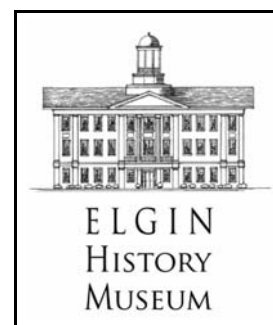




# The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 53 NUMBER 1  
JANUARY 2016



## President's Report

*Bill Briska, President*



With the coming of the New Year, the Historical Society is close to entering into an agreement with the City of Elgin to revitalize 302 West Chicago St. This 1846 cobblestone residence was the home of Nancy Kimball, built by her sons, Samuel and William Kimball, who were both mayors of Elgin in the 19th century.

The 170-year-old building is a significant clue to re-discovering the nearly forgotten story of Elgin's near west side. The Nancy Kimball House was constructed just west of the Chicago Street Bridge and near the "high Northwestern" train depot. This location was once the focal point for commerce and development on the near west side of the city. The building is one of the oldest in the city, and the only cobblestone construction in public ownership.

After nearly a century of use as a single family home the Nancy Kimball House was converted into apartments during the 1940s. Initially it held four small units, however during the 1970s two more tiny "apartments" were squeezed in. Many longtime Elginites will remember this building as the Jo Dormer apartments. The property became increasingly troublesome for the neighborhood as the quality of the upkeep and tenants declined. In 2009 the City acquired the building to stem the downward spiral. The building then was gutted in preparation for a new purpose, however the economic recession interceded and the empty shell was mothballed.

In 2014 the Historical Society began discussions with the City and the Near West Neighbors Association about ways in which to develop the potential of this unique asset, making it into something more than an

abandoned eyesore. We believe this small building can serve the neighborhood in a larger role than as a residential property of only modest value.

The Historical Society's intent is to rehab the building into a small scale, multi-purpose public-use space. This means a combination of gallery, meeting, office, and workshop space for educational, exhibition and neighborhood preservation activities. The building would be used primarily by the Elgin History Museum and the Near West Neighbors Association. The History Museum would offer neighborhood schools educational programs on history and architecture, similar to those already being offered to schools within walking distance of the Museum's Park Street location. The Nancy Kimball House can serve as a gateway structure to the neighborhood. Its successful rehab and programming can foster neighborhood identity and pride, while bolstering grass-roots activities to improve the surrounding area. The low intensity use of the building by small groups of people for relatively short periods of time during the day is not expected to create traffic or parking problems. The small size of the building, in conjunction with this level of use, should minimize the ongoing costs of utilities and maintenance.

The Historical Society already has obtained commitments for \$68,000 in grants for architectural work and to address the structural needs of the building. The Nancy Kimball House Project is estimated to take at least three years. Progress will be made in carefully staged phases with secured funding for each phase. Fundraising for the Nancy Kimball House will come primarily from sources other than those supporting our current operational income or activities. Stay tuned for information about this exciting opportunity for the Historical Society to serve our community.

## The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.  
Next deadline February 20, 2016

 Visit our website [Elginhistory.org](http://Elginhistory.org)

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## Program Schedule for 2016

*David Nelson, Program Chair*

Events are held at the Museum unless otherwise noted. Check the website for the latest details.

[elginhistory.org/events.html](http://elginhistory.org/events.html)

**March 20, 2016, 2:00 P.M.**

**The Hayloft Gang: Story of the National Barn Dance, Stephen Perry**

**April 10, 2:00 P.M.:**

**Mother Jones featuring Betsey Means**

**April 24, 3:00 P.M.: History Fair, 12:00 to 3:00 P.M.**

**May 19, 12:00 noon**

**Brown Bag Lunch: Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House**

**May 23, 7:00 P.M.**

**Free Masonry and the Elgin Masonic Lodge History**

**June 16, 12:00 noon**

**Brown Bag Lunch: The Cold War in Berlin with Steve Stroud**

**July 21, 12:00 Noon**

**Brown Bag Lunch: Elgin Artist Jane Peterson as portrayed by Linda Rock**

**Sunday, July 17, 10:00 A.M. TO 3:00 P.M.**

**2016 Car Show at the Museum**

**August 18, 12:00: Brown Bag Lunch, Jerry Turnquist**

**September 15, 12:00 Noon**

**Brown Bag Lunch: History of Presidential Campaigns with Carl Flaks**

**September 25, 11:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.**

**Bluff City Cemetery Walk**

**October 9, 2:00 P.M.**

**Amazing Adventures of Bertha Benz and the History of the German Auto featuring Anette Isaccs**

**November 5, 6:00 P.M.**

**Annual Benefit/Silent Auction/General Meeting: Jacqueline Kennedy as portrayed by Leslie Goddard**

**December 3, 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.**

**Holiday Tea featuring music by North Side Brass with David Nelson on piano**

## Thank You Donors

### Illinois Give Donations

- Jim and Sara Ellen Anderson
- Harry and Phyllis Blizzard
- Marianne Bost
- Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks
- Patrick and Carol Gieske
- Mary Gregory
- Tricia Grosser
- Paul R. Larson
- Cheri Lee Lewis
- Miriam Lytle
- Rebecca Marco
- Beth Nawara
- David and Dolores Nelson
- Steve and Laura Stroud
- Alan and Kathy Walters

### General Donations:

- Wayne and Jeannette Russell in honor of their daughter, Sara Russell, the Museum's Educator.
- Dennis and Laurie Roxworthy: Bungalow Book Project
- Ann Chipman
- Peggy and Steve Youngren

### Joyce Pellicore Memorials

- |                            |                            |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|
| • Sara Ellen Anderson      | • Kathleen Bechtel         |
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| • Lois Wilhelm             |                            |

## Project 2-3-1 Update

by Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

*Project 2-3-1: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage* exhibit and documentary are traveling throughout the Elgin community. The exhibit has visited four of the five U-46 high schools since September with a stop at Judson University in November. Over 3,500 students have explored the exhibit during class visits to the school libraries. Thanks to the librarians, including Katie Hauser, Melissa Neace, Laura Colilla, Robina Button, and Alyse Liebovich for hosting and promoting the exhibit within their schools!

Many thanks to the tireless Museum volunteer team of George Rowe, Bill Briska, Ron Barclay, Doug Tomsha, and Mark Preradovic who have transported the exhibit to nine different venues since April 2015. They break the exhibit down, pack it, load it into trucks and vans, drive to the next site, unpack the exhibit, and assemble. Each time it takes about 3 hours from start to finish with much heavy lifting.

In 2016, the Project 2-3-1 exhibit will be on display at Bartlett High School from January 5 to January 26.

The exhibit will move to Elgin Community College on January 26 to stay until February 23 for Black History Month. The documentary will be screened for a student audience on February 9 at 12 noon at ECC with time for discussion after the film. Judson University offered a similar screening for students in November. The Museum continues to sell the Project 2-3-1 DVDs at the Museum Store and State Street Market.



*Installing the Project 2-3-1 exhibit at Judson University*

## Welcome New Members

- Vicki Frederick
- Daryl Marcelo
- Carol S Moneyhun
- Gordon Struve

## Henry Jensen, Master Carpenter Contractor

by David Siegenthaler

In 2015 the City of Elgin instituted a new annual award to recognize the best renovation or remodeling project completed within the year. The award is called the Henry Jensen Award in honor of an extraordinary carpenter contractor who lived in Elgin from 1871 to 1918. Jensen probably built or renovated more than 200 Elgin homes, from modest workers' cottages and bungalows to elaborate Queen Annes and Prairie-style homes.



*The first Henry Jensen Award winner at 359 Park St.*

Jensen also built at least three Elgin churches (at 76 S. Jackson St., 357 Division St. and 224 Division St., all still standing), two hospital buildings (at 934 Center St. and 600 Villa St., both now gone), the Lords Park Pavilion, and several apartment, factory and store buildings. He worked with all of the prominent architects of his day, including W.W. Abell (whose home he built), Smith Hoag, David Postle, Gilbert Turnbull and George Morris.

Unlike architects, most builders do not achieve a lasting legacy or prominence. What makes Jensen different, in addition to the quality and volume of his work, is the existence of two "estimate books" covering the years 1898 to 1915, when his career ended. In these books Jensen recorded building specifications, floor



plans and sketches of about 175 buildings, which he used in preparing bids. The accurate and artistic attention to detail shown in these drawings and specifications is reflected in Jensen's construction. See Steve Stroud's book *There Used To Be*, Volume 3, for excellent examples from the estimate books. The entire contents of Jensen's books are currently being digitized and will soon be available online through the Illinois Digital Archives.

Fortunately, Jensen's books have survived all these years. In 2008 they were donated to the Elgin History Museum by historian Mike Alft, to whom they were entrusted by a person who bought them at a garage sale. Though Jensen was not an architect, his books are the closest items our Museum has to architectural plans of early Elgin homes and buildings. Jensen began his building career in the 1870s, so these books, beginning in 1898, represent only the last part of his career.

The very first home to receive the Henry Jensen Award, just months ago, was the Queen Anne home at 359 Park St., directly across the street from our Museum. Though Jensen did not build this home, the beautiful and sensitive remodeling work reflected his craftsmanship.

One of the best examples of Jensen's Queen Anne-style homes is the Alfred Bosworth mansion at 705 West Highland Ave., built in 1894 and designed by Smith Hoag.



*Jensen-built Queen Anne-style home, 705 W. Highland Ave*

One of the best examples of Jensen's Prairie-style homes is the Allen Retan home at 420 Douglas Ave., built in 1909-10 and designed by George Morris. Both of these homes have been awarded historic plaques and are excellent examples of their styles.



*Jensen-built Prairie-style home, 420 Douglas Avenue*

Henry (Heinrich) Jensen was born September 13, 1852 in Niebull, Schleswig, Germany, to Siegfried and Herlich Petersen Jensen. Henry was their second child, born about two years after Peter. Herrlich died while giving birth to Henry. Siegfried then married Hannah Jensen (1820-1905). Siegfried and Hannah had four children: Andrew, Friederike, Christian Detlef (died in infancy) and James.

Henry immigrated to America in April 1871 and proceeded directly to Elgin. Half-brother Andrew immigrated in March 1872 and also came directly to Elgin. In June 1874, the remainder of the Jensen family—Peter, Friederike, James and Hannah—arrived in America and joined Henry and Andrew in Elgin. Henry's father, Siegfried, died in Germany in 1873. The family is first listed in the 1875-76 directory as living at 61 Franklin Boulevard, a home gone by 1910.

Friederike (1857-1935), Henry's half-sister, married John Charles Jansen in 1876. By the 1900 census, Hannah, now 79 years old, was living in Dundee with her daughter Friederike and son-in-law. Hannah, Henry's stepmother, died in 1905. Friederike and J.C. Jansen had six children. The Jansen family bought the Wilcox farm along Big Timber Road in the early 1900s and later sold it to the Burnidge brothers, who subdivided and developed it. Today the old farm site includes an industrial park, a Metra commuter station and Century Oaks West Subdivision.

Sometime in the mid-to-late 1870s, Henry built the frame, cross-gabled home that still stands at 55 Seneca St. By the 1880 census, Henry was living here with his brother Peter, half-brothers Andrew and James, and his stepmother Hannah.



*Jensen family, c. 1900. L-R, top: Andrew, James and Henry; bottom row: Friederike Jansen, Hannah and Peter*

On January 20, 1881, Henry married Friederike Krumm (1855-1929), a native of Mecklenberg, Schwerin, Germany. Friederike immigrated to America in 1872 and came to Elgin in 1874. She and Henry had four children: Herman Peter (died at six months in 1882 of cholera); Emma May (1883-1921; a teacher at Franklin School); Walter Paul (1887-1976; a carpenter contractor); and Inga Elizabeth (1891-1917; a commercial artist).

In about 1883 Henry built a home at 24 Warwick Place for his brother Peter. This home, still standing, is one of the earliest examples of the Queen Anne style in Elgin. In 1887-88 Henry built his own Queen Anne home next door at 18 Warwick Place. Peter Heine Jensen (1850-1924) was one of Elgin's most expert and artistic bookbinders, employed for 50 years at the Elgin Daily News. In 1883 Peter married Minnie Krumm, a sister of Henry's wife, and they had four children.

In 1881, half-brother Andrew (Andreas) Fred Jensen (1854-1944) bought a farm along Crawford Road in Plato Township from his sister and brother-in-law. In 1883 he married Maria (Mary Lena) Rambow and they had 12 children, including one who died in infancy and another at eight years old. In 2006 Andrew's farm (then owned by Mike Ariens, a great grandson of Andrew) was sold to the Kane County Forest Preserve District, who restored it to its natural state. Today it is the easternmost part of the Bowes Creek Woods Forest Preserve.



*Henry Jensen's home at 18 Warwick Pl. currently being remodeled*

Henry's youngest half-brother, James (Jens) C. Jensen (1866-1948), a carpenter, married Dora Fritz in 1890. They had no children. In 1889 Henry built a double home for James, which still stands, at 478-80 Laurel St. One of Henry's last projects was the building of the four-home Laurel Court development in 1915-16, located behind the homes at 470 and 474 Laurel St.

In 1878 Henry Jensen filed a "Declaration of Intention" to become a U.S. citizen. However, he apparently never filed the final document, the "Petition of Naturalization," to actually become a citizen.

Henry died July 14, 1918 at age 65 of myocarditis, with pleurisy as a complication. He was buried in Bluff City Cemetery. His obituary said, "he was a lover of trees and flowers and gave most of his spare time to the planting and cultivating of them. He was fond of reading and a student of books of which he possessed a handsome collection. [He] was a quiet, unassuming man of a kindly disposition and possessed exceptional artistic ability. Carved furniture and wall spaces in his home, as well as many of his buildings, testify to his handiwork."

*Acknowledgements: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; probate files; federal censuses; city directories; naturalization records; newspaper building reports; obituaries; etc.; family photo and genealogical information from Kim Miels, a half-great-grand-niece of Henry Jensen. All home photos by Judy Van Dusen.*



## Benefit Recap

David Nelson, Program Director

The Elgin History Museum's 6th Annual Benefit, Silent Auction and Raffle was held at the Elgin Country Club on November 7, 2015.

It was a gala evening with delicious appetizers and desserts with Lauren Beneszewski, harpist, providing beautiful background music.

The main feature of the evening was Terry Lynch, well-known actor, portraying Daniel Burnham, architect of the 1909 Chicago Plan. Burnham also helped our community with the first City of Elgin plan in 1917. Terry Lynch gave us a wonderful program which was well-received by the audience of 162 people.

The Annual Benefit helps our Museum to provide great exhibits, programs and other events like the Cemetery Walk.

As the Museum Program Chairman, I wish to thank all of the people who helped make this benefit a huge success. A big thank you to all who supported the Museum by attending.

## Reverend Nathaniel Clark's Papers

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

Volunteer Linda Eder recently finished cataloging a collection of papers by Reverend Nathaniel Clark, the first pastor at the First Congregational Church. The collection includes letters, sermons, and remarks written by Clark from the 1840s to the 1860s. Many thanks to Linda for transcribing and organizing it. The catalog will be posted on our website in January. This letter is one example from the collection.

Ringwood July 4th 1864  
Bro. Harwood

The Sabbath schools in Greenwood are intending to have a picnic next Saturday the 9<sup>th</sup> inst. & desire you to be present & address the scholars & those present. The schools will assemble early & close so as to give you time to return. Or if you will exchange with me on the following Sab. I will go to Crystal Lake.

We are all anxious to have you present. If convenient, please drop me a line by the return mail, Tuesday evening that I may know what to depend upon. Saturday is chosen for the picnic because it will interfere less with the day schools than on any other day.

Yours fraternally  
N. C. Clark

## 302 W. Chicago Street: Worth Saving

Rebecca Marco, Editor

The Nancy Currier Kimball House, located at 302 W. Chicago St., is a rare example of cobblestone construction. This building method was brought to the Midwest by the original settlers from upstate New York. In both places, the Great Lakes provided the building material: cobblestones.



*Kimball House, 302 W. Chicago St, from the southeast*

There are two types of natural cobblestone: ice-laid, which were formed by glaciation and freeze-thaw cycles; and water-laid, which are formed by wave action that tumbles the stones smooth. The Kimball House is built with water-laid cobblestones. There is an inner wall made of rough fieldstone, and the outer walls are made of nice-looking cobblestones set neatly into the mortar. This method of construction allowed the house to be built more quickly and was also common in New York.

Masons looking for work after the Erie Canal was completed developed methods of using the stones in building construction, taking advantage of raw materials that were readily available and which were piled up by farmers removing them from the soil as they worked the land. The mortar and styles used were often kept secret. Being able to use the stones as-is, reduced the labor needed to make the house, as only the quoins and lintels needed shaping. In the East, cobblestone houses were mostly built between 1825 and the Civil War.

When settlers migrated from New York to Illinois, they used cobblestones created by Lake Michigan to construct buildings. Though an estimated 600 cobblestone buildings exist in the United States, only 100 of them are located outside the state of New York.



*Hand-split lath, installed over the fieldstone inner walls (2x4s added later as the structure for apartment walls)*

Though the Kimball House needs significant work to make it usable again, it is one of a very few cobblestone houses remaining in our area. That, and the fact that it was built by one of the founding families of Elgin, give the home a significance beyond the unusual structural technique used.



*Nancy Currier Kimball, age 75*

The Kimball House stones are a mix of limestone and other types such as granite. The photos of the interior walls indicate that a first layer of fieldstone was used followed by a layer of the rounded, nicer-looking cobblestones. Also of interest is the hand-split lath that lines the stone walls.



*Inside of stone walls, showing rough fieldstone*

*Acknowledgements: Niagara County Historical Society web page*

*<http://www.niagara2008.com/history100.html>;*

*National Park Service. National Register of Historic Places report for Cobblestone Architecture of New York State, 1992, downloaded from [http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/weekly\\_features/NYCobblestoneMPS.pdf](http://www.nps.gov/nr/feature/weekly_features/NYCobblestoneMPS.pdf) Dec. 29, 2015.*

## **Collections Corner**

*Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director*

The Sanderlin watch was donated to the Museum in August 2015 by William and Kathleen Sanderlin. It is a beautiful 1899 ladies watch in a gold hunter's case with tri-color gold floral details. The donors acquired it in the 1960s and have treasured this watch for 40 years. Thank you to the Sanderlin's of Virginia



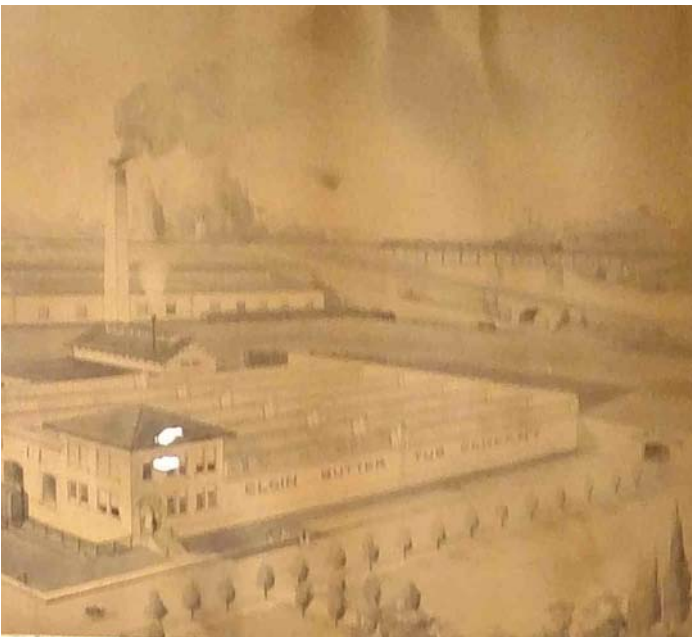
*1899 Elgin Ladies' Pocket Watch, donated by Kathleen and William Sanderlin*



ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM  
360 PARK STREET  
ELGIN, IL 60120



Other recent donations now on exhibit include an Elgin Steel Kitchen sign donated by Jeff White and the new Elgin Butter Tub architectural drawing by Ralph Abell. Both are now part of the Made in Elgin exhibit.



*Drawing of Elgin Butter Tub factory by W. W. Abell  
(detail)*



*Elgin Steel Kitchens advertising sign*