



Elgin History Museum News January 2019

President's Report

Al Walters, President



2019 is a transitional year at the Elgin History Museum as we say thank you, but not goodbye, to a retiring board president.

Bill Briska's second term as President ended after leading the Museum through four successful years. During his tenure, the *Dairies to Prairies* video and accompanying travel display were conceived, financed, developed and completed, leading to the community's deeper understanding of Elgin's agrarian past.

Another milestone of Bill's leadership was the partnership developed with the City of Elgin to rehab the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone house. Bill's vision, along with the work of many others, will result in the preservation of one of Elgin's oldest structures, rehabbed and repurposed for community use.

While Bill is stepping down as president, he and his institutional knowledge are not going away. He will continue to serve the Board as our new treasurer. Bill, along with new Vice-President George Rowe, Museum Director Elizabeth Marston, and others will continue spearheading work at the cobblestone house.

I have been a board member and volunteer for over six years, most recently serving as vice-president. I am a lifelong resident of Elgin and a Larkin High School Class of '71 graduate. I recently retired from Benjamin Moore Paints and look forward to leaving the business world to pursue my longtime passion for history, education and all things Elgin.

As with every organization, it is the people who make the difference. I am comforted in knowing that capable, motivated, supportive, and proven volunteers and staff surround me.

The board of directors also wish to welcome the two newest board members, Ms. Tina Viglucci and Ms. Betsy Armistead.

Tina is the Hispanic Outreach Director for Gail Borden Library and as such has deep roots among Elgin's Hispanic population. Tina will help the Museum engage this growing and important demographic.

Betsy recently retired from a career managing performing arts venues, and has volunteered her expertise to lead the Museum's program committee. Betsy replaces David Nelson, chairman of the program committee for many years. David is retiring but has agreed to remain on the board, where his input will be invaluable.

All of us at the Elgin History Museum look forward to an exciting 2019 as we strive to honor the Museum's mission of collecting, preserving and interpreting Elgin's heritage for the enrichment of our community.

Join the Museum Team!

Docents are needed to greet Museum visitors, answer questions, show people around the exhibits, and sell items in the Museum Store. Also needed are volunteers to help digitize images in the collection, enter historical data, organize objects and help with exhibits. Do you have an interest in history, antique objects, and your local community? Apply online at <https://elginhistory.org/volunteers/> or call the Museum at 847.742.4248.



George Rowe and Paul Larson enjoy volunteering at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House

The Crackerbarrel

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President: Al Walters
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Corr. Secretary: Ricky Harris
Treasurer: William Briska



Editor: Rebecca Marco

The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline February 20, 2019

 Visit our website Elginhistory.org

Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the
Society's Board of Directors.

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Sunday April 28, 2:00 P.M.

Alice Paul: Winning Votes for Women

Leslie Goddard will portray the dynamic women's suffrage leader who pioneered techniques of picketing, parades, and other non-violent civil disobedience.

Thursday May 16, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Program TBD

Thursday June 20, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Program featuring Linda Rock TBD

Saturday July 14, 10:00 A.M. Classic Car Show

Thursday July 18, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Program TBD

Thursday August 15, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Jerry Turnquist; program TBD

August 2, 6:00 P.M.: Summer Soiree, Venue TBA

Thursday Sept. 19, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Program TBD

Sunday September 22, 11:00 A.M. to 3 P.M.:
Cemetery Walk, Bluff City Cemetery

Sunday October 13, 2:00 P.M.
Program TBD

Saturday, November 2, 6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.
Museum Benefit and Silent Auction

Venue TBD. Carry Nation: The Original Barroom Smasher with Ellie Carlson

Tickets available from elginhistory.org

Saturday, December 7, 1:00 P.M.

Annual Holiday Tea at the Museum

2019 Program Schedule

Betsy Armistead, Program Chair

Events are held at the Museum unless otherwise noted. Details will be added as they become available. Check website for the latest details, and tickets.

elginhistory.org/events.html

Sunday, January 27, 2:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Bartlett Public Library, 800 S. Bartlett Road

Elgin American Compacts: The Business of 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 makeup models from the 1920s and 1950s. Presented with the support of the Bartlett Historical Society.

Saturday February 9, 11:00 A.M. to 1:00 P.M.

Volunteer Thank-You Luncheon (invitation only)

Sunday March 10, 2:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.

Elgin High School's 150th Anniversary

History teacher John Devine discusses Elgin High School, organized in 1869. It was the first public high school in the Elgin area, for students aged 14-18.

Saturday April 27, 1:00 P.M. to 5:00 P.M.: Open Elgin

The Museum and the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House will be open to the public as part of this community event.

Welcome New Members

Many thanks to Board Member Paul Larson who joined the Membership Committee chaired by Jerri Barnhart. With Paul and Jerri's help, the Museum will transition to a rolling membership program with annual memberships based on renewal date, rather than strictly January to December calendar year. Renewal letters will be going out month by month, so you will be able to enjoy a full 12 months of your Museum membership.

- Scott & Paula Damisch
- Jane Erlandson
- Jim & Levonia Hamby
- Larry D Jones
- Paul & Susan Kuester
- Glenn & Cherie Murphy
- Jean & Matt O'Connor
- Tina Viglucci
- Jim & Sue Wingfield

Cobblestone Volunteer Warren Tejes

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

How do you heat and cool your house? The Museum committee is planning the best type of HVAC system to install at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House. Warren Tejes is a heating and air conditioning engineer and an Elgin preservation volunteer. He serves as a house captain every year at the GPA Historic House Tour. When we asked for help on the cobblestone, Warren designed a system that would use radiant heat in the cobblestone basement floor. He developed a Scope of Work and diagrams to give to vendors for preparation of future bids. Thanks to Warren, the Museum is on its way to efficiently heating and cooling the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House.



Warren and Chris Tejes

Thank You Donors

ILGive Day, November 2018

The Elgin History Museum again participated in IL Give Day on November 27. This year, 92 donors generously raised \$12,450 toward the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Project!

We offer sincere thanks to the 92 IL Give donors who supported the Museum. The Grand Victoria Foundation matched the donations up to \$4,000. The Museum also won the Small But Mighty Award from the IL Give website, earning another \$500. This brought the amount raised for the Cobblestone rehab project by this community giving event to a grand total of \$16,950!

Brian Anderson	Rebecca Marco
Jim & Sara Ellen Anderson	Elizabeth and John Marston
Chris & Jan Barry	Emma Marston
Steve Bartholomew	Jane Marston
Mary Bavidio	William Marston
Paul and Jean Bednar	Dorothy Martin
Harry and Phyllis Blizzard	Robert Martin
Marianne Bost	Julie McClendon
Bill Briska	Sandi McClure
Kathryn Brown	Dan Miller
Brown Family	Krisilee Murphy
Scott and Pam Budd	Ronald Mursewick
Leon Busche	Marc & Brittany Mylott
Lori Ziegler Cabell	John Navin
Lydia Camasta	Beth Nawara
Fran Cella	Aubrey and Rachel Neville
Joanne and Daniel Cullnan	Don Nish
Britta and Andrew Cuming	Gilbert & Mary Nore
Barry and Andrea Danielson	Linda O'Connor
Laura Davies	Amber Peters
Jose and Sarah Delao	Don Pielin
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Linda Eder	Valerie Remmert
Carl & Mary Ellen Flaks	Richard Renner
Terry Gabel	Richardson family
Cindy Garand	Linda Rock and Jeff White
Jeffrey Gill Family	Jerry and Carolyn Roller
Len Govednik	George and Margaret Rowe
Susan Groenwald	Dylan Rozek
Jeff Grosser	Sara Russell
Maureen Grosser	Bob & Judy Schroeder
Tricia Grosser	Heidi Schroeder
Ricky Harris	Neal and Kelsey Shipton
John Hausser	Donna Stefani
John Hora	Laura and Steve Stroud
Doug Horton	Christen Sundquist
Sue Hyser	Chandler and Pam Swan
Jim and Pat Jocius	Valerie Swan

Bonny Katzman	Tanner Family
Paul Larson	Jerry Turnquist
Beth	Dana Vierck
Trish LaFleur	Tina Viglucci
Morgan & Reece LaFleur	Jacqueline Vossler
Ron and Kathie Lange	Alan Walters
Rick Larson	Dan Walters
Tom and Mo Lee	Kathy Walters
Anne LoCascio	Mirosława Wojciechowska
Mimi Locknar	Lyle & Martha Wolff
Miriam Lytle	Peggy Youngren

General Donations

We also received the following donations in addition to the IL Give effort and we thank these donors as well.

- Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks for Youth Education Programs
- Wayne Heinmiller
- Northern Trust Bank matching grant for Paul Larson donation
- Mike Kalland for reprinting *Elgin Mental Health History* by Bill Briska
- Marge Krueger for the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone
- Paul and Sue Kuester
- Bruce Morical
- Jerry Turnquist for Speakers Bureau

Board Fundraiser

- Elizabeth and John Marston
- Judy and Alex Sorton

The Wilcox Family of Elgin – Part 1

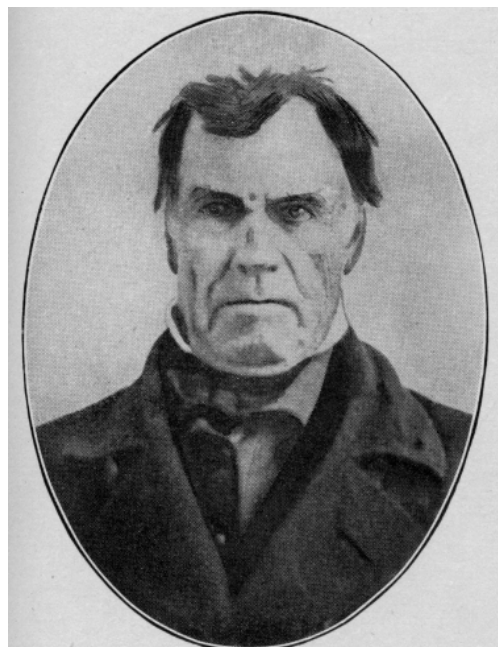
by David Siegenthaler

Probably no family in Elgin's history has had as many prominent and influential members as the Elijah Wilcox family. Elijah settled in Elgin in 1842, having come west from upstate New York. His immediate family included a state senator; a mayor; three Elgin Academy trustees; a circuit court judge; three Civil War officers (a general, a colonel and a captain); a West Point cadet; four postmasters; three lawyers; two real estate developers; a bank organizer; one of the "Four Immortals" responsible for bringing the watch factory to Elgin; and a man who was influential in attracting a competing railroad (what became the Milwaukee Road) to serve Elgin. Wilcox family in-laws included another mayor and a woman who was president of the organization that established and built Elgin's first general hospital.

Elijah was born May 10, 1792, in the town of Glen, Montgomery County, New York, to Silvanus and Sarah (Johnson) Wilcox. The Wilcox family originally spelled their name Wilcockson and came from Wales. Elijah's father and grandfather both served in the Revolutionary War. Elijah, at age 20, raised a military company during the War of 1812, but peace was declared before it saw action. Elijah served with distinction in the New York State Militia, where he rose to the rank of general. His main occupation was farming but in 1832 he was appointed county commissioner and superintendent of the poor. In 1836 he was appointed collector of tolls on the Erie Canal at Fultonville.

Financial conditions following the panic of 1837 led Elijah to look to the west as a future home for his children. With his four eldest children and a son-in-law, Elijah came to Elgin in the summer of 1839. Here they purchased claims in section four of Elgin Township (along Big Timber Rd. from about Todd Farm Dr. to just west of Randall Rd.) and then returned to New York.

In May 1842 the family returned to settle in Elgin. Elijah built a humble dwelling that he replaced in the early 1850s with a "palatial" farm home. The cement exterior was at that time considered a startling innovation. This Greek Revival-style home stood until 1978 when it was destroyed by fire. While the house was under construction, the Galena & Chicago Union railroad was laying track westward on its right-of-way through his farm. The site is now home to the Elgin Evangelical Free Church at 1900 Big Timber Rd.



Elijah Wilcox, Elgin Academy Trustee, 1843-54

Elijah quickly became involved in the development of Elgin and Kane County. From 1843-54 he was an Elgin Academy trustee. From 1846-48 he was a state senator for the local district. In 1849 he was appointed

to commissions to locate highways as well as to establish townships. In 1855 he and Rev. Pingree bought the Gilbert farm and platted the village of Gilberts. Elijah was an active Democrat and a personal friend of Stephen A. Douglas. He was an ardent Universalist. At the outbreak of the Civil War, he encouraged his three youngest sons to enlist and support the Union. They all became Civil War officers. In late summer 1862 a cancerous growth developed on his face that resulted in his death on December 11, 1862.

Elijah married Sally Shuler (1791-1875), daughter of John and Hannah (Buck) Shuler, on August 26, 1813, in Montgomery County, New York. He and Sally had ten children, eight sons and two daughters, all born in Montgomery County: Amelia Ann (1814-68); John S. (1816-32); Silvanus (1818-1902); Rensalaer (1820-22); Daniel Shuler (1823-55); Calvin E. (1825-51); Edward Sanford (1828-1919); Hannah Maria (1830-1901); John Shuler (1833-1926); and William H. (1836-1914).

Their eldest child, Amelia, married John Hill (1812-64) in 1834. Hill was elected Elgin's third mayor in 1858, serving a one-year term. The couple had no children. John and Rensalaer both died in childhood. Daniel, a carpenter, married Sarah Ballard in 1847 and had three children, Emma, Charles and Ellen. He died in 1855 in Belvidere. Calvin married Emily Larkin, daughter of Cyrus, in 1846 and died in Acapulco, Mexico, in 1851, while on his way home from California. They had no children. Hannah married Charles R. Collin in 1855 and had four children, Charles L., Harry, Calvin and John.

William H. Wilcox, the youngest child of Elijah and Sally, was born January 13, 1836, in New York and came to Elgin with his family at age six. He completed his education at Lombard University in Galesburg in 1856. In 1857 he married Mary Green at Galesburg and they had six children: Mary Florence (1857-96; Mrs. Morton H. Kendall); Laura Gertrude (born 1859; Mrs. Charles E. Williams); William G. (1861-1935; wives: Mary Smith; later, Bertha Johnson); May (born 1868; Mrs. Patrick J. McKee; later, Mrs. Brown); Helen (born 1870; never married); and Charles (born 1872). William G. Wilcox, a carpenter-contractor, served as an Elgin alderman 1905-06 and in 1907 was an unsuccessful mayoral candidate. Helen was a missionary to China for many years. Charles became an attorney in Des Moines, Iowa, and was involved in Iowa state politics.

William H. Wilcox was engaged in farming in Missouri when the Civil War broke out. He returned to Elgin and enlisted in the 52nd Illinois Infantry Regiment as a first lieutenant. He served over three years and participated in many battles, including Shiloh, after which he became a captain. After the war he returned to Elgin and studied law under his brothers, Silvanus and John. William was admitted to the bar in 1871 and worked as an attorney until 1881, when he

became involved in real estate development. He platted and laid out four Elgin subdivisions, as well as one each in St. Charles and Geneva. He had mining interests in Utah and Nevada, was appointed Elgin postmaster in 1886 (serving two years), and was elected commander of the Elgin GAR post in 1887.

William's first wife, Mary, died of yellow fever in Mississippi in 1878. In 1879 he married Helen (Nelly) Green (née Merriam), a widow from Missouri. Helen died in 1911. William passed away January 5, 1914, at age 77 of chronic myocarditis.

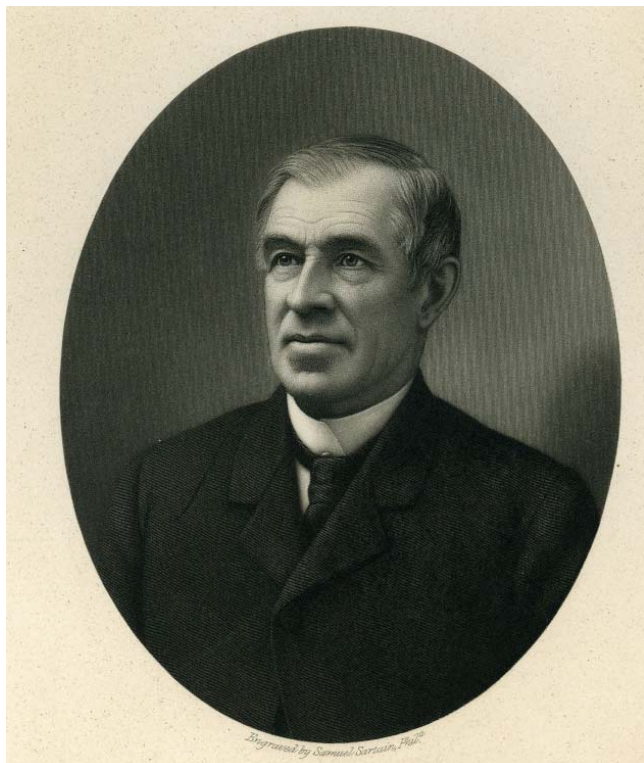
Silvanus Wilcox, Elijah's oldest surviving son, was born September 30, 1818, in New York. At age 15 he was sent to Amsterdam Academy and in 1836 was appointed a West Point cadet. However, after a protracted illness of more than a year, he tendered his resignation. He came to Elgin in 1839 with his father and some siblings, at which time they bought their land claims. Returning to New York, Silvanus began to study law and was an agent for his father for a line of boats running from New York City to Utica. Settling in Elgin in 1844, Silvanus was appointed postmaster in 1845, serving four years. He was licensed to practice law in 1846 and partnered with Judge Isaac Wilson in a law practice from 1846-50. By the time of the Civil War he was using a cane due to a knee injury and was unable to serve.

In 1864 Silvanus became, according to Elgin National Watch Co. lore, one of the "Four Immortals." He, along with Benjamin Lawrence, Walter Pease and Henry Sherman, subscribed to \$25,000 in watch factory stock, as well as buying and donating 35 acres of land for the factory site. Thus, the Elgin National Watch Co., Elgin's largest industry for the next 100 years, chose to locate its factory here.

Silvanus was elected circuit court judge in 1867 and served a six-year term. He was re-elected in 1873 but had to resign the following year due to ill health. He was one of the founders of the Elgin Packing Co., was president of the Northwestern Dairyman's Association for three years, and was president of the Elgin Condensed Milk Co. for three years. Silvanus served as an Elgin Academy trustee from 1865-90 and was president of the board in 1889-90. He was a Universalist Church member and a Democrat, though he did support Republican President Lincoln's re-election.

On August 27, 1840, Silvanus married Jane Mallery (1819-84) in New York. Their only child, Silvanus Marcus, was born in 1852. This child, afflicted with epilepsy and unable to speak, was a helpless invalid all his life and passed away at age 38. His obituary said, "A most pathetic, almost poetic, instance of love and devotion was that of Judge Wilcox for his unfortunate son." In 1851 Silvanus and Jane adopted Kate ("Kitty") Mallery, the infant daughter of Jane's brother Marcus. Kitty married Charles McComb in 1873 and they had a daughter Harriet ("Hattie"). Charles died in 1878 and Kitty married Fred Welch in 1881. She and Fred

had a son, Henry. Kitty died of peritonitis in 1882 when Henry was only seven weeks old. Silvanus and Jane then adopted both Hattie, now seven, and Henry. Jane passed away in 1884 at age 64 and Sylvanus died of an enlarged heart on January 15, 1902 at age 83.



Silvanus Wilcox, Circuit Court Judge

In the early 1860s Silvanus had a home built atop the highest hill on his farm and lived there for several years. This Greek Revival-style home, which still stands at 52 Crighton Ave., was built with 16-inch-thick walls clad in yellow brick. Prior to that, his home was on a hill near the southwest corner of West Chicago and South Crystal streets, with a great view of the east side of Elgin. About 1870, Silvanus built an impressive brick home on the site of this earlier home. In 1890 Silvanus platted his "S. Wilcox's 2nd Addition," which included three streets named for his family: Wilcox Ave., Shuler St. (mother's maiden name) and Mallery Ave. (wife's maiden name).

To be continued...

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

Annual Benefit Recap

Rebecca Marco, Editor

The 2018 Annual Benefit and Silent Auction was held at the Grand Victoria Casino and was a great success. The event raised a total of \$13,300 for the Museum, from event sponsorships, the silent auction, ticket sales, and raffles. A big "thank you" to everyone who volunteered to help make it happen, those who donated wine bags and items for the silent auction and the generous event sponsors.

Entertainment was provided by folksinger and guitarist Bucky Halker, and his program featuring folk songs from Illinois was well-received and enjoyable.

The riverboat banquet facility was very nicely decorated and the buffet dinner was excellent.



Guests examine the contents of the many gift baskets offered in the silent auction.



Excellent food was served buffet-style and was enjoyed by Vice President George Rowe.



Board Member Miriam Lytle was a silent auction winner.

Thank You To Our Event Sponsors: Gold Level

Jim & Sara Ellen Anderson	Don & Linda Pielin
Ken & Jerri Barnhart	George & Marge Rowe
Terry Gabel & Sue Brigham	Paul Sommer
Dan & Pat Miller	

Silver Level

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 Carl & Mary Ellen Flaks
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 Jerry Turnquist
 Al & Kathy Walters

Donor Level

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James Bauer	Carl & Chris Missele
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Janet & Gordon Burkart	Aubrey & Rachel Neville
Rudy & Lillian Galfi	Linda Rock & Jeff White
Patricia & Jim Jocius	Dennis & Laurie Roxworthy
Rebecca Marco & Jeff Biss	John & Holly Weidmeyer
John & Elizabeth Marston	

Contributing Level

Alisa Corsi
 Paul Larson
 Beth Nawara



Folksinger and guitarist Bucky Halker

Cobblestone Reflections Art Exhibit – Update

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

The Cobblestone Reflections Community Art Project successfully brought in funds for the Museum and the artists through an online auction. Trish La Fleur, the Museum's Media Coordinator, found a way for the Museum to list each of the 13 artworks online. Bids came from all over the country totaling \$1,460. Many thanks to the art buyers, including Richard Meier, Dorothy Martin, Mark and Glenna Preradovic, Jan Schroeder, Carol George, John and Elizabeth Marston, Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham, Dwight and Betsy Armistead, Patty Christenson, Dave Pool, Kris and Jim Heykoop, Rudy and Lillian Galfi, Tom and Maureen Lee, and Jeff White and Linda Rock.

The art project raised \$960 for the Cobblestone house and \$464 for the local artists. The exhibit is currently at the Artspace Lofts and will move to Gail Borden Public Library on January 3, 2019.

For info on the project, see: <https://elginhistory.org/community/nancy-kimball-cobblestone-house/>



Cobblestone House as winter approaches.

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



Collections Corner

Beth Nawara, Curator of Collections

Do you happen to have a painting by Elgin landscape artist Albert Kenney? Recently, the Museum received a research request about him. Museum research found that Kenney served in the Civil War with the 69th Illinois Volunteer Infantry. He lived in Elgin after the Civil War holding many jobs, including landscape artist. Kenney had a studio at 47 East Chicago Street.

The Museum does not have an example of Kenney's artwork in the collection, and would be very interested in acquiring a Kenney painting. Please contact the Museum if you know of such a painting. The Museum could at least make a reproduction to include Kenney in the Elgin artist's collection.



Elgin landscape artist Albert Kenney