & they lost themselves. Looked for them til late.

Aug 16

On the move as usual. Crossed the Bridge after 2 miles of travel. Roads rocky & hilly. Met some Cavalry in the canyon. Immediately after dinner pulled up a long steep hill Billy gave out.

Aug. 18

On the move by daylight. Road not so hilly as yesterday. But dreadful rough & rocky. made a good days drive. Mules stand if very well. Came across some Portland chaps on a burn or excursion trip. Camped beside them for night - 5 miles east of Laurel Mt. Close by Mt. Hood.

Aug. 19

On the march quite early. Reached summit about 10 A.M. Road still rough & rocky. Made a very good drive to-day. Nooned at the Mt. House. Camped at the 2n'd house for the night. Grandma fell out of the buggy coming down Laurel Mt. Hurt some.

Aug 23

Westward bound a little after sunrise. Passed thru Subhity in forenoon. This Jefferson in P.M. Also crossed the St. Arms on a ferry. made 30 m. to-day. Camped at Knox's Butte. 45 miles from Eugene city. Apples free.

539 Aller Street: The Legacy of Roger and Eva Mae Moffatt

by Suzy (Moffatt) Clements

When I was four, my mom, dad, and I spent a lot of time at "the lot." While they worked, I played on the tire swing Dad hung from one of the many trees in the woods. It took me a couple of years to figure out why we spent so much time there, and then I realized that my dad was building a house for us. My memories were of getting all itchy from crawling around in the insulation containers and collecting the little round metal pieces from electrical boxes, not of him digging by hand the foundation and putting up the walls. Then one day he asked me which bedroom I wanted.

In December of 1951, we moved into what did not really look like a house. The outside was all covered in tar paper and the inside had unfinished walls and ceiling. The Christmas tree was still sitting on the dirt floor when we took off for our yearly visit to grandmas in Florida.

In later years I learned that they had purchased the property for \$900 by borrowing money from my mom's father. When Dad started building and needed an address, 539 Aller Street, Elgin, Illinois came into existence, carved out between stately elm trees.

Year by year, things started coming together. Uncle Floyd Berndt, my mother's brother, worked in demolition construction. One day he called to ask if Dad could use some marble from a bank they's just torn down. The marble was too big for Dad to lift, so he broke it in large chunks and hauled it home. Using red grout, the pieces were fit together to become our kitchen and hallway floor that was cool on my bare feet in summer and great for roller skating. It was surely the only one like it in the entire universe, and totally indestructible.

Eventually Dad added tile in the living room and cedar panels on the ceiling. Then, as he could afford it, he started finishing the outside of the house with crab orchard stone. He would stop when he ran out of money. To finish off the living room he added a fireplace with the same stone. That fireplace got them through the big storm of '67.

One year we planted tiny little evergreen trees all over the yard. I didn't like mowing around all those silly trees, but didn't know at the time that they would eventually grow into a miniature forest. Years later, the trees were so big they had to be cut down.

But Dad wasn't done yet. After a few years, he poured a cement slab to the back of the house for a screened porch, laundry room and spare bedroom. Then, a garage. A couple of years after that, he added an entire back addition that served as a photography studio and dark room for his hobby. Later, my parents turned that area into a a two-bedroom apartment that brought them rent for nearly 20 years.

Dad had only a 9th grade education, had worked on the railroad as a cattle rustler, but somehow he learned to be a plumber, electrician, carpenter, mason, and craftsman. Everything in that house he did by himself....even down to building the kitchen cabinets and a club house for me. I asked him once how he learned how to do all that. He told me there's a book for everything.

One of Dad's dreams was to build a miniature big tent circus. He was modeling the heads of the figures when he got sick. Dad passed away in 1983 and Mom lived in he house ten more years until she couldn't live by herself any longer.

I drive by it once in a while. 539 Aller still looks good after almost 60 years....built with love that will last forever.



Mystery House

This late-19th century house on the east side of Elgin is still standing. Can you guess the address? Be sure to look in the background for clues. A prize to those who guess the address! Send an email with your best guess to elginhistory@foxvalley.net or call 847-742-4248.



Marching for Civil Rights in Selma, 1965

By Raleigh Sutton

The author has researched African American families in Elgin for many years and written two books, one available in the Museum Store. The following is an excerpt from Raleigh's unpublished memoir, "Selma and Other Stories."

In 1965 I heard of Dr. Martin Luther King's plan to tour the South through Little Rock, Arkansas to Selma and Montgomery, Alabama. I signed on and made plans to make the trip. I was picked up by a school bus and we were off. I don't remember Little Rock at all, but I sure remember Selma! We "camped" outside of town, doing the best we could for shelter and comfortable sleeping arrangements. I recall that Dr. King came by to see if everyone was as comfortable as things allowed. He was staying at someone's home.

The next day we were met by a large crowd of local blacks that swelled our number considerably. They had much to lose, as they lived there and we didn't. We started walking down the highway toward the Raymond Petus Bridge, which was blocked by a large crowd of jeering white people carrying signs. Some of the signs claimed that God didn't want integration or that integration was a sin and worse. But we moved ahead anyway, determined to march through town.

I am rather short, so I put myself in the middle of the crowd so as not to be an easy target. We kept marching through the water hoses, tear gas, and police dogs. A lot of rocks were thrown and many of us were hit.

When we got across the bridge by pure pressure from the crowd behind, we were met by more of the same, and a lot of police lined the street. Aside and behind them were screaming crowds throwing everything they could find: bottles, rocks, and boards. Then the police charged us with their nightsticks. The crowd opened up like the Red Sea and there I was, standing flat footed as a deputy sheriff came right at me and hit me solidly over my left eye with his nightstick. After I lay in the street for awhile bleeding badly, I was dragged to the curb and handcuffed. I came to in a jail cell with my shirt wrapped around my head. For the rest of the day and through the night I was poked with a broomstick and called a "nigger lover" and other names too numerous to list.

They released us the next morning and herded us to our busses outside of town. I think they just wanted to get rid of us so they let us go.

Soon we were on our way to Montgomery. I don't remember Montgomery or the trip home at all; I probably had a serious concussion. There were at least 50 white people involved in the marching, and many of us got equal opportunity beatings.

All told, in spite of the horror of the whole thing, I was glad to be a part of this moment in history. I had always believed that a person has to put their money where their mouth is and I did just that. It was one of the worst days of my life when Martin Luther King was assassinated.



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Hidden Mysteries

By Richard Bennett

Have you searched the walls in your old home yet? A few years ago Brendan Morse and his family were tearing out a small section of the kitchen in their old house at 258 Vincent Place. Behind one small section of the wall they found many old artifacts hidden for 100 years.

Brendan, a junior at Larkin High School, has amassed a nice Elgin collection including postcards, envelopes, and other ephemera as well as some architectural remnants from Elgin buildings long gone.

One of the most interesting items is a ledger book from a grocery store in Chicago. The dates of entry stop on October 7, 1871—the day before the Great Chicago Fire. John Welch, the store owner, grabbed the book and a few as other items and headed for Elgin. The ledger book is rich with history, not only of Chicago before the Fire, but of Elginites as well. Ledger entries resume on October 10, 1879.

Among other items Brendan found were a man's shoe, a lady's hat, and a boy's hat from the turn of the century. There were old glass bottles, some in perfect condition and with labels still on, including Webbs Pure

Extracts and Snider's Home Made Catsup. Brendan found an 1889 Borden's Pure Rich Cream lid, an old box of matches, some 1902 campaign cards of John H. Williams for Judge of Kane County, and a Nursery Nonsense Book with a beautiful color cover. Research shows that S. J. Morris occupied the house around this time period. Did he hide these items intentionally, or were they put into the wall by a child and then forgotten? Another mystery.



258 Vincent Place - date unknown