

# The Crackerbarrel



## Elgin History Museum News September 2019

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### President's Report: Interpreting History

*Al Walters, President*



The theme of my last several Crackerbarrel columns has been to highlight specific ways the Elgin History Museum interacts with key constituencies, including members, school children and the general public.

Certainly artifacts are cool. After all, who doesn't love to see historic relics that often interpret their story in graphic detail. The Museum docents and education volunteers frequently observe how the recreated log cabin and covered wagon in the Museum's exhibits make pioneer life and hardships come alive for visiting children, in a 3-D, real life way.

This month, let's consider another history telling tool....interpretation. The Elgin History Museum is blessed with members, staff, guest contributors and volunteers who make history come alive through their talents. These include first person storytelling, artwork, hands-on displays that encourage imagination from younger visitors, research that results in books and articles, and the popular documentary series that now includes three videos central to interpreting Elgin's story.

Interpretation is the order of the day for the next several months. Consider these opportunities available to you in the near future:

The Museum is very excited to be hosting an art exhibition by local artist Joel Sheesley. This collection of Fox Valley riverscapes will focus on the Fox River that has defined the Elgin area from the Native American period until now.

One of the most interpretive Museum events is the annual Bluff City Cemetery Walk. The 32nd edition takes place on September 22. Six actors will interpret the stories of four individuals and one couple whose

lives had an impact on Elgin's history and people. There will also be vignette speakers who tell fun facts (yes, fun facts) about the cemetery.

Something new this year is a stage version of the 2019 Cemetery Walk to be presented at the Iglesia Principe Del Paz Church on Villa Street on Sunday, September 29th. Instead of you walking to the actors, they will come to you!

On September 14 at 3:00 P.M. we have a special cemetery event. Local dignitaries will dedicate and consecrate a Silent City memorial granite marker at the site of the Bluff City Cemetery Common Grave. Spearheaded by the late Steve Stroud, his wife Laura and the Museum, this program will pay tribute to the souls anonymously transferred from the Channing Cemetery to Bluff City in the 1960s. See the Program Schedule on page 2 for details.

When visiting the Museum, don't forget to stop by the Museum Store. Another way to interpret Elgin's history for your family and friends is through our selection of books, videos, pictures and collectibles. Many items are also available through our online store: <https://elginhistory.org/shop/>

With so many interpretive activities scheduled for this fall, we look forward to seeing old friends and making new ones. Stop by and tell us your story—we're listening.

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### Welcome New Members!

- Paul and Laurie Alexander
- Julie Ford
- John Svast

## 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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**Sunday September 29, 4:00 PM - 7:00 PM**

**Iglesia Principe De Paz, 263 DuPage St, Elgin.**

*Silent City Speaks* is the NEW theatre production featuring the actors and characters from this year's Elgin History Museum Cemetery Walk.

**Sunday October 13, 2:00 P.M.**

Jane Addams, presented by Betsey Means

**Thursday October 17, 12:00 P.M. Brown Bag Lunch**

Clint Ganshirt presents a program on McGraw Wildlife Foundation and its long Elgin history.

**Saturday, November 2, 6:00 P.M. to 10:00 P.M.**

**Museum Benefit and Silent Auction**

**Grand Victoria Casino**

Carry Nation: The Original Barroom Smasher with Ellie Carlson. Tickets available from [elginhistory.org](http://elginhistory.org)

**Saturday, November 9, 2:00 P.M.: Construction**

**Celebration at Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House**

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

**Annual Holiday Tea at the Museum**

Victorian Tea featuring Holiday Harmony Carolers.

## 2019 Program Schedule

*Betsy Armistead, Program Chair*

Events are held at the Museum unless otherwise noted. Check the website for the most up-to-date information and to purchase tickets. [elginhistory.org/events](http://elginhistory.org/events)

**Friday Sept. 13: Art Exhibit Opening: A Fox River Testimony**

Selected works by artist Joel Sheesley, on display from Sept. 13 through November 15.

**Thursday September 12, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch: History of Women Educators in Elgin with Linda Rock**

Bring your lunch; drinks and dessert provided. Linda describes the evolution of Elgin education from cabin to classroom, and shares stories of female teachers who made other significant contributions to the city. Members free; \$3 for guests.

**Saturday, September 14, 3:00 P.M.: Silent City Memorial Dedication, Bluff City Cemetery, 945 Bluff City Blvd**

Dedication of a granite memorial marker in memory of the remains buried in the common grave area; dedication of rest area with tree and bench in memory of Steve Stroud. Illinois State Representative Anna Moeller, Elgin Mayor David Kaptain and Elgin's Poet Laureate Chasity Gunn will speak. Cake and coffee will be served.

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

Tickets available from [elginhistory.org/events](http://elginhistory.org/events)

## Thank You Donors

Richard Renner in memory of Steve Stroud	Carol Plagge in honor of Bill Briska
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Benevity Foundation through Al Walters	June Nissley through EBay Sales

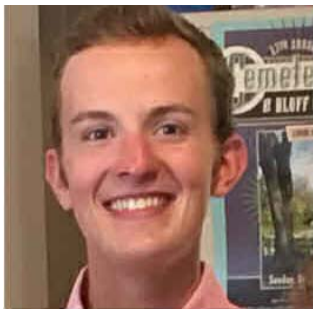
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## Farewell Museum Interns

This summer the Elgin History Museum was lucky to have two college interns volunteer to work on a variety of projects.



**Evan Neilson** attends the University of Illinois, majoring in History. In May, he started scanning, cataloging, and uploading images of the Museum's postcard collection into the Past Perfect software system. He also cataloged and numbered objects and archival items, and

recorded their storage locations. He created a new telegraph interactive display in the 19th Century room exhibit, and led school tours and children's programs. Evan also learned to docent, greeting visitors and selling items in the Museum Store.



**Liz Huerta** attends Knox College and started mid-summer to help with collections projects like re-housing and scanning postcards, exhibit changes, and some educational programs. Liz and Evan were a wonderful addition to the Museum's volunteer crew, making a real difference in keeping the Museum up-to-date. Thank you!

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## Community Outreach

Come and visit us at the Historic Elgin House Tour on September 7 and 8. The Museum Store table will be located in the 400 block of Division St.

Board members will also be representing the Museum at Prairiefest, at Corron Farm in Campton Township on Saturday, September 21, and Native American Days at Elgin Public Museum on September 28.

Thanks to Museum board members Tina Viglucci and Sandi McClure, the Museum will host a country table at the Hispanic Heritage Month Festival on Saturday, October 5. Come find Ecuador!

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## Museum News

*Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director*

### Silent City Memorial Dedication for Bluff City Cemetery Common Grave Memorial

When Bluff City Cemetery opened in 1889, many of the graves and monuments from Channing Street Cemetery were moved to the new location. If there were no family members to pay the cost of moving the graves, the remains stayed at Channing. When the foundation for Channing School was dug in 1968, many remains surfaced during the digging and were brought to Bluff City for re-burial in a common grave.

Although the City of Elgin buried the remains, a memorial marker was never placed on the site. Elgin historian Steve Stroud, author of the booklet, *Silent City: A History of Elgin's City Cemeteries*, was working to create a marker before he died earlier this year. With the funds received in memory of Steve, his vision of a memorial headstone for those buried in the common grave will become a reality. See the Calendar on page 2 for details about the dedication on September 14.

### New art exhibit to open at Museum

Selected works from "A Fox River Testimony," the collection of original Fox River paintings by artist Joel Sheesley, will be on view at the Museum from the opening night reception Sept. 13 until Nov. 15. Original paintings, limited edition prints and a book about the art project, which combines Joel's exquisite writings with his stunning paintings, will be for sale during the reception. Joel partnered with The Conservation Foundation's Fox River Initiative, an environmental education and outreach program about the Fox River and the Fox Valley. Art of the Fox is one of three key pillars for the initiative, intended to broaden interest in the health of the Fox River by sharing the river's aesthetic value. Joel painted over 90 landscapes in two years, traveling from West Dundee all the way to Ottawa where the Fox joins the Illinois River.

Please register for this event here:

<https://elginhistory.org/event/new-art-exhibit-at-the-elgin-history-museum-a-fox-river-testimony-by-joel-sheesley>

For more information:

<http://www.theconservationfoundation.org>

<https://artofthefox.org>

### Telegraph Interactive Exhibit

Elgin telegraph collector John Hora is working with the Museum to install a working telegraph and develop an interactive telegraph activity in the 19th Century room exhibit. The telegraph was invented by Samuel

Morse, a successful American painter. It was the first form of digital communication: just dots and dashes, like ones and zeros!

Museum interns Evan Nielsen and Liz Huerta researched Elgin telegraph offices and the significance of telegrams in American culture, and searched the collections for images to support the story. Museum volunteers Al Walters and Dennis McClure installed the telegraph tables, carpenter Dave O'Donnell made the telegraph office roof gable, which was painted by Dennis Roxworthy. It takes a team to interpret history in an engaging way. Thanks to all!



*President Al Walters and volunteer Dennis McClure work on the new telegraph exhibit*

## 2019 Cemetery Walk Preview

*by Rudy and Lillian Galfi*

At the Elgin History Museum's 32nd Annual Cemetery Walk on Sunday, September 22, a guide leads visitors on a 90-minute tour through the scenic Bluff City Cemetery. The tour takes visitors to the gravesites of the following six former residents, portrayed by actors in period costumes.

- Artist Laura Bray: as a young Elgin artist, Ms. Bray designed an iconic World War I recruiting poster.
- Businessman A.B. Church: One of Elgin's greatest personal benefactors, the Church Family donated the first Elgin Public Library in honor of their famous stepfather, Gail Borden.
- Entertainers Carl and Maude Parlasca spent their lives organizing the Hiawatha Pageant for the Elgin community for 50 summers, 1929 - 1979.
- Businessman Benjamin Pearsall, an intrepid entrepreneur who somehow made money making margarine in a butter town.
- Artist Trygve Rovelstad, a talented Elgin artist who designed the American Roll of Honor in London and many American war medals and other government medals. Trygve Rovelstad also created the Pioneer Memorial along Elgins Riverwalk.



Visitors will also learn about other fascinating people buried in the cemetery and cemetery symbolism while strolling the lovely cemetery grounds. Tours leave every few minutes starting at 11am and continuing to 3pm. The walk is about 3/4 of a mile in total, and there will be chairs available at most stops.

The event provides insight into Elgin's unique history, showcases the beauty of the Bluff City Cemetery grounds, and educates people about the importance of preserving cemeteries.

Bus tours at 11:30am and 1:30pm are provided for guests with limited mobility. Please fill out a form online or call the Museum at 847-742-4248 for more information. Please make bus reservations by September 21.

A tour presented in American Sign Language will leave the entry at 1pm. No reservations are needed for this tour. Bathroom facilities are available at the beginning and mid-way through the tour. Food trucks will be at the entrance to the cemetery. The tour goes on rain or shine.

Tickets can be purchased with credit card online at <https://elginhistory.org/shop-category/event-tickets/>

Tickets can be purchased with check or cash in-person at Elgin History Museum, 360 Park Street, Elgin; ACE Hardware, 215 N. Spring and 1158 Lillian Street, Elgin; or Bluff City Cemetery Admin Office, 945 Bluff City Blvd.

If you cannot make the Cemetery Walk at Bluff City, please attend the Elgin History Museum's FIRST indoor Bluff City Cemetery Walk, entitled *Silent City Speaks*, at the recently renovated Iglesia Principe De Paz Church, 263 DuPage St., Elgin. The same volunteer actors portraying the characters in the Bluff City Cemetery Walk on September 22 will bring their char-

acters to life on the stage. This new event is a way for people unable to attend the outdoor walk because of scheduling conflicts or limited mobility to enjoy the Bluff City Cemetery Walk.

Built in 1892, Iglesia Principe De Paz was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on November 7, 1980. It was first reopened to the public this year in May for the Mayor's Preservation month award ceremony. The Museum welcomes you to see the church, then watch our volunteer actors portray some of Elgin's past residents.

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## The Bosworth Family of Elgin: Part 2

by David Siegenthaler

Another line of the Bosworth family, this one descended from Increase Bosworth's brother Benjamin, was also prominent in Elgin. Benjamin Franklin Bosworth was born October 7, 1801, in Saratoga County, New York. He graduated from Union College, read law, then studied medicine and finally became a merchant. He married Almira Smith January 12, 1832, in Buffalo, New York. The couple had one child, Franklin Smith, born December 17, 1832, in Erie County, New York. Almira died in 1834 and Benjamin came west to Chicago in 1835, where he and his brother-in-law, Alfred Edwards, partnered in a store. In about 1837 Benjamin struck out on his own as a merchant in various places. Benjamin married Elizabeth Nixon in 1838 in LaSalle, Illinois, and the couple had two daughters, Almira and Olive, who both died young in 1843. Benjamin died in McHenry, Illinois, September 8, 1843, at age 41.

Franklin Smith Bosworth came west to Dundee in 1839 with his grandparents, Alfred and Olive Bosworth, and re-united with his father Benjamin. When Benjamin died, Franklin was only 10 years old and moved in with his Uncle Increase in Dundee. Soon he was clerking in Increase's store, and in 1852 became a business partner. Franklin and Increase partnered together until 1867, when Increase moved to Elgin. Franklin carried on the Dundee store until 1871, when he moved to Elgin and purchased an interest in a hardware store. He successfully ran the hardware store until 1883, when he sold it to Metcalf & Reed. In 1885 he purchased an interest in a lumberyard with Lewis Eaton and added coal to its offerings. Three years later Franklin became the sole owner. In 1896 his son Franklin Hunt became a partner in the firm, F.S. Bosworth & Son.



*F. H. Bosworth Co. Office and Lumber Yard formerly located at 75 S. State St.*

Franklin Smith Bosworth served as an alderman in Elgin in 1879-80 and then was elected mayor in 1880. In 1881, when Elgin mayoral terms were increased from one to two years, Franklin was re-elected. Many observers credited his re-election to the destruction of the Chicago St. bridge when the dam gave way during an April flood on election day. West side supporters of his opponent who were going to vote en masse later in the day were distracted by the event and never reached the east side polling place.

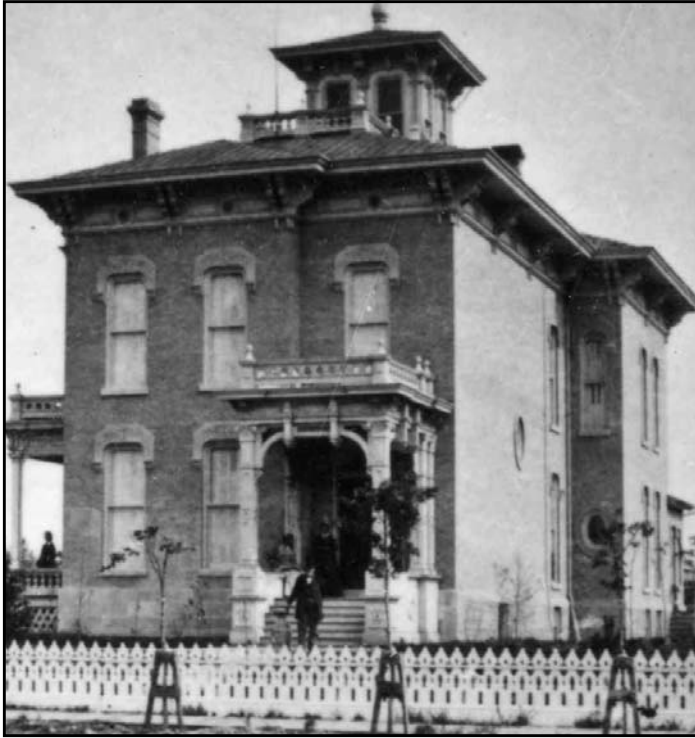
On January 4, 1859, in Dundee, Franklin Smith married Sarah Hunt (1832-1908) and the couple had four children: Reuben Hunt (1859-61); Edward Increase (1861-1927; wife: Bertha McClure); Mary Abbie (1867-1942; Mrs. Walter Skeelee); and Franklin Hunt (1870-1919; wife: Bertha Swan). Edward was a student and professor of religion at Oberlin College, Ohio, for 45 years. Mary also graduated from Oberlin College and was an accomplished organist and pianist. Her husband Walter was dean of the University of Southern California School of Music for over 40 years.

Franklin Hunt Bosworth was born September 3, 1870, in Dundee and moved to Elgin with his family within a year of his birth. In 1896 he became a partner in his father's lumber and coal firm. In 1900 he married Bertha Swan (1874-1936) and the couple had three children: Wilder, Wesley and Franklin. By the 1910s, Franklin Hunt had become the active head of the firm due to his father's advancing age. Tragically, Franklin Hunt was killed in an accident on the frigid morning of January 3, 1919. He was asphyxiated by automobile fumes in his tightly-sealed garage while preparing his car for his daily commute.

Following Franklin Hunt's death, his wife Bertha carried on as head of the firm, at 75 S. State St., under the name "F.H. Bosworth Co." In about 1928 the firm was sold to Shurtleff & Co. Franklin Smith Bosworth died of pneumonia November 24, 1919, at age 86 at the home of his son Edward in Oberlin, Ohio, where he had been living for the past year.

The Bosworth families left a legacy of impressive homes in Elgin. Increase Bosworth's first Elgin home, a brick Italianate at 7 Villa Court, was built in 1871 for

\$18,000, a huge amount at that time. In 1875 he sold it to Julius Angelo Carpenter and his wife Mary (Increase's niece). After Julius died in 1885, Mary and George Lord married in 1889, and it became known as the George and Mary Lord home. It was razed in 1947 for an Illinois Bell facility.



*Original Increase Bosworth residence, 7 Villa Court, 1871–1947*

After Increase sold his home at 7 Villa Court in 1875, he built a frame Italianate at 155 S. Gifford St. This home has been meticulously restored to its original splendor by its current owners, Dan and Pat Miller.



*Increase's second family home on Gifford St.*

In 1894-95 Increase's son Alfred built a 3-story Queen Anne at 705 W. Highland Ave. This home has also been beautifully restored by its current owners, Evelyn and Roy Chapman.



*Alfred Bosworth's home at 705 Highland Ave.*

The homes of Franklin Smith Bosworth at 387 Fulton St. (an 1873 Italianate) and his son Franklin Hunt Bosworth at 903 Douglas Ave. (a 1904 Queen Anne) have also been very well preserved.

The final "home" of Increase's family line is represented in Bluff City Cemetery by a large classic sarcophagus, surrounded by smaller headstones for individual family members.

*Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; Kane County histories; Kane County Early Families, 1833-1885 (1991); Elgin Today (1903); Internet sources; obituaries and other newspaper articles; house photos taken by Judy Van Dusen.*

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## It's a Small World

*Linda Hoffman*

My mother Joanne Johnson's roots in Elgin go back to the 1880s when her grandparents arrived there. Joanne's parents were C.B. and Ruth Johnson. C. B. was Elgin's Justice of the Peace until his death in September 1957. Ruth was the second youngest of 11 children. Ruth's sister Carrie Strauss married artist Thomas Wallace Holmes in 1907. They had a home on Cherry Street. My uncle Jim (Joanne's brother) owned the Rexall Drugstore on Liberty Street. My grandmother Ruth died in 1985. Besides modeling for her brother-in-law Thomas Holmes, Ruth worked for the Elgin National Watch Company along with several relatives, including Ken Parry.

In 1998, I began to research Carrie's husband, Thomas Holmes. My first article "Proof Ruth" was published in the American Breweriana Journal in 2013. Last sum-

mer, I was first made aware of Thomas Holmes' connection with Ringling Brothers Circus advertising artwork. My latest article is "Baraboo Circus Museum and Miller Girl on Moon Connection" in the January-February 2019 American Breweriana Journal.

Last fall I began looking online for early Ringling Brothers lithograph posters that resembled Tom's style. I found a Chicago auction house sale of a huge collection of rare circus posters from 2017. Some vintage circus posters for the Ringling Brothers and Barnum and Bailey Circus Combined Acts on the auction website reminded me of Tom's work.

Then I saw the name of the collection owner: Richard Bennett from Elgin, IL. When Thomas Holmes died in 1969, his son Bob hired a local auction company to sell items from the home. Was it possible Mr. Bennett owned any of Tom's original pieces for the circus?

In January, the Museum put me in contact with Richard, a charter member of the Elgin Area Historical Society. He invited my husband and I to his home in Baraboo, WI. Richard grew up in Elgin, but spent summers on Devil's Lake near Baraboo with his family.

Richard's home is a shrine to the circus. He had a long career in show business, including performing with Jimmy Durante, the Three Stooges, the Lone Ranger (Clayton Moore), Grandpa Jones from Hee Haw, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans to name a few. Richard was also a close friend to a Ringling family member.

Richard and I exchanged family memories. We were astonished to learn of several coincidences in our past. I had brought along a 1963 Elgin newspaper photograph of the American Legion Women's Auxiliary Unit 57 with my grandmother Ruth seated in the front row. To Richard's amazement, his sister, also named Ruth (Mrs. Chauncey Fowler), and mother Beatrice (Mrs. Joseph Bennett) are seated next to my grandmother. I showed Richard my grandfather C.B. Johnson's business card. Richard remembered meeting C. B. while delivering C. B.'s business cards to his office – his family's business, Bennett Printing, had produced the cards! (Bennett Printing was in business for a century: 1915-2015.)



1963 American Legion Auxiliary photo  
 AMERICAN LEGION AUXILIARY, UNIT 57. Past Presidents, seated left to right, Mesdames Joseph Bennett, Chauncey Fowler, Clayton Johnson, Vern Minehart, Laurence Adkins, Cleo Liepitz, Percy Martensen and Elmer Ewert. Standing, Mesdames Edward Peabody, Virginia Henryson, Kirk Newell, Harold Sterricker, George Prokop, Walter Stolt, Morris Hoven, Donald Steeman, Royal Spear, Richard Hampel. Missing from the picture, Mrs. Ernie Plath. FREE PRESS Photo

1963 American Legion Auxiliary photo

Richard identified the exact location of a photograph of Thomas and Carrie Holmes, c. 1919, sitting on Elephant Rock at Devils Lake. He is an expert on the area. Richard is an avid art collector and has donated circus art to the Baraboo Historical Society. His house is like a museum filled with Elgin and circus memorabilia.

We also figured out that Richard's niece is married to my uncle Jim's wife, June Morse Johnson's brother's son! It's a small world.



Thomas and Carrie Holmes at Elephant Rock c. 1919

## Dairies and Prairies

The Open House at Aubrey Neville's home on August 25 was well-attended. Museum documentary *Dairies to Prairies* was shown again. Visitors toured Mr. Neville's vast collection of dairy-related items.

Cup plants, Joe Pye weed, and other native plants in full bloom at this time of year made the 2-acre native prairie a lovely sight and a way to imagine Northern Illinois in the days before the dairy farms.



Jeff White and a visitor view the dairy collection at the Dairies to Prairies Open House

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM  
360 PARK STREET  
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## Cobblestone Progress

Master mason John Crowe, skilled in historical stone building techniques, will be working to complete restoration of the cobblestone front facade of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House. This will allow the remaining windows to be installed and painted.

Elgin carpenter Dave O'Donnell is installing the windows.

Thanks to the City of Elgin for working to install the gas line and repairing the sewer line.

AJL Electric has completed the electrical rough-in.

Chris Shreve continues working to complete exterior painting this year. Rebecca Marco, Museum volunteer, is helping with exterior and window frame painting.

The Chicago company Restoric will be installing a new doorway with sidelights and a transom.

Plumber Paul Spiller of Professional Inspection Services continues to volunteer with providing running water in the building.

We look forward to a Cobblestone Construction Celebration on Saturday, November 9 at 2 pm. Mark your calendars!



*Scaffolding in preparation for repairing the front facade of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House on W. Chicago St.*