



# Crackerbarrel

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## President's Report

*Bill Briska, President*



One of the Museum's most successful projects reached a few new milestones. Our documentary film *Project 2-3-1: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage* recently won four awards. Two of these awards are local: One was from the Elgin Image Commission and the other from the Elgin Heritage Commission. The other two awards are

from national organizations of professional historians and museum managers.

The local recognition is gratifying because it speaks to the personal connection of the commission members and the Elgin community to this documentary film and traveling exhibit and to our partners, Phil Broxham from Grindstone Productions and Ernie Broadnax. These are awards that come with considerable emotional significance.

The national awards are significant in a different way. They bring the prestige and satisfaction that the Elgin History Museum ranks among the best of its professional peers. See the article on page 3 for details. The film continues to air on cable channel 17 in Elgin. Copies of the DVD have been distributed to all public and academic libraries in Illinois. The traveling exhibit has been to 12 different venues and visited by more than 15,000 guests. Contact us if you know of a venue interested in hosting the film and/or exhibit.

Finally, you will soon be receiving in the mail our annual summer fundraising appeal letter. The money raised amounts to about 7% of our yearly operating budget. That small percentage has been significant in giving us the resources to pursue excellence. Your gifts are wisely invested in the Museum's operations and future growth. The awards reflect the success we have enjoyed thanks to your support.

## Welcome New Members

*Jerri Barnhart, Membership Chairperson*

- Marita Jacobs
- Lori Kase
- Bethany Snyder

## In Memoriam

*Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director*

**Fran Alft** passed away May 4 in Philadelphia. Fran was the Museum's volunteer registrar from 1987 to 2010, accessioning thousands of items into the collection. Fran and Mike Alft, Elgin's historian, moved to Philadelphia in April to be closer to family. We miss her and Mike every day.

**Barb DuMoulin**, board member (2008-2009) and dedicated Cemetery Walk tour guide, passed away June 27. Barb was Board Member Jerry Roller's sister-in-law. For many years Barb was a wonderful museum docent and helped with student educational programs. I knew her in the 1960s as the school secretary at McKinley School when I was a student there.

## Summer Soiree on August 5! Celebrate Old Main's 160th birthday!

Celebrate 160 years of Old Main on a sparkling Friday summer evening. The party starts at 7:00 P.M. on August 5th. Jeff Morello and Friends will entertain with music from the time period of Old Main's construction. Enjoy cake and toasts to a long life for Old Main. Free admission!

## The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.  
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 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)

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

**Vintage Car Show at the Museum**

Vintage cars and Mandy Z and Rural Route 1 Band

**July 21, 12:00 Noon**

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

The program will give insight and historical context into this fascinating time in world history from a personal perspective. This is a perfect way to enjoy your lunch and learn at the same time! Desserts and drinks provided. Members Free/Non-Members: \$3.00.

**August 5, 7:00 P.M.**

**Summer Soiree: Celebrating Old Main's 160th Birthday. Free admission.**

**August 18, 12:00 Noon:**

**Brown Bag Lunch: Miss Elgin Pageant of 1925 with Jerry Turnquist**

Elgin historian Jerry Turnquist describes the impact of the Miss Elgin Pageant of 1925. Bring your lunch, drinks and dessert provided. Members Free/Non-Members: \$3.00.

**September 17, 12:00 Noon**

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

Join Elgin historian Carl Flaks for our last Brown Bag Lunch of the year. Carl will give insight from years of

research about the evolution of presidential campaigns from the early days of the country to recent times. National political climates set the stage for how presidential hopefuls structured their winning or losing campaigns. Bring lunch, drinks and dessert provided. Members Free/Non-Members \$3.00.

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

**29th Annual Bluff City Cemetery Walk  
945 Bluff City Blvd., Elgin, IL**

Cemeteries are solemn reminders of death, but also interesting places to learn about past lives. Join one of the walking tours of Bluff City Cemetery and visit six characters from Elgin in another time. Members, \$10; Adults, \$15. Discount for advance purchase.

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

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

Anette Isaccs is a frequent lecturer on German history and famous figures. Her vast knowledge of German history, politics and interesting topics will keep guests enthralled and leave everyone with a need to put the pedal to the metal! Members Free/Non-Members \$3.00.

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

**Annual Benefit/Silent Auction/General Meeting:  
Elgin Country Club  
2575 Weld Rd., Elgin, IL**

Leslie Goddard portrays first lady Jackie Kennedy in 1964, as the former First Lady is besieged by sightseers around her home in Georgetown. As she deliberates what to do next, she shares the story of her life, including her years in the White House, her struggle to maintain her privacy in the face of media onslaughts, her restoration work, and her attempts to showcase the arts. In a climactic revelation, she recounts her husband's death and comes to a heartfelt decision about how to begin a new life for herself and her children. Hearty appetizers and desserts, plus a full silent auction and raffle. Members \$40.00, Non-Members \$50.00.

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

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

## Reverend Nathaniel Clark, Elgin's First Pastor – Part 1

*by David Siegenthaler*

Elgin founder James T. Gifford was deeply religious, so it was important to him to establish a church in his new settlement. In 1835, after finishing his log cabin and bringing his family to Elgin, Gifford welcomed worshippers, mostly Congregationalists (his own faith) and Presbyterians (who shared the Calvinist doctrine), to his home every Sunday. On February 15, 1836 Gifford invited Reverend Nathaniel Catlin Clark,

a Congregational/Presbyterian minister based in the Naperville area (Lisle Township), to his cabin to discuss the organization of a church in Elgin. That day Rev. Clark preached the first of what would be hundreds of sermons in Elgin over the next 36 years. Gifford invited Rev. Clark back on May 12, 1836, at which time he presided over the organization of Elgin's first church, a Congregational Church that is still thriving 180 years later.

Rev. Clark passed away on December 3, 1872. In 1878 his widow Julia donated 191 of his original hand-written sermons to the Elgin Scientific & Historical Society. One hundred years later, in 1978, a trunk-full of early Elgin historical and genealogical documents, including the sermons, were donated to the Elgin Area Historical Society. These sermons have recently been organized and inventoried. Most of the sermons were preached more than once and many were funeral sermons, including that for 26-year-old Mary Ann Kimball, the first white person to die in Elgin (May 6, 1837). Rev. Clark also preached the funeral sermon for James T. Gifford, which, along with his first sermon as pastor of Elgin's Congregational Church, is on long-term loan to the First Congregational Church, where they are on display on the wall in the Church's library.

Though Elgin's Congregational Church was organized in May 1836, it lacked a pastor until September 1837, when Rev. Clark, who was now living in St. Charles, agreed to divide his time between the Elgin and St. Charles churches. In 1839 he became a full-time pastor in Elgin, where he was pastor at three different times: Sept. 1, 1837-June 13, 1845; July 29, 1847-July 13, 1851; and May 1, 1860-Sept. 1, 1862.

Most worship services in Elgin were held at Gifford's cabin until late 1838 when the "Elgin Chapel" (or "Union Chapel") was built at the northeast corner of DuPage and Geneva streets. Congregationalists shared the cost and use of the Elgin Chapel with the Baptists, who organized their Elgin church in July 1838. This small frame church (enlarged in 1842-43) served both congregations for several years. In 1843 the Congregationalists sold their interest in the chapel to the Baptists and broke ground for their big brick church at the northwest corner of Villa and Fulton streets. Rev. Clark preached the first sermon in the basement of the new church in May 1844.



*First building housing Union Chapel*

Rev. Clark is credited with preaching the very first sermon in Kane County. It was at the log cabin of Christopher Payne, the County's first white settler, in August 1834 in Batavia Township. However, he preached the third sermon in Elgin. The first Elgin sermon was given by an unnamed itinerant Methodist preacher in late 1835. The second Elgin sermon was given on Feb. 14, 1836, the day before Rev. Clark's sermon, by Rev. John Prentiss, a Methodist preacher from Joliet.

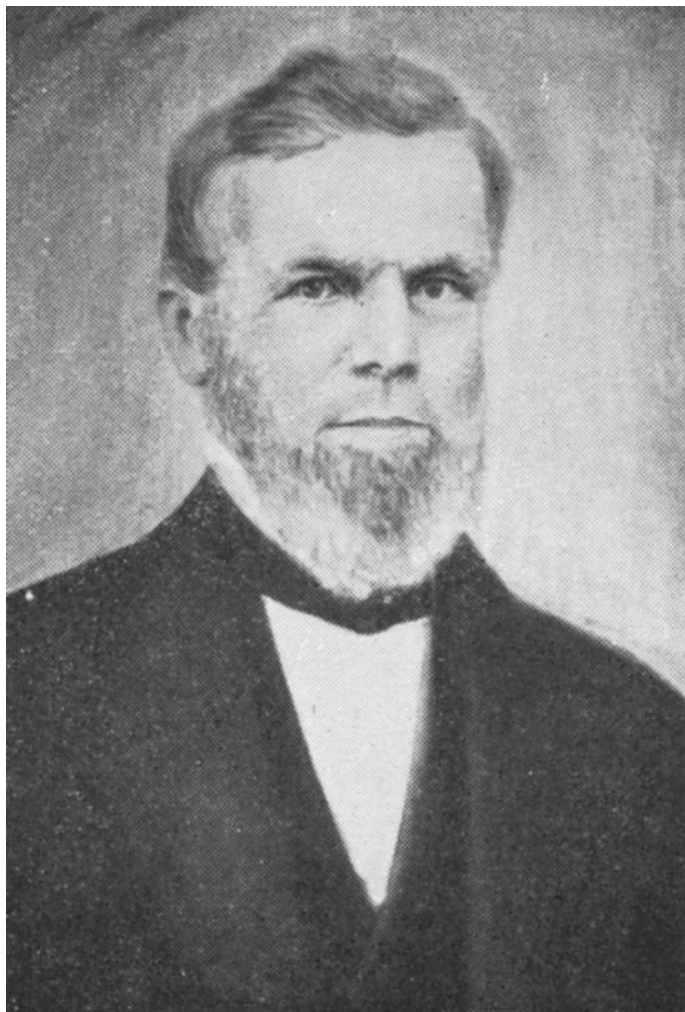
A native of Vermont, Rev. Clark had been requested to come to the Chicago area by some Vermont people already living here. He sought sponsorship from the American Home Missionary Society, which commissioned him at \$400 per year (less any amount he could raise from his own labors). Rev. Clark, along with his pregnant wife, arrived in Illinois on June 29, 1833, at age 31, as a missionary to preach the gospel on what was then the western frontier. This was only a year after the Blackhawk War ended and the region was opening up to white settlers.

Life as a missionary on the frontier was a constant struggle, as Rev. Clark revealed in his quarterly reports to the Missionary Society from 1833-38. Money was always an issue. Though his commission allowed him up to \$400 per year, it had to be continually re-justified, any extra money returned, and any gift of goods subtracted. There was always pressure on him to collect a salary from his parishioners, most of whom barely had enough to support themselves. And during the 1830s, those who did have extra money were usually saving it to buy land when the land offices opened.

Sickness seemed to be ever-present – either for himself, his family (his first-born child died at age three in 1836), or his parishioners. And the population was spread out over a wide area with no roads, so it was hard to minister to them.

Sometimes, in reporting to the Missionary Society, he couldn't hide his discouragement. He noted that a minister had to do everything that ordinary people did – build a house, make a garden and purchase a horse and cow. In addition, a minister needed to study, to prepare his sermons, to preach and to visit people. He organized churches, Bible classes and temperance societies. And yet, despite the hardships and discouragement, he was "well pleased with my field of labour."

Sources vary as to the number of Congregational and Presbyterian churches Rev. Clark organized in the five counties of Kane, Cook, DuPage, McHenry and Will, though it is somewhere between 25 and 37.



*Rev. Nathaniel Clark*

In 1873, following Rev. Clark's death, the American Home Missionary Society published a poignant tribute to him. It noted that "with brief intervals when he served self-supporting churches, his name had been upon the list of this Society's missionaries for an entire generation – 1833 to 1866. Few men have given to the

ministry a lifetime of more persistent self-sacrifice and devotion." The tribute ends with the question, "Did it pay to send him out?"

The answer was a resounding yes. "In New England, during his lifetime, he might have been the pastor of one or two average churches; here he has touched the springs of life in a quarter of a hundred, and has put his impress upon the rising society of a half a dozen counties... On the field assigned to him there have since been organized eighty Congregational churches and perhaps as many Presbyterian. Places where he has ministered have grown to cities of three, five, ten and fifteen thousand people. Wealth and culture have come along; and in all this development he has had a hand."

And finally, in a plea to future missionaries, "What say you, young men of the theological seminaries, did he fall out of notice by coming West on a commission of \$400 to make a place for himself as best he could upon the rude frontier? Counties, Territories, States lie yet beyond, waiting the molding influence of such young men."

*To be continued...*

*Acknowledgements: Linda Farroh Eder, historian of Elgin's First Congregational Church, did most of the research for these articles on Rev. Clark. She spent many hours organizing and inventorying his sermons, researching local history sources, and copying and transcribing his microfilmed hand-written letters to the American Home Missionary Society, which are housed in the Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College.*



*1844 Elgin Congregational Church*

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## Thank You Donors!

- Harry and Phyllis Blizzard in support of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone Project
- Lucy and Mark Elliott in memory of Fran Alft
- Gail Borden Library Foundation for *Take Project 231 to the Library*. Thank you Library Foundation!
- Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham, as sponsors of the Museum Candlelight Tour in May.
- Carol Plagge in honor of Bill Briska.
- Carol and William Redeker in support of the Museum's educational programs
- Jackie Vossler as sponsor of the James Eppenstein architecture program with Patrick Steffes.

### Donations for Hillside Cemetery Signage

- Lester Lupinot
- Charles and Nancy Nelson
- Poris Paige
- Bob and Dolly Scanlon
- Tim Sweeney

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## More Awards for Project 2-3-1

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

Project 2-3-1, has won two prestigious awards: an AASLH Award of Merit, and the Midwest History Association's Alice B. Smith Prize in Public History.



The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) proudly announced that the Elgin History Museum/Grindstone Productions and Ernie Broadnax have won an Award of Merit for *Project 2-3-1, Two Boxcars, Three Blocks, One City: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage*. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards, now in its 71st year, is the most prestigious recognition for achievement in the preservation and interpretation of state and local history.

Project 2-3-1, is a 75- minute documentary film that begins with Civil War "contrabands," who were the first African Americans to live in Elgin, and continues to the present day. The film is filled with enthralling stories, amazing history and wonderful photographs. Produced in partnership with Grindstone Productions, Elgin Area Historical Society and Elginite Ernie Broadnax, the film premiered at the Elgin Community College Blizzard Theatre in April 2015.

This year, AASLH is proud to confer 63 national awards honoring people, projects, exhibits, and publications. The winners represent the best in the field and provide leadership for the future of state and local history. Presentation of the awards will be made at a spe-

cial banquet during the 2016 AASLH/MMA Annual Meeting in Detroit, Michigan, on Friday, September 16. The banquet is supported by a generous contribution from the History Channel.

The AASLH awards program was initiated in 1945 to establish and encourage standards of excellence in the collection, preservation, and interpretation of state and local history throughout the United States. The AASLH Leadership in History Awards not only honor significant achievement in the field of state and local history, but also bring public recognition of the opportunities for small and large organizations, institutions, and programs to make contributions in this arena. For more information about the Leadership in History Awards, contact AASLH at 615-320-3203, or see [www.aaslh.org](http://www.aaslh.org).

The Midwestern History Association announced the winner of its annual Alice Smith Prize for best public history project completed in the previous calendar year. The honor was conferred upon the Elgin History Museum in collaboration with Grindstone Productions and Ernie Broadnax for their film and traveling exhibit project, *Two Boxcars, Three Blocks, One City: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage* (<https://project231.org/>). The project connects Elgin's abolitionist past with the Civil War and contrabands, but also reflects on the topic over time, profiling individual community members and addressing topics of current relevance in the community. The documentary screened on local cable television and in multiple public venues and the associated traveling exhibit was displayed at Elgin U-46 schools, Elgin Community College, Gail Borden Library and other public venues.

Named after the director of research at the Wisconsin Historical Society from 1947 to 1965 who authored six books and numerous articles on the state's history, the Alice Smith prize honors a public history project that contributes to broader public reflection and appreciation of the region's past.

The prize committee was impressed with the Elgin project's multimedia approach, community engagement and overall response to the film and exhibit from visitors and viewers. The documentary is a fine example of community-engaged local public history that received strong support from community members, sponsors and local officials. The members of the Smith Prize committee are Aaron Shapiro of the University of North Carolina Charlotte, Amy Tyson of DePaul University and Jeff Manuel of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. For more information see [www.midwesternhistory.com](http://www.midwesternhistory.com).

In addition, *Take Project 231 to the Library* has now been completed. A copy of our award-winning documentary has been delivered to every public and academic library in the state of Illinois—a total of 810 DVDs.

## Candlelight Museum Tour Recap

Laura Stroud, Secretary

On Friday, May 13, 2016, Old Main had a new event: the first candlelight tour of the Museum. Visitors were treated to a beautiful candlelit tour of this grand old building, built 160 years ago. The first and second floors were alight with electric candles.

After a brief greeting and introduction by Steve Stroud, guides escorted groups of guests to four different exhibits. In the log cabin room volunteer Beth Hudson read from a letter James T. Gifford wrote while traveling to Elgin. Then upstairs, Mike Delehoy told stories in character as Earl "Mad Man" Muntz. Next was a visit from George Hunter, portrayed by Andrew Cuming, in the Watch Factory exhibit.



*Tour Guides and Greeters for the Candlelight Tour*

The last exhibit was on the first floor, with volunteer Barbara Schloss sharing stories of Prohibition and women's votes in Elgin. An interesting side note is that while researching this speech, we came across the 1840s Washingtonian Temperance ledger in the Museum archives. It has signatures of many Elgin men and women who signed a pledge to abstain from alcohol.

When the tour was completed the guests were invited into the Seigle Room for drinks and appetizers. The refreshment room was aglow in candlelight, and yummy treats set up by Ricky Harris and Mira Wojciechowska were enjoyed by all.

This event was organized by the Program Committee made up of David Nelson, Laura Stroud, Ricky Harris, Mark Preradovic, Liz Marston and Carl Flaks. A special "thank you" to volunteers Beth Hudson, Barbara Schloss, Mike Delehoy, Andrew Cuming; Don Pielin and Mark Preradovic who helped to keep groups

moving; to Hannah Walters at the ticket table; Steve Stroud, greeter; to the guides; Paul Larson, Kathleen Grimm, Rick Grimm, Marge Rowe, Linda Rock and Jim Turner; Carol Huntoon for her generous donation of candles; and refreshment ladies Ricky Harris and Mira Wojciechowska.

This was a very successful event attended by close to 100 interested people, despite the fact that there was a rainstorm going on at the time. The Program Committee hopes to organize similar events in the future at the Museum.



*Program Director David Nelson, Hannah Walters and Board Member Rick Grimm welcomed visitors.*



*Mike Delehoy as Mad Man Muntz and Andrew Cuming as Watch Factory Superintendent George Hunter*

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## 2016 Historical Society Outing

Rebecca Marco, Editor

The weather was just perfect for our annual outing on June 25. We enjoyed a guided tour with the Lake Geneva Cruise Line, customized to focus on the Elgin Club and the links between Elgin and Lake Geneva. Captain Hauch provided an excellent commentary throughout the trip, demonstrating his extensive knowledge not only of Lake Geneva but also of how the economy of the Gilded Age and the building of the railroads contributed to the development of Lake Geneva as a resort for wealthy Chicagoans.



*The Grand Belle on the lake*

A delicious luncheon was served aboard the beautiful Grand Belle and the ride was smooth. After the meal some guests went up to the open-air deck. The scenery was wonderful and the captain provided a wealth of information about almost every house we passed. We especially appreciated the information about the Elgin Club, the oldest subdivision on the lake, which was founded by Charles Moseley of the Elgin National Watch Company along with friends and hunting/fishing companions from Elgin. Especially interesting was the information about the railroads that used to bring visitors to the lake.



*Lake Geneva enthusiast Marge Rowe*



*L to R: Board Member Paul Larson, Rebecca Larsen, Board Members Don Pielin and Rebecca Marco, Jeffery Biss*



*President Bill Briska and Fran Cella enjoy the weather from the top deck.*

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## Car Show July 17th

Join us once again for the Vintage Car Show at the Museum lawn on July 17th. We will be entertained by Mandy Z and Rural Route 1 Band from 10:30-3:00. Hot dogs and popcorn will be available. There will be two 50/50 raffles this year. Sponsors are the Chicagoland Thunderbirds, KJP Car Show, and the Model T Car Club. Hope to see you there!



## Miller Car Reunion, Milwaukee, WI

*Rebecca Marco, Editor*

These pictures are from the 23rd annual Millers at Milwaukee event, held at Milwaukee County fairgrounds June 24/25. The event showcases Indy cars designed by Harry Miller, an American car designer who is towering figure in the history of American auto racing.



*Vintage Indy cars on display in Milwaukee*

The black #10 car pictured, owned by Dana Mecum of Mecum Auctions, won the Ford event in the 1933 Elgin Road Race. The other cars pictured are Dana's collection of vintage Indianapolis cars from the 1940s and '50s. For more information on Harry Miller see [www.harrymillerclub.com](http://www.harrymillerclub.com).

The Elgin History Museum was represented by board member and Road Race historian Maury Dyer, who was a guest of Dana Mecum. Maury introduced Zach McClure, a graduate student from McPherson College (Kansas) who Maury is sponsoring to research the Elgin Road Races. McPherson College was selected by Maury because they award a degree in automotive restoration.



*Winner of Ford event in 1933 Elgin Road Race*