



Elgin History Museum News July 2018

President's Report

Bill Briska, President



"The land has a story to tell." That is the tag line from the *Dairies to Prairies* documentary film and traveling exhibit, which premiered on June 24. More than 300 people turned out at the Gail Borden Public Library to take a first look at the film and exhibit. *Dairies to Prairies* is the Elgin History Museum's most recent major project and took more than 3 years to fund, research, write, design, and film.

The original idea for the project was to tell the story of Elgin's once prominent role in the dairy industry. The story includes Elgin's meteoric rise in dairy farming and milk processing following the Civil War. Dairy farming continued to play a major part in Kane County agriculture before fading out in the last half of the 20th century. However, as so often happens, when one story ends another begins.

So, what happened to the land once occupied by those farms? After about 1960, cities grew and many farms converted to subdivisions and commercial development. Some of the land was preserved as open space. Farming continued on the outer fringe of the urban area, but not dairy farming.

When the wave of development reached Kane County, decisions had to be made: Should the land be developed, remain agricultural, or be preserved as open space and natural areas? Sustaining quality of life depended on a careful balance of these choices.

Linking the two stories about the land was intended to provide both historical context and current day relevance to the overall project. Another objective was to find an audience among those who now live where dairy farms once were. Many are new to the Elgin community. It is hoped this project helps them identify with the larger story of our city.

Dairies to Prairies Premiere: Thank You Volunteers

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

The Museum's *Dairies to Prairies* exhibit is on display at Gail Borden Public Library, second floor, from now until July 18. The exhibit was written and produced by Elizabeth Marston and Bill Briska, and designed by Karen Terhorst Designs. It was picked up and installed by a wonderful team of volunteers led by George Rowe, including Bill Briska, Mark Preradovic, Rick Jones, Paul Larson, Marge Rowe, Bryce Terhorst, and Ernie Broadnax.

The video documentary premiere and reception on June 24 was well-attended. Thanks to Pam Swan, Ricky Harris, Laura Stroud and Mira Wojciechowska for decorating and organizing the Donor Reception in the River Room at Gail Borden Library. The catering by Rebecca Albert Catering was phenomenal!

The Museum's Program Team put in extra hours helping everyone through the reception and keeping things organized. Many thanks to Tricia Grosser, Betsy Armistead, Mark Preradovic, and Kathy Walters.



Paul Larson, Karen Terhorst, George Rowe, Elizabeth Marston, Mark Preradovic, Rick Jones, and Ernie Broadnax helped set up the new exhibit at Gail Borden Library.

The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline August 20, 2018

 Visit our website Elginhistory.org

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

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Friday, August 10, 6:00 P.M.: Summer Soiree McClure Mansion, 770 West Highland

Enjoy a Ravinia-style Museum gathering on the lawn of Susan and Glen Holland's home and show support for the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Project. Live jazz by the Chris Shuttleworth Trio, wine, beer and appetizers along with updates on the Elgin History Museum's rehabilitation of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House. Donations accepted, 50/50 raffle.

Thursday, August 16, 12 Noon Brown Bag Lunch with Jerry Turnquist Bet You Didn't Know This About Elgin History?

Do you know where "The Dipper" and "Devil's Glen" once were in Elgin? What unusual thing happened when an Elgin golf course was built? Was life in the 'good old days' really that crime-free? Join Elgin historian Jerry Turnquist as he shares favorite stories from his Daily Herald column and talks he has given.

Sunday, August 26; 2:00 P.M. D.C Cook History and the Mystery Portrait

The David C. Cook Family (Molly, Martha, Bruce, Greg, and Becky) present a visual story of David C. Cook Company's part in the history of Elgin, using newly transcribed diaries and archival material.

Thursday, September 13, 12:00 Noon Brown Bag Lunch: History of the Telegraph with John Hora

Elgin resident John Hora, will speak about the history of the telegraph system in the 19th century and of the effect it had on society, commerce, and industry worldwide. He will also be displaying a number of actual telegraph devices dating from the Civil War to the turn of the century.

Saturday September 15, 5:00 P.M. Dairies to Prairies screening at Gray Willows Farm 5N949 Corron Rd., Campton Township

RSVP to museum@elginhistory.org

Sunday, September 23, 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. 31st Annual Cemetery Walk at Bluff City Cemetery

See flier on page 7 for details.

Sunday, October 14, 2:00 P.M.: Annual Meeting Brian "Fox" Ellis presents Stories of Abraham Lincoln, as told by his law partner, Herndon.

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

Grand Victoria Casino, Elgin
Bucky Halker: Folksongs of Illinois

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

Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer with Nancy Koutsis.

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

Antique Car Show

Get ready to step back in time! This FREE annual event hosted over 70 very cool classic cars in 2017. Car styles and years vary, but if you love classic cars this is a must-attend event. Music by the Belvederes and the Bart Alonzo Band. The Museum will be open and tours will be available. Free admission.

Thursday, July 19, 12 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch: The History of the Miller Girl with Linda Hoffman

20th Century commercial artist Thomas Wallace Holmes created the iconic Miller High Life Girl in the Moon using his wife Carrie and her sisters. Linda Hoffman presents her 20+ years of research linking her family's history to the origins of the Girl in the Moon. She has a permanent exhibit at the National Brewery Museum. Desserts and drinks are available. Members: free/Non-members: \$3.

Saturday, August 4, 6:30 P.M.

Dairies to Prairies screening at Serosun Farms 45W485 Berner Rd., Hampshire IL

847-683-4793 or RSVP to info@serosunfarms.com

New Collectibles For You

To commemorate the new *Dairies to Prairies* documentary, small collectible milk bottles and magnets are available for sale in the Museum Store and from our website. Bottles are \$8.00 and magnets are \$3.00. Members receive a 15% discount. To shop online, visit <https://elginhistory.org/shop/>

Get them while they last! Your purchases help support the Museum.



Karen Terhorst and George Rowe with parts of the exhibit Karen designed

Volunteers at Work

Here are a few more scenes from setup of the *Dairies to Prairies* exhibit at the library. Thanks again to everyone who helped! The Museum could not exist without our many generous and dedicated volunteers. We hope everyone who could not attend the premiere can come into the library to view the exhibit in the next few weeks, and attend one of the other screenings of the documentary that have been scheduled.

The exhibit will travel to the Kane County Fair, July 18-22. Be sure to catch it, just outside of the wine tasting area at the Fair.



A preview of the exhibit at Gail Borden Library



Another preview of the exhibit on display at Gail Borden Library

Orlando Davidson, Pioneer Banker: Part 2

by David Siegenthaler

Orlando's wife Caroline ("Cara") Amelia Gifford arrived in Elgin with her family at age eight in 1835. Caroline went through a series of life-changing experiences between 1847 and 1850. In September 1847 her family moved to Wisconsin and before the year was out two of her siblings had died. The following May she married Orlando and moved to Chicago. The following year her first-born child died and the year after that her father died. Caroline had a habit of obsessing over minor details, a fault both she and Orlando often joked about. Perhaps this trait was nurtured by her lack of control over the tragedies in her life.

After her father's death, Caroline moved into the "Stone Cottage," where she and Orlando raised their family. Caroline was the gracious hostess of numerous

social gatherings and her home was always open to her extended family, many of whom lived there for varying periods of time. Caroline passed away at age 63 of cerebral anemia on October 24, 1890, while visiting her daughter Stella in Moline.



Caroline Davidson

Following Caroline's death, Orlando lived at the "Stone Cottage" with his daughters Jennie, who continued to live there after her marriage in 1892, and May. Orlando was still active as secretary of the Elgin Packing Co. and the Elgin Academy, as well as being a deacon and Sunday School teacher at his church. However, in December 1895, Orlando had a stroke that left him paralyzed and unable to walk or converse. He retained his faculties and was able to greet family and friends with a smile and a hand grasp. He could even get around the streets in his wheelchair in good weather. In the fall of 1899 he began to grow weaker and passed away on December 2, 1899, at age 74.

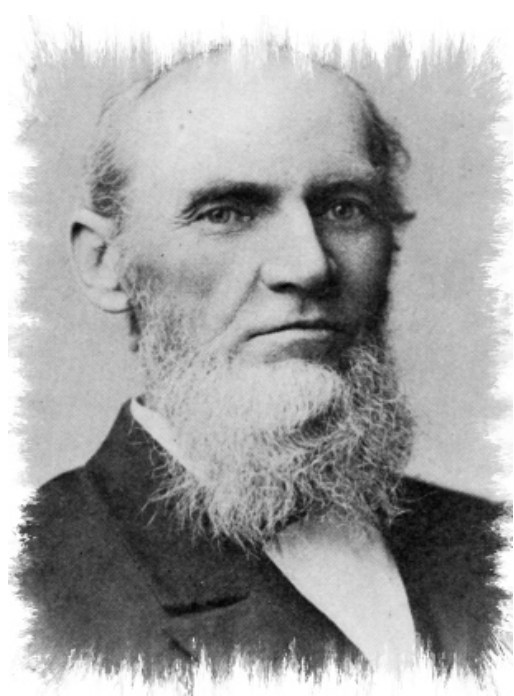
Six children were born to Orlando and Caroline, though their first, Lucy Lancaster (March-July 1849), died in infancy. Jay Gifford, their only son, was born January 19, 1851. Jay was skilled in mathematics and graduated from the University of Chicago in 1872. After college he entered a real estate conveyancing office in Chicago and then went abroad to complete his studies. Returning to Illinois, he opened a business in Chicago as an accountant and conveyancer. In late 1882 Jay became seriously ill with what was thought to be consumption (tuberculosis). He was confined to his home for three months and then sought to regain his health by moving to a different climate. He spent time in the South, the Far West and Europe, but received only temporary relief. In November 1884 Jay moved to Pueblo, Colorado, and finally, in March 1885, to Salida, Colorado, to live with an uncle. His health continued to decline and his father was summoned. Orlando

spent the last three months of Jay's life at his bedside. Jay died July 31, 1885 at age 34 of Bright's disease of the kidneys.

Their third child, Laura Raymond, was born July 10, 1854. Like her brother Jay, Laura's favorite subject was mathematics. She graduated from Elgin Academy in 1872, receiving the first diploma ever issued by the Academy. Laura graduated from Vassar College in 1876 and returned to teach mathematics and other subjects at Elgin Academy from 1877-87.

During Laura's last two years as an Elgin Academy student, 1870-72, the Academy had a new principal, Amos Sears, and a new teacher, Amos' wife Susan. Their son Nathaniel, the same age as Laura, also attended the Academy in 1870-72. Nathaniel went on to earn degrees from Amherst College and was admitted to the Illinois bar in 1878. He practiced law for 15 years until 1893 when he was elected judge of the Superior Court of Cook County. Four years later he was appointed to the appellate bench, from which he resigned in 1903 to return to private practice.

Nathaniel Clinton Sears married his first wife, Matie Lee Barclay, in 1881. Matie Lee was the daughter of David Barclay, a four-term Elgin mayor. Tragically, Matie died only five months after the wedding. On May 26, 1887, on the 60th birthday of her mother Caroline, Laura Davidson married Nathaniel Sears. Laura resigned as an Academy teacher following her wedding and moved to Chicago. However, she and Nathaniel did not leave Elgin Academy behind.



Orlando Davidson, Elgin Academy Trustee

Nathaniel became very successful as a Chicago attorney and built a summer home, "Glen Fern," at Lake Geneva in 1894. In 1911 he had the home rebuilt and

it still stands today as one of Lake Geneva's most impressive homes. Laura was elected to the Elgin Academy Board of Trustees in 1912 and remained a trustee the rest of her life. It was about this time that she and Nathaniel began showering the Academy with gifts. They provided funding for endowments, repairs and improvements. They bought real estate to greatly expand the campus, including an athletic field. They funded a gymnasium dedicated to Laura's father, Orlando. Perhaps their most visible gift, which still stands today, is the art gallery built in 1923-24, and dedicated to Laura by her husband. Not only did they provide the building but they filled it with what a Boston art critic in 1927 declared was "the finest collection of early Americans in the world."

Nathaniel became an Elgin Academy trustee in 1920 and served as president of the board from 1920-26, after which he was chairman until his death. Laura passed away on April 3, 1930, and Nathaniel on May 7, 1934. They are buried in the Sears mausoleum at Lake Geneva, Wisconsin. A childless couple, Laura and Nathaniel bequeathed the bulk of their estate to Elgin Academy, so their largesse continued to benefit the Academy long after they were gone.

The fourth child of Orlando and Caroline was May Cynthia, born May 14, 1857. May graduated from Elgin Academy in 1875 and was a school teacher for nearly 50 years. She taught in Elgin and Chicago and became a member of the Christian Science Church in St. Louis, at whose school she taught. In about 1898 May helped organize an Elgin chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution and, in recognition of her efforts, was elected first regent of the unit. Her great grandfather, Newcomb Raymond, served in the Continental Army during the Revolution. May never married and retired from teaching about 1926 due to a paralytic stroke, at which time she moved in with her sister Laura. When Laura died in April 1930, May moved in with her sister Stella in Moline, and passed away on May 30, 1930. She is buried in the Sears mausoleum at Lake Geneva.

Their fifth child was Jennie Elizabeth, born October 29, 1860. Jennie graduated from Elgin Academy in 1877 and then from Oberlin College in Ohio. She married Arthur Lloyd Warner December 29, 1892. Jennie was living at the "Stone Cottage" at the time of her mother's death in 1890. She and Arthur continued to live there after their marriage until moving to Carpentersville in 1898.

Arthur was foreman of the Moseley Lathe Co. in Elgin at the time of their marriage. In 1898 he became superintendent at the Illinois Iron and Bolt Co. in Carpentersville. In 1902 he accepted a position as superintendent of the Williams White & Co. of Moline, Illinois. He returned to the Iron and Bolt Co. in 1917, at which time he moved his family to Elgin. Jennie was active in the First Congregational Church, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the Every

Wednesday Literary Club and the Elgin Woman's Club. She and Arthur had five children: Orlando Davidson (1894-1969); Florence May (1896-1979)(Mrs. Wolstan C. Brown); a stillborn boy (1897); Horace Gifford (1900-58); and Nathaniel Sears (1905-86). Jennie passed away on January 31, 1933 and Arthur on February 3, 1937. They are buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

The last child of Orlando and Caroline was Stella Amelia, born November 19, 1862. Stella graduated from Elgin Academy in 1879 and Oberlin College in 1885. She then taught school in Elgin before marrying Harry Ainsworth May 27, 1889. Harry graduated from Oberlin College in 1884 and Harvard Law School in 1887. He then worked with his father in the management of Williams White & Co. (machinery manufacturers) in Moline, of which his father was president. When his father died in 1914, Harry became president. Stella, one of Moline's most influential citizens, was a leader in numerous civic, church and social activities. She played an active role in Elgin's Centennial observance in 1935 and authored a booklet entitled "The Gifford Family's Arrival in Elgin in 1835."

Stella and Harry had three children: Carolyn Davidson (1890-1981)(Mrs. Harry W. Getz, Jr.); Sarah Andrews (1892-1920)(Mrs. Howard Rogers); and Dorothy Sears (1894-1976); Stella passed away on October 28, 1940 and Harry on February 6, 1930. They are buried in Geneseo, Illinois.

Stella's great-grandson, Steven Bartholomew, is the only member of our Society who is descended from Elgin's founder James T. Gifford. Steven has donated many valuable Gifford family items and his family still owns Moline Forge, the forge shop founded by his great-grandfather Harry Ainsworth in 1915.

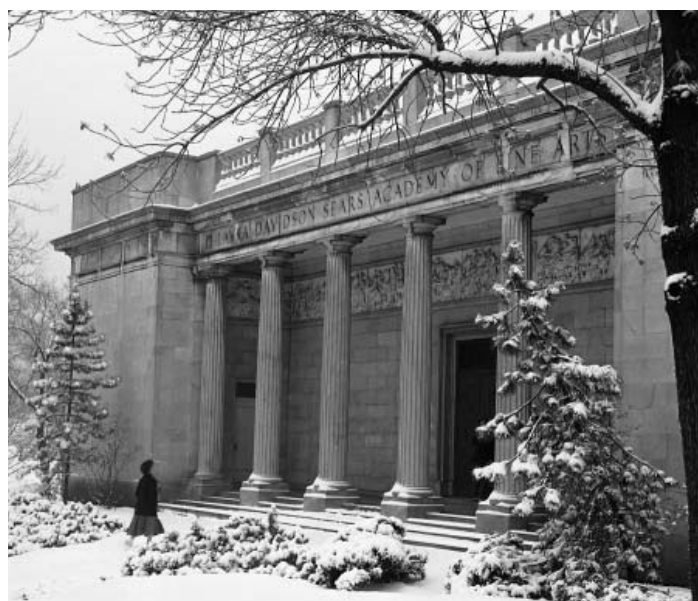
The accompanying family photo, courtesy of Steven Bartholomew, was taken in 1895 at the Lake Geneva home ("Glen Fern") of Orlando's son-in-law and daughter, Judge Nathaniel Sears and his wife Laura. Standing in the back row, left to right, are Laura Davidson Sears; Orlando Davidson; Arthur Warner (Orlando's son-in-law); Jennie Davidson Warner, holding Orlando Warner; and Harry Ainsworth (Orlando's son-in-law), holding Dorothy Ainsworth. In the front row, left to right, are Carolyn Ainsworth; Judge Nathaniel Sears (sitting); May Davidson (standing); and Stella Davidson Ainsworth, holding Sarah Ainsworth. This photo was taken only months before Orlando suffered a stroke that left him paralyzed for the last four years of his life.



Ainsworth-Davidson Family at Lake Geneva home, 1895

The Davidson name lives on: It is the name of the small triangular park bounded by Prairie, Chapel and Villa streets. This park originally faced the "Stone Cottage" across Chapel St. before intervening homes were built in the early 1900s. Though only 0.3 acres, Davidson Park contains more historical monuments than any park in Elgin. In addition to the WW1 "Doughboy" sculpture (1922), there are two boulders with attached plaques (1886 and 1929) describing where the James T. Gifford log cabin once stood.

In addition to Davidson Park, Elgin has immortalized the names of four of the Davidson children. Elgin streets are named for Jay, May and Stella Davidson, and the Elgin Academy's art gallery bears the name "Laura Davidson Sears Academy of Fine Arts."



Laura Davidson Sears Academy of Fine Arts, on the campus of the Elgin Academy

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's book and newspaper articles; obituaries; Kane County histories; Hazel Belle Perry's newspaper articles; etc.

Thank You Donors

- Dwight and Betsy Armistead
- Bill Briska
- Linda Rock
- PEO Sisterhood
- Jerry Turnquist

Dairies to Prairies Project

- Scott and Paula Damisch
- Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham
- Mike and Carol Kenyon

Nancy Kimball Cobblestone Project

- E. C. "Mike" Alft
- Elias Kent Kane Daughters of the American Revolution Bicentennial Gift

Dana Olson Memorial

- Sara Ellen Anderson
- Mary Doherty
- Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks
- Andrea Gryzb
- Phyllis Heine
- Carol Huntoon
- Eva Luedtke-Ostdick
- Olson Family
- David Siegenthaler
- Karen Stocking

Welcome New Members!

- John and Peg Caughlin
- Sue and Paul Cutler
- Ray Heneise
- Deborah Kelly
- Ron Kendall
- John Regan
- Sandra Skulski
- Martha Yochum

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM PRESENTS

31st Annual Cemetery Walk

AT BLUFF CITY CEMETERY
945 BLUFF CITY BLVD.
ELGIN, ILLINOIS

**SUNDAY
SEPTEMBER 23, 2018
11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M.**

For more information call:
(847) 742-4248
Go to: www.elginhistory.org/events
Or visit us at
[Facebook.com/ElginILHistoryMuseum](https://www.facebook.com/ElginILHistoryMuseum)

See & historical reenactors bring Elgin history to life!

Family Friendly Tour at 3:00 pm

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



Collectors' Corner

Dean Chipman was a well-known Elgin artist and educator. For many years he was the curator at Elgin Academy's Sears Art Gallery. Charles Mote donated this beautiful Dean Chipman framed watercolor, collected by his mother in the 1950s. Dean spent part of every summer painting in Door County, Wisconsin. This is the Moravian church in the town of Ephraim.



**Save
the
Dates.**



July 19 - 22, 2018

Exhibit only

Kane County Fairgrounds

525 Randall Rd., St. Charles, IL 60174

further info: kanecountyfair.com

Saturday, August 4, 2018

6:30 pm

Serosun Farms

45W485 Berner Rd., Hampshire, IL 60140

847.683.4796

RSVP: info@serosunfarms.com

Saturday, September 15, 2018

5:00 pm

**Corron Farm Preservation Society/
Campton Township**

Gray Willows Farm

5N949 Corron Road

Campton Township, IL 60175

RSVP: museum@elginhistory.org

Light refreshments will be served at all events.

Contact Museum with questions: 847.742.4248



**ELGIN
HISTORY
MUSEUM**

www.elginhistory.org