

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News September 2018

President's Report

Bill Briska, President



It is often said, "We live in a digital age." That implies the use of computer-related devices and technology, but did you know that using electricity to transmit digitally based information is as old as the telegraph? The binary code used by telegraph operators was no more than a series of electrical impulses switched on and off.

Telegraph operators described it as "dots and dashes" but it is the same as today's computer using ones and zeros. John Hora is an expert on the telegraph and its history, and a collector of old telegraphic equipment. He will present a 1-hour talk on September 13th at noon as a part of the Museum's Brown Bag Lunch series. This talk will amaze you.

Equally amazing are the two biggest events of September for local history fans. First is the Gifford Park Association sponsored Historic Elgin House Tour on September 8th and 9th. Use your digital device to get details from HistoricElginHouseTour.com

The next big event is the Museum's 31st annual Cemetery Walk at Bluff City Cemetery on September 23rd. Guided tours depart between 11 AM and 3 PM. This event combines live dramatic portrayals with interpretive information and a pleasant stroll through one of the area's most beautiful cemeteries and best collection of monuments. You will learn more about life from an afternoon at the cemetery than you can imagine. The tour staff have upgraded the event with new amenities and features to make it a memorable afternoon. Find out more at elginhistory.org/events/cemetery-walk/2018-cemetery-walk/

Our friends at the Fire Barn No.5 Museum hold their 25th anniversary open house September 22nd from 11 A.M. to 3 P.M. That's easy to remember, it's the day

before the Cemetery Walk! Check their website at elginfiremuseum.com for an overview of this small marvel of a museum.

Also, on the 22nd is the Corron Farm Prairie Fest. Recently listed on the National Register of Historic Sites, the farm is a local treasure and one of the focal points of our recently released *Dairies to Prairies* documentary. The annual fest runs 11 AM to 4 PM and is a great opportunity to get acquainted with this interesting and evolving place. Check their Facebook page for more information,

[Facebook.com/CorronFarmPreservationSociety](https://www.facebook.com/CorronFarmPreservationSociety)

While we live in a digital age we are still very much like the thousands of generations who came before the invention of the telegraph or cell phone. Life's richness comes from shared experiences.

These September events help us connect to the lives of people we share so much in common with, even though never actually met them.

Dairies to Prairies at Serosun Farm

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

It was a beautiful night when our new documentary *Dairies to Prairies* was shown for the second time, this time outdoors, at Serosun Farm in Hampshire. We had a very good turnout and the hors d'oeuvres were great! Thanks to Serosun Forms for hosting the event.



The Crackerbarrel

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360 Park Street, Elgin, IL 60120
Phone 847-742-4248
e-mail: museum@elginhistory.org



President: William Briska
Vice President: Al Walters
Secretary: Laura Stroud
Corr. Secretary: Ricky Harris
Treasurer: George Rowe



Editor: Rebecca Marco

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

Visit our website Elginhistory.org

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Saturday, November 17, 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

Tuesday, September 11, 7:00 P.M.

David Nelson Book Signing

Thursday, September 13, 12:00 Noon

Brown Bag Lunch: History of the Telegraph with John Hora

Elgin resident John Hora will speak on the history of the telegraph system in the 19th century and of the effect it had on society, commerce, and industry world-wide. He will also display telegraph devices dating from the Civil War to the turn of the century.

Saturday September 15, activities at 5:00 P.M.

Dairies to Prairies screening at 7:30 P.M.

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

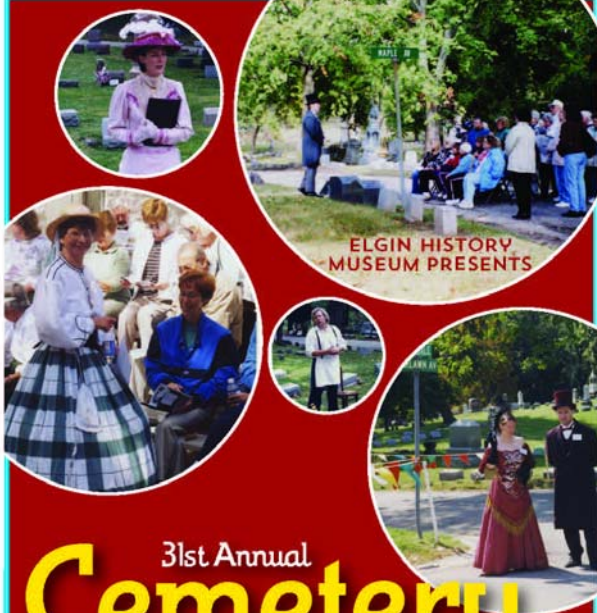
See flier on this page for details.

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

Brian "Fox" Ellis presents Stories of Abraham Lincoln, as told by his law partner, Herndon.

Tuesday, October 30, 7:00 P.M.

Sears Art Gallery: Elgin's First Art Gallery with Anne Chipman and David Nelson



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

See & historical reenactors bring Elgin history to life!

Family Friendly Tour at 3:00 pm



Elgin Artists Go To War, 1917-1918

by Richard Renner

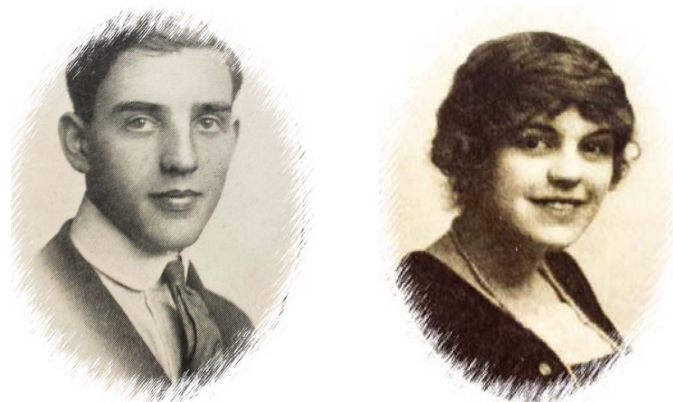
Elgin in the early 20th century was the home of many artistically-talented young people. America's participation in the First World War inspired their patriotism and creativity.

In the spring of 1918 Clarence Reber was a 17-year-old Elgin High junior planning on pursuing art studies after his graduation. He was also a senior patrol leader in Elgin's Boy Scouts, who were making a great record soliciting for savings stamps and certificates to help fund the war. In support of that effort Clarence created a cartoon published in the March 27 edition of *The Elgin Daily News*. With a call to "Let's Make This Shot Put An End To Autocracy," Clarence portrayed a particularly buff Uncle Sam, stripped to his "Torch of Liberty" tank top, and loading a shell for the Campaign of 1918.



Clarence Reber's 1918 Version of Uncle Sam

In his senior year at Elgin High, Clarence's plans for continued art study were derailed by a job at the Norris Mortuary. That began a career he would pursue for some 70 years, though many in Elgin most warmly remember him for his extraordinary efforts—including artwork—on behalf of the Elgin Area Historical Society and the Elgin History Museum.



Young artists Clarence Reber and Esther Richmann, circa 1919

Early 1918 found another Elgin native making her artistic mark. Esther Richmann was a scholarship student at the Art Institute of Chicago and living with her parents at Villa and Wright Avenue. On March 8 it was announced that she had won the \$50 first prize in a war poster competition for Art Institute students. This was an early award for a young artist who would go on to a career as an illustrator for several publishers and an interior decorator for Marshall Field's where she helped decorate buildings such as the Drake Hotel and The Chicago Theater. After her marriage to a Detroit doctor, Esther Richmann Bacon remained active as a painter in Detroit area art circles until her death in 1983.

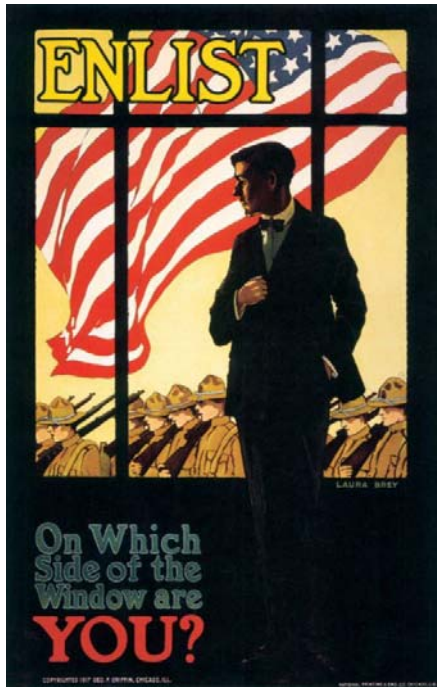
Esther's war poster was praised for its beautiful coloring, and it is regrettable that no image seems to have survived.

However, finding an image of another Elgin artist's war poster is no problem today. Laura Brey was living with her widowed mother in their home on Dundee Avenue in 1917 when she designed a poster that is one of the most notable propaganda works of World War I and the subject of special attention during the War's centennial.

Laura designed the work while an instructor at the Art Institute and received a \$500 first prize in a competition whose judges included the famous Chicago Tribune artist John T. McCutcheon.

From the beginning Laura's poster was considered an "irresistible" enlistment tool, but it has gained particular prominence with the increasing attention to gender roles and the psychological elements of warfare. Scholars find the work provocative as it contrasts the "over-refined" young man at the window with "the manliness of the recruits." Its message is "doubly powerful" coming from a female artist. A leading history of war posters notes how Laura's work exploits "men's anxiety over their masculinity by suggesting the effeminacy of the man who does not enlist." Recently the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts included the poster with works by John Singer Sargent, Georgia

O'Keeffe, and Childe Hassam in a traveling exhibit on American artists' responses to the First World War. Reproductions of Laura's poster are readily available, but an original in modest condition was auctioned last year for \$1200 and a gallery has offered one in good condition for \$3250.



Laura Brey's famous World War One poster

Laura Brey, like many Elgin residents of her time, was of German heritage. But Laura had no doubt where she stood on a war against her parents' homeland. In a published interview she acknowledged her German parentage but said "I myself am an American. You understand? An American! And I propose to do my full share as a loyal American citizen.... Count on me for anything I can do." And Laura was true to her word, being selected in 1917 with artists of the stature of John McCutcheon and Louis Raemaekers to provide the six designs for Red Cross Christmas cards to send to the troops. Later she designed a flag, pennant and banner for a mammoth war savings campaign in Charleston S. C.



Laura's Red Cross Christmas card design

After the war Laura Brey pursued an artist's career as an employee with Illinois Bell and an independent artist and book illustrator. In the 1930s she had affiliations with the Elgin Academy. After her mother's death she continued to live in the family home at 460 Dundee Avenue until the late 1930s. Her last 40 years are a bit of a mystery. She died in Chicago in 1980 and is buried in Bluff City cemetery under a headstone with a dubious birth date.

The works of Clarence, Esther and Laura were part of the unprecedented demands the First World War made on all segments of American society, including artists. Even Elgin's most famous native artist Jane Peterson, busy building her career on the East Coast, put aside her customary subjects for themes like "Sighting A Submarine." On the centennial of their efforts, let us remember their contributions toward the futile dream of winning the war to end all wars.

New Book On Sale Now

Elgin's musical life is documented in board member David Nelson's new memoir, *David John Nelson: Story of My Life's Musical Career as Musician, Teacher and Pianist*. The book is sold in the Museum Store for a \$10 donation. All proceeds will go toward the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Project.

David will be signing copies of his new book at the Museum at 7 p.m. on Sept. 11.



Board Member and Program Director David Nelson as a Young Musician

Welcome New Members

- Teena Austin
- Kristine Linderberg
- Barbara Simon Njus
- Bruce Wascher
- Jay Yusko

Summer Fun



Here's a taste of what you missed if you were unable to come to this year's Car Show at the Museum.

Mary Edwards Carpenter Lord – Part 1

by Marge Rowe

Within days of the death of Mary E.C. Lord, the *Elgin Daily Courier* announced that the letters of administration for her estate would be issued promptly. The news continues that the estate is one of the largest ever left by an Elgin person and is valued at a half a million dollars. The year is 1905.

Mary Edwards was born in Greenfield, Saratoga County, NY on August 9, 1832 to Mr. Alfred and Lucinda (Bosworth) Edwards. Mary was the eldest child and had three siblings: sisters Ella and Elizabeth and brother Henry. In 1837, the family moved to Chicago from New York and located in Dundee in 1839. In April of 1852, she married her childhood playmate and lifelong companion, Julius Angelo Carpenter.

Julius Angelo Carpenter was born in Uxbridge, Massachusetts on August 19, 1827 to Mr. Charles Valentine and Esther (French) Carpenter. The family, along with Charles' brother Daniel, arrive in the Fox River Valley in 1837. They intended to settle in the Rock River Valley but due to spring flooding, were unable to continue their journey. They became known as the first settlers of Carpenters' Grove.

At the age of 23, Angelo opened a store. In 1851, he built the first bridge and surveyed the settlement. To honor Angelo the citizens renamed the community

Carpentersville. He was also postmaster and Supervisor of the Village. Carpentersville was incorporated in 1887.

Mary and Angelo settled into married life. They had three children: Ella Elizabeth (1854-1860), Alice May (1860-1863), and Julius Angelo Jr. (1872). In 1867, they engaged in an extensive tour of Europe where Angelo studied the industrial and financial practices of the European business leaders. They are members of the Union Church and later the Congregational Church; teaching Sunday school, inviting traveling ministers to visit their congregation and devout followers of the temperance movement. Mary and Angelo are committed to improving their community, not only providing jobs but assisting the less fortunate with personal needs such as housing and food.



Mary's first husband Julius Angelo Carpenter

In 1864, George Marshall incorporated the Illinois Iron & Bolt Works, with W.L. Pease, Capt., J. G. Soule and Cyrus Woodruff. A few years later Angelo became financially interested and was elected treasurer and manager, serving until his death in 1880. Mary succeeded him as treasurer of the company until her death in 1905.

In 1873, Angelo also purchased an interest in the Star Manufacturing Company. Soon, Angelo owned part of nearly every manufacturing and business establishment in the village. He also convinced the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad to build a spur and station in Carpentersville. He owned approximately 1200 acres of land locally and 230 acres in Champaign County. He had large quantities of stock in the Bolt Works

Company, Valley Woolen Co. and the First National Bank of Elgin. Angelo also served in the Illinois legislature.

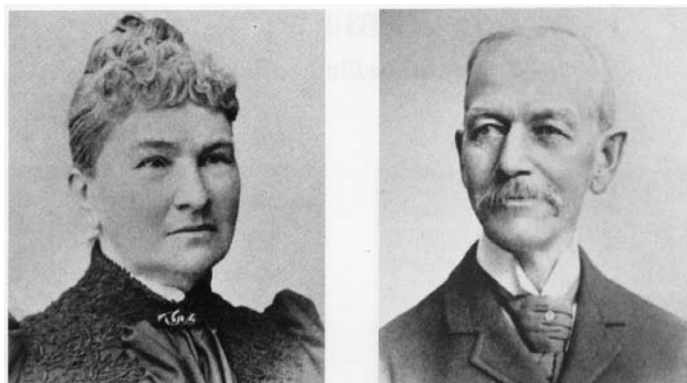
In 1875, Mary and Angelo purchased the first home of her uncle, Increase Bosworth, in Elgin. The stately home is described as having beautiful grounds and was situated at the entrance to the business district of Elgin, at 7 Villa Court. Angelo, while continuing to operate the Bolt Works, also held positions as treasurer for the Northern Illinois Hospital and Asylum for the Insane, President of the First National Bank of Elgin and Elgin City Banking Company (the mortgage arm of the First National Bank). Angelo died after a short illness on March 31, 1880; he was 53 years old.

Angelo's estate was estimated at \$250,000 at the time of his death and today would be valued at approximately 5,780,000. His will was written two days prior to his death. Mary and Angelo's niece Lillian E. Arvedson inherited the bulk of the estate in bank stock, significant farmlands and corporate securities. Soon after Angelo's death Mary gifted to the Carpentersville community: a Library and Literary Association; providing books and personally overseeing the construction of the building; land for Carpenter Park, Carpenter Boulevard, and funding for the Congregational Church and parsonage. These gifts are only the beginning of her generosity to Carpentersville, Elgin and beyond the Fox Valley.

Nine years after her first husband Angelo Carpenter passed away, later Mary Carpenter married George Lord on August 22, 1889, in Portland, Maine. George was 70 and Mary was 57. George was born in LeRoy, Genesee County, New York on March 26, 1819. Before coming west, he was a partner in the mercantile house of Alfred Edwards & Co. of New York.

Like Angelo, George was a philanthropist and highly regarded businessman. He was a business manager for the Elgin National Watch Company, owner of a dairy farm, mayor, and served as president of Elgin's Board of Education, First National Bank of Elgin, Elgin Streetcar Company, Elgin Water Commissioners, the Elgin Academy, and the YMCA. In 1899, George became the president of the Illinois Iron and Bolt Works (I.I.& B) in which Mary had controlling interest. George too was a Congregationalist and follower of the temperance movement. George was previously married to Marcy Hendee who passed away in 1885; George and Marcy had no surviving children.

Mary and George were individually wealthy; together they were a force of good works and deeds. They believed their wealth should enrich the lives of others. George is quoted "Whatever we have done in Elgin, we have done together with one mind and purpose. It is not Mr. Lord nor Mrs. Lord, but Mr. and Mrs. Lord. But, do not think there is any credit due to either of us. We have been privileged to do more than some could, but it is not we who did it, but Christ through us."



Mary and George Lord

Together they financially supported the Elgin Academy, the YMCA, the Old Peoples Home (Oak Crest Residence), and Elgin's congregational church. In 1889, they gifted 50 acres of land to establish what today is Lords Park. In 1901, they helped to establish Elgin's Young Women's Christian Association.

Individually each also contributed to many community organizations. In 1891, serving as Vice President of the Elgin Women's Club, Mary presented \$5000 to the club to build a new Sherman Hospital near Center and Cooper Streets and George donated nine valuable lots he owned. Again, in 1898 they gave 2 additional lots to expand the hospital grounds.

Mary and George traveled extensively and had begun to winter in "warmer climes" during their aging years. In the winter of 1905, both were in declining health and traveled to Clifton Springs, New York to visit a renowned sanatorium. Mary had rheumatism that soon affected her heart and right lung. At 11:30 pm on April 27, Mary died; she was 73 years old.

To be continued.....

Acknowledgments:

The Past & Present of Kane County, IL-1878

Elgin Daily News and other news sources

Commemorative Biographical and Historical Record Kane County 1888

Historical Encyclopedia of Illinois and History of Kane County 1904

Marge Edwards and the Dundee Township Museum

David Seigenthaler

Days Gone By (E.C. Alft)

Elgin, An All American City (E.C. Alft)

Thank You Donors

Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Project

- Sara Ellen and Jim Anderson
- Jeff Gill
- David & Dolores Nelson: proceeds from book sales
- Paul and Mary Spiller

General Donations

- Anonymous donor
- Dana Olson Bequest from the Estate of Dana Olson
- Chicagoland Thunderbirds
- Jerry Turnquist and Bill Briska, Speaker's Bureau

Board Fundraiser

- Rachel Campbell
- Ann Chipman
- Maurice Dyer
- Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham
- Paul R. Larson
- Rebecca Marco
- Sandra and Dennis McClure
- Susan McIntyre
- David J. and Dolores Nelson
- Gilbert and Mary Nore
- Glenna and Mark Preradovic
- Dawn Silfies
- Lorece Smith
- Thomas and Judith Wisinski

Hay Day 2018

The Historical Society presented children's activities at the second annual Hay Day at Providence Park, on August 25. Thanks to the volunteers who gave their time to make this event a success!



Elizabeth Marston, Jim Anderson, Mark Preradovic and Paul Larson (not shown) volunteered at Hay Day



Children enjoy fun and educational activities relating to our agricultural past at this year's Hay Day

New Media Coordinator

Please join the Museum staff in welcoming our new Media Coordinator, Trish LaFleur. She is taking over for Kim Bauer, who moved to Colorado to become the Historic Preservation Planner for Brighton. Thanks to Kim for her work at the Museum in recent years.



St. Francis Park Refresh

The City of Elgin Parks Board partnered with the Museum to create a historical interpretive sign for the St. Francis Park renovation. Improvements include new playground equipment with artificial turf, basketball hoops, a soccer enclosure, and a new gazebo. The new park improvements were dedicated July 21, 2018. See photo on the back page

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



The new sign for St. Francis Park depicting its past as a hospital. Pictured are Elgin City Council member Rose Martinez, Elizabeth Marston, Bill Briska, and Parks director Randy Reopelle.