

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News January 2018

President's Report: The Anderson Bequest

Bill Briska, President



In 2018, the Museum will receive a 1.9 million dollar bequest from the estate of Warren Anderson. In keeping with Museum policy, this bequest will be added to the Museum's Endowment Fund, established in 2000 as part of a long-range plan to foster the Museum's financial resiliency.

The Museum is well-prepared for this very generous gift. In recent years the Board and staff completed a thorough review of operations using the museum industry's best practices standards, known as the StEPS program. We have identified strategically important goals for the Museum to reach the next higher level of service to our community, and this gift will help us realize them.

The Board added two important conditions when it created the Endowment Fund. First, that the principal will remain untouched and that only the income it generates can be withdrawn. Second, that income from the fund will be reinvested until the endowment grows enough to be self-sustaining. Approximately \$271,000 in bequests and memorials gifts have been donated since the endowment was established. Through income reinvestment, the fund has grown to approximately \$615,000.

Though a substantial amount of money, until now it was not felt to be fiscally prudent to spend Endowment income. Warren Anderson's bequest will change that. Sometime this year or the next, the Museum will begin using a portion of the Endowment income to pursue the next level. The focus is not on the total value of the Fund, but rather the size of the income stream it will provide and still allow for future growth. A very pre-

liminary estimate is that income of around \$25,000 is prudent and reasonable. This represents about 10 percent of the Museum's annual budget.

The Museum has come a long way in the last 30 years thanks to the support of the membership, volunteers and donors. The Board is very grateful for that. Your continued support, along with income from the endowment, will be needed to reach the next level.

The Andersons



*Warren and
Charlen Anderson*

Charlen and Warren Anderson were the children of Charles and Helen Anderson of Elgin. Charlen was born in 1921 and Warren in 1923, both at St. Joseph's Hospital. Charlen graduated from Elgin High School in 1940 and worked at the Elgin National Watch Company from 1941 to 1969. After the factory closed, she worked as an assembler at the Waltham Service Center and then as an inspector for Knowles Electronics. She retired in 1985. Warren graduated from Elgin High School in 1941 and attended Ellis Business College in Elgin. He entered the Army in 1943 and served in Central Europe, Germany and France as a surgical technician taking care of wounded soldiers and civilians. After the war, Warren worked as an accountant for real estate firms. Warren enjoyed collecting glassware and was President of the 20-30-40 Society in the 1970s. Warren died in 2014. His will provided for the care of his sister until her death. Charlen collected Elgin memorabilia, Elgin National Watch Company items, and stamps. Charlen and Warren each donated many items to the Museum collections. When Charlen passed away in 2017, the Museum learned of his generous bequest.

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Visit our website Elginhistory.org

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Society's Board of Directors.

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Saturday, April 21, 12:00 Noon to 3:00 P.M.

Open Elgin Event

Discover historic Elgin by touring schools, churches, downtown office buildings, and businesses not normally open to the public. Free admission.

Monday, April 30, 7:00 P.M., Gail Borden Public Library: Miss Elgin Contest of 1925

Elgin historian Jerry Turnquist tells the story of the Miss Elgin Contest of 1925, sponsored by the Elgin Motor Club. The winner advanced to the Miss America pageant.



Wednesday, May 16, 7:00 P.M., Gail Borden Public Library: Elgin Architecture

Elgin historian Bill Briska gives an overview of Elgin architectural styles with local examples.

Thursday, May 17, 12:00 Noon. Gail Borden Public Library: Brown Bag Lunch: Online House Research Computer Lab

Elgin house researcher Rebecca Hunter shows how to research your Elgin home online.

Saturday and Sunday, June 9 and 10 Civil War Experience in Elgin: Civil War Re-enactment, Corner of Rt. 31 and Rt. 20

Join the 9th Virginia Cavalry, Co B & McGregor's Battery, and the City of Elgin for the 2nd Annual Civil War Event, featuring live skirmishes, living history, Confederate and Union encampments, medical field operations, and baseball as it was originally played.

Thursday, June 21, 2:00 P.M.

Brown Bag Lunch with Linda Rock

Non members \$3. Refreshments available.

Sunday, July 15, 10:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Antique Car Show

Lively music, good food available for purchase. Prizes awarded for cars. The Museum will open at 11:00 a.m. and tours will be available. Free admission.

Thursday, July 19, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch

Thursday, August 16, 12 Noon

Brown Bag Lunch with Jerry Turnquist

Saturday, August 25, 12:00 Noon to 4:00 P.M.

Elgin HayDay at Providence Park

Thursday, September 13, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch

Sunday, September 23, 11:00 to 3:00 P.M.

31st Annual Cemetery Walk at Bluff City Cemetery

2018 Program Schedule

David Nelson, Program Chair

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

elginhistory.org/events.html

Sunday, January 14, 3:00 P.M., State Street Market

Linda Rock presents Herstory: Elgin Women

Saturday, February 17, 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Volunteer Brunch (invitation only)

Sunday, March 18, 2:00 P.M.

Elgin History Museum, Members Free, \$3 Guests Virtuoso: The Life of Clara Schumann (1819-1896)

Clara Wieck, a brilliant performer, and Robert Schumann, a gifted composer fell deeply in love. Their marriage became one of the great true love stories of all time. Clara was eternally grateful for the art that was to sustain her through a lifetime of triumph and tragedy.

Wednesday, March 21, 7:00 P.M.

Gail Borden Public Library

Elgin American Compacts: Making Women Beautiful

Using her collection of Elgin American powder compacts, Elgin historian Linda Rock describes the evolution of women's makeup from Egyptian times to today. Audience volunteers will become makeup artists and make up models from the 1920s and 1950s.

Sunday, October 14, 2:00 P.M.: Annual Meeting

**Saturday, November 10, 6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.
Museum Benefit and Silent Auction**

**Saturday, December 8, 1:00 P.M.
Annual Holiday Tea at the Museum**

Welcome New Members

- Mary Navin
- Rich Kaleta
- Estella Moorhouse
- Valerie Driskill
- Kit Domenico

Thank You Donors

See back page for IL Give donor list.

- Janet and Gordon Burkart
- Cathy Daniels
- Michael Kalland, Elgin Mental Health Book Reprint
- Aubrey Neville, Dairies to Prairies project
- Elgin Heritage Commission: Grant for Elgin Architecture exhibit.

Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Project

- E. C. "Mike" Alft,
- Jeff Turner and In the Neighborhood Deli
- Signal Hill DAR

IL Give Results

The Grand Victoria Foundation challenges Grant-Works participants to raise money for their organizations through the online IL Give/Giving Tuesday campaign. This year, the challenge was to bring in new donors to the Museum. On Giving Tuesday, December 1, the Museum doubled the number of total donors from 44 in 2016 to 90 in 2017. Forty-eight of the 90 donors had not previously given to the Museum.

The total amount donated to the Museum on Giving Tuesday 2017 was \$7,345. The Grand Victoria Foundation matched up to \$4,000 of those donations. The Museum also received a \$2,000 incentive from the Foundation for new donors and a \$1,000 award from the state IL Give organization for the most donors between 10:00 and 11:00 a.m. on Giving Tuesday.

With the incentives and matching funds, total Giving Tuesday contributions to the Museum add up to \$14,345! Many thanks and a pat on the back to all of the Museum's board members and staff who asked new donors to contribute and also donated funds to the Museum.

Also thanks to Museum staffer Kim Bauer for designing the Museum's IL Give website page and managing the website, Facebook and Twitter feeds for IL Give. Thank you also to all those who donated to the Museum as part of the ILGive campaign. See the back page for a complete list of all who donated.

Nancy Kimball Cobblestone Update

The Elgin Cultural Arts Commission recently awarded the Museum a \$3,000 grant to produce the Cobblestone Reflections public art project in 2018! This project will provide a way to reach a new audience for the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House rehab project and will allow the house's use in engaging the community, even before rehab is complete.

Showcasing Elgin

The National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference was held in Chicago for the first time in 20 years this past November. Christen Sundquist, the City of Elgin's Preservation Planner, proposed a field experience for National Trust Conference attendees called *City of Elgin: Working Round the Clock to Preserve the Midcentury*. Christen worked with Bill Briska and Elizabeth Marston from the Museum and Rebecca Hunter from the Heritage Commission to plan and implement the tour. It was a full-day bus excursion on November 16, attended by 45 National Trust people from all over the country. Bill and Christen led the tour. Stops included:

- Brethren Church General Headquarter offices on Rt. 25 and I-90, built 1959
- Bus tour through the Spring/Douglas Historic District on the way to City Hall (built 1968)
- Second Appellate Court Building, 1966
- Union Bank on East Chicago Street, 1960
- Lunch at the Museum
- Bus tour through Elgin Downtown Commercial District

- Visit to Elgin Mental Health Center to view two Bertrand Goldberg buildings: the Laundry Building, 1966, and the Medical and Surgical Building, 1967. Both buildings have been closed for many years.



Rehearsing the National Trust tour, June 2017: L to R: Jordan Torrance from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, Bill Briska, Rebecca Hunter, Christen Sundquist, and Eric Keune, an architect with Skidmore Owings and Merrill in Chicago, in front of the Laundry Building at the Elgin Mental Health Center



Interior of the Laundry Building at the Elgin Mental Health Center

Dr. Joseph Tefft, Elgin's First Doctor and Mayor: Part 1

by David Siegenthaler

In Elgin historian Mike Alft's ranking of "Civic Hall of Fame" members, only two persons were deemed more prominent and influential in Elgin's history than Dr. Joseph Tefft (1812-88). Those persons were Elgin founder James T. Gifford and entrepreneur B.W. Raymond. The number of leadership positions held by Dr. Tefft is truly impressive.

Dr. Tefft was Elgin's first doctor, practicing here for 40 years. He was the first president of the Fox River Valley Medical Association. He was the primary force in getting Elgin incorporated as a city. He was Elgin's first mayor, serving a total of five terms. He was a town election judge and served two terms each as police magistrate and township supervisor.

He was the first president of the Elgin Board of Trade, whose success helped Elgin to become the dairy capital of the Midwest, if not the entire country. He was the first president of the Elgin Dairy Club, the Elgin Agricultural Society, the Illinois Holstein Breeders Association and was the second president of the Illinois State Dairymen's Association. He was the first president of the Elgin Dairy Co. and helped organize the Elgin Milk Condensing Co.



Dr. Joseph Tefft

He was a director of the Fox River Valley Railroad Co. and was the first president of the McHenry Railway Co. He was the first president of the Elgin Packing Co. and was president of the Wagonshire Insurance Co.

During the Civil War, he was appointed examining surgeon of the 141st Illinois Volunteer Infantry and was surgeon of the post while the unit encamped in Elgin.

Dr. Tefft was president of the Elgin Academy's Board of Trustees for 33 years and was the driving force in finally getting the school built and opened 17 years after it was chartered. That school building, Old Main, is now in the 30th year of its second life as the home of the Elgin Area Historical Society and its Museum. He was also the first president of the Elgin Scientific and Historical Society and for several years was president of the Old Settlers Association, the two predecessors of the Elgin Area Historical Society.

On social issues, Dr. Tefft was the most influential local advocate of prohibition during his lifetime, and was also an abolitionist who took in seven contrabands (former slaves), when the train load of them arrived in Elgin in 1862.

Born in Lebanon, Madison County, New York, on August 29, 1812, Joseph was the first of 14 children born to Jonathan and Elizabeth (Collins) Tefft. Of Quaker ancestry, his paternal grandparents were Jeremiah and Rhoda (Hoxie) Tefft and his maternal grandparents were Solomon and Sarah (Perry) Collins.

Joseph's siblings were: Maria (Mrs. Eliphalet Mann)(1814-59); Amos (wife: Margaret Calvert)(1815-1906); Jonathan, Jr. (wife: Delinda West)(1817-1903); Erastus (wife: Ruth Kenyon)(1818-80); Louisa (Mrs. Persons Gilbert)(1821-1906); Eli Alonzo (wife: Tamar Eliza Hewitt)(1823-89); Thomas Wilbur (wives: Emily Betsey Joles and Frances Kinlock)(1824-1912); Minerva Sarah (Mrs. Alfred Hewitt)(1826-52); Solomon Perry (wife: Mary Van Wies)(1828-64); Emeline (Mrs. William Wardin)(1830-1909); Electa Ann (1833-35); Rhoda Jerusha (Mrs. Chancey Hawley)(1835-1922); and Susan Almeda (1837-42).

Joseph graduated from the College of Medicine at Woodstock, Vermont in June 1833. On February 5, 1834, he married Emeline Gilbert in Cazenovia, New York. He left Madison County, New York, in the spring of 1835 with a company composed of himself and his wife Emeline, his father Jonathan and his family, his uncle, Dr. Nathan Collins and his family, and his brother-in-law, P.C. Gilbert and his family.

Traveling by covered wagons pulled by ox teams (some sources say horse teams), the company slowly made their way nearly 800 miles, across bridgeless streams and sometimes through almost impassable swamps. Most of their household furnishings and supplies were transported by ship through the Great Lakes, which held their own dangers. Their goods finally arrived in Chicago seven months after they did, and were mostly ruined by water during a severe storm on one of the lakes.

Arriving in the Elgin area in early November 1835, the families immediately made claims. Joseph took a claim on the east side of the Fox River in what is now South Elgin. Dr. Collins claimed a tract of land across the river from Joseph. Joseph's father, Jonathan, laid claim to land about a mile east of Elgin, within the present boundaries of Cook County. Jonathan's claim included what is now Lords Park. In 1837 Joseph traded farms with his father, taking the one in Cook County, while Jonathan settled on a 260-acre farm east of South Elgin.

Settling in what is now South Elgin, Joseph and Dr. Collins hoped a town would arise there, which they named Clintonville, after DeWitt Clinton, a former Governor of New York. A dam built in 1836 washed out, but was replaced with a more substantial one.

In 1837 or 1838 (there is conflicting evidence), Joseph was given property in Elgin by founder James T. Gifford in consideration of his making Elgin his residence. Here, at the northeast corner of Spring and Chicago streets, Joseph had the first frame home in Elgin built.

In 1836 Dr. Collins moved to St. Charles, leaving Joseph as the only doctor in Elgin Township. His practice extended from the south line of the Township north for 20 miles or more, and a similar distance east and west. The roads in those days were poor or non-existent and his trips were made on horseback in all seasons. He often had to swim streams or cross trackless prairies on dark nights with no landmarks.

Joseph continued in active practice until 1875, after which he served as a consulting physician. He served as a surgeon in the Civil War and helped create the Fox River Valley Medical Association in 1864. He was president of that organization in 1864, 1868, and from 1877 until his death.

In 1837 Joseph and Emeline had their first child, Mary Eliza, who died in 1842 at five years of age. Their second child, Julia Ellen, was born in 1844, the same year Emeline passed away at age 33. Julia married Robert Martin and passed away in 1894 in Topeka, Kansas, survived by her husband, five sons and one daughter.

Joseph married Lavina (Johnson) Ormsbee (1815-97), a 31-year-old widow, on October 22, 1846. Lavina had one child from her first marriage, Cornelia (Mrs. Struthers). Joseph and Lavina had one child together, Leslie Eugene (1848-99). Leslie married Susan Belyea in 1872 and the couple had two children: Nellie Edna (Mrs. Sherman Spitzer) and Leslie Joseph. Leslie Eugene followed in his father's footsteps and earned his medical degree in 1887.

In 1846 Joseph bought a vacant lot at 218 E. Highland Ave., just west of the Methodist Church. Here he had a big cobblestone and brick home built, completed in 1849. This home remained in the Tefft family until 1914, when it was sold to the First Methodist Church

next door, which used it as a Sunday School, nursery and meeting place for several years. In 1923 the home was razed to make room for a big new church.



Dr. Tefft's home on Highland Avenue

To be continued...

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; Autobiographies of Fox Valley Pioneers (1981); obituaries; newspaper articles; Kane County histories; etc.

Story of an Elgin Watch

by Al Bailey, Rowan, Iowa

Editor's note: this story came from an Elgin watch research request. Mr. Bailey visited the Museum in December 2017 with his grandson Simon. While he was here, he related his grandmother's story about how she purchased her Elgin watch.

Mable Olson was like hundreds of other rural Iowa girls. She had gone to a small one-room country schoolhouse, then went to college for a short time to learn how to be a teacher. As it happened, her old school needed a teacher when she returned home in 1908 so she was in the unique position of teaching many of her previous classmates.

At the end of her first month, the county school superintendent stopped by to see how she was doing and deliver her pay, a \$10 gold piece. She treasured that coin. Of course, she'd seen many others but this one was special because it was hers and she had earned it.

Mabel studied the coin intently, noting its various nicks and dents. She wondered how many people had owned it before her and where it had been.

After some thought, she decided to buy something special with the money, something she would treasure for the rest of her life. She would buy an Elgin 295 watch with a fancy hunter case and a mine-cut embedded diamond.

Rural people relied heavily on mail order at that time. She took the order form and her \$10 gold piece to the post office where she purchased a postal money order to pay for the watch. She mailed the order and went home to anxiously await the delivery of her new Elgin watch.

That night someone broke into the post office and all the money was taken from the till.

News of the theft spread around the community very quickly. Shortly, someone was caught with the exact amount missing from the post office, but there was no other evidence to link them to the crime. It looked like the man would have to be released, until Mabel told someone that she could identify the \$10 gold piece she'd used to buy her money order.

Mabel testified at the man's trial in Federal Court in Fort Dodge, Iowa. She described all the distinctive markings on her coin. She picked out the coin from all those held in evidence in the case and explained why she had studied the coin so closely. The man went to prison and the money was eventually returned to the post office.

After teaching in that same country school for only a few years, she married a neighbor's son. They were my grandparents.

The watch was indeed cherished all the rest of her life and I have it now. It's never been dropped and it still works perfectly. I cherish it because it belonged to my grandmother and also for the story that accompanies it.



Watch Dial



Back and front of Mable Olson's watch

Programming Note

As shown in our Program Schedule on page 2, Museum programs for 2018 will include a wide range of topics, venues, and formats. Look for updates on the Dairies to Prairies Documentary and Exhibit premiere set for April or May. The Program Committee devel-

oped programs for general meetings at the Museum and for the summer Brown Bag Lunch series, but Museum speakers will also present at the Gail Borden Public Library and at City of Elgin events, such as the Civil War Experience and Hay Day. Our speakers also present to community groups and clubs. Project 2-3-1 will be displayed again at the Hemmens during Martin Luther King weekend. The Museum partners with the city and other Elgin organizations for events like Open Elgin on April 21, where almost 40 buildings will be open free to the public, the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House public art project, Cobblestone Reflections, and programs at Lords Park Zoo. The Museum's website has the latest information. Email flyers, Facebook posts, Twitter and Instagram also keep you updated.

Collections Corner

Pat Bailey from Colorado donated this wonderful print of the Elgin National Watch Company in December. Her father, Jack D. Bailey, worked for the watch company from 1951 to 1969. He started at the Lincoln, Nebraska facility and moved to Elgin in 1958. Jack worked as a Quality Control Supervisor, Production Engineer, Manufacturing Foreman, General Foreman, and Assistant Plant Manager during his career. The day the framed print was delivered to the Museum, Kaffie Milliken, a Director with the Smithsonian's Office of Advancement, was visiting with Museum members, Jackie Vossler and Rich Renner.



Jackie Vossler and Kaffie Milliken show off the print donated by Pat Bailey

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
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IL Give Donors 2017: Thank You!

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