



# The Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 53 NUMBER 5  
SEPTEMBER 2016



## President's Report

Bill Briska, President



The Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House, at 302 West Chicago Street, has the potential to be an important resource for Elgin's near west side neighborhoods. However, like most resources, it needs some effort put in before it can yield those benefits.

Earlier this year the Historical Society entered into an agreement with the City of Elgin, which owns this property, to raise the funds and oversee the rehabilitation of this architecturally and historically significant building. Sadly, over the last several decades the property had become a neighborhood eyesore and trouble spot. The city acquired the building in 2009 to rid the area of this festering blight.

The Historical Society's vision for this property goes beyond the building itself and extends into the neighborhood. The cobblestone will become an entryway landmark and source of neighborhood pride that will encourage other grassroots organizations in their efforts to improve the area. The rehabilitation of the Nancy Kimball House is an opportunity to demonstrate adaptive reuse and historic preservation. The plan is to create gallery space for exhibitions, educational programs and small group meetings. The lower floor of the building will have workspace for hands-on demonstrations related to home restoration, and for use during neighborhood projects. The building will also be a venue for neighborhood schools to join with us in teaching Elgin history.

As this issue goes to press, the Museum will have reached the first important milestone in redeveloping the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House. During the last few months steps have been taken to correct the decades-old problems with the building's 1846-era foundation. The entire north wall was removed and a new foundation was laid. After the wall is re-framed,

a cobblestone veneer will be applied to replicate the original appearance of the building. It was a bit shocking to see the building with an entire side removed, but the work went as planned and on schedule thanks to the talented team of architects, contractors, and tradespeople involved. These include Eric Pepa of Allen+Pepa Architects, Mike Howell of Carpentry with Integrity and Frank Jurske of Frank's Concrete and Excavating.



*Putting up forms for pouring new concrete foundation*

Having concluded this phase, we now begin fundraising for the next steps of this multi-year project. On October 1, from 12:00 to 4:00 P.M., a group of Kimball House supporters, including the Near West Neighbors Association and Neighborhood Housing Services, will host a fundraising street party, cook out, raffle and silent auction at the corner of West Chicago and Crystal Streets. Please join the fun and get a glimpse of the progress to date.

Rehabilitation of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House is the biggest project the Historical Society has undertaken since saving Old Main from the wrecking ball in the 1970s and '80s. That challenge was several times larger and was completed before there was widespread appreciation for preservation. Old Main today is a tremendous asset for the community and saving it was a game-changer for Elgin. I see the Nancy Kimball house in a similar vein. To help support this project please contact the Museum for more information.

## The Crackerbarrel

Published bimonthly by the Elgin Area Historical Society  
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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.  
Next deadline **October 20, 2016**

 Visit our website [Elginhistory.org](http://Elginhistory.org)

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

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## Program Schedule for 2016

*David Nelson, Program Chair*

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

[elginhistory.org/events.html](http://elginhistory.org/events.html)

**September 17, 12:00 Noon**

**Brown Bag Lunch: History of Presidential Campaigns with Carl Flaks**

Join Elgin historian Carl Flaks for our last Brown Bag Lunch of the year. Carl will give insight from years of research about the evolution of presidential campaigns from the early days of the country to recent times. National political climates set the stage for how presidential hopefuls structured their winning or losing campaigns. Bring lunch, drinks and dessert provided. Members Free/Non-Members \$3.00.

**September 25, 11:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.**

**29th Annual Bluff City Cemetery Walk  
945 Bluff City Blvd., Elgin, IL**

Cemeteries are solemn reminders of death, but also interesting places to learn about past lives. Join a walking tour of Bluff City Cemetery and visit six characters from Elgin in another time. Members, \$12; Adults, \$15. Discount for advance purchase. Order tickets at [elgin-history.org](http://elgin-history.org) or buy at Ziegler's Ace Hardware

**October 1, 12:00 noon to 4:00 P.M.**

**Save the Cobblestone, Build the Neighborhood  
Crystal St. & W. Chicago St.**

Benefit to raise money for restoration of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House (see ad at right and President's Report for details)

**October 2, 2:00 P.M., Lords Park Pavilion. History of Trout Park: Jerry Turnquist & Steve Beyers**

Join us in historic Lords Park Pavilion as we reminisce and share golden memories of Trout Park. Join us and relive the past of this great park. Jerry Turnquist, Bill Vincent and Steve Byers will talk about Trout Park; its history, baseball and unique natural features.

**October 5, 6:30 P.M. Lords Park Pavilion: History of Wing Park Golf Course with Steve Thoren**

Join us in historic Lords Park Pavilion to share memories of Wing Park Golf Course. Steve will talk about the course history and its famous golfers.

These free events are sponsored by the Elgin Parks and Recreation Foundation and are presented in conjunction with the Elgin History Museum. For more details call 847-931-6127.

**October 6, 7:00 P.M.**

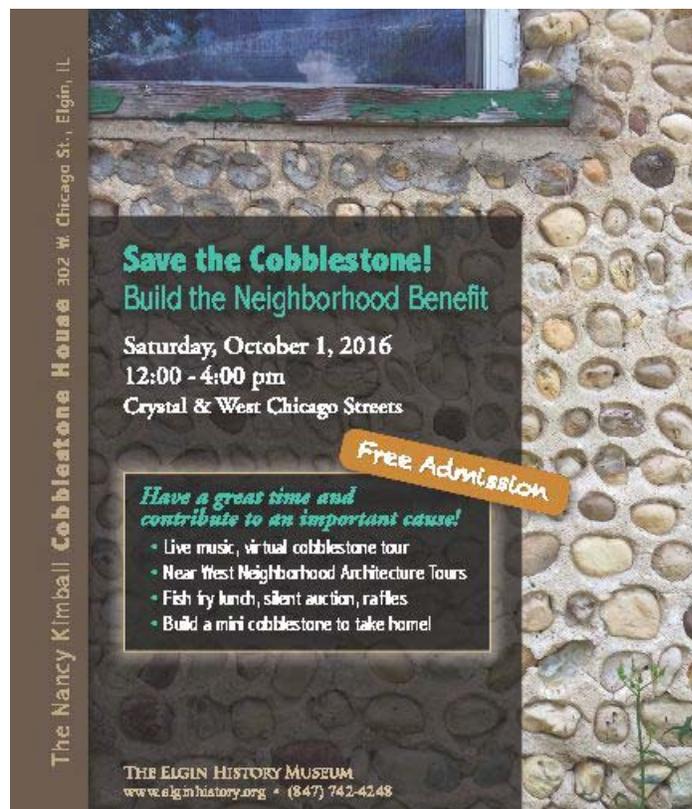
**AAUW African-American Quilt Program.**

African American textile art highlights the intricate work of enslaved women. Ms. Williams will place her talk in the context of Project 2-3-1.

**October 9, 2:00 P.M.**

**Amazing Adventures of Bertha Benz and the History of the German Auto featuring Anette Isaccs**

Anette Isaccs is a frequent lecturer on German history and famous figures. Her vast knowledge of German history, politics and interesting topics will keep guests enthralled and leave everyone with a need to put the pedal to the metal! Members Free/Non-Members \$3.00. There will be a short annual meeting with election of officers.



The Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House 302 W. Chicago St., Elgin, IL

**Save the Cobblestone!  
Build the Neighborhood Benefit**

Saturday, October 1, 2016  
12:00 - 4:00 pm  
Crystal & West Chicago Streets

**Free Admission**

*Have a great time and contribute to an important cause!*

- Live music, virtual cobblestone tour
- Near West Neighborhood Architecture Tours
- Fish fry lunch, silent auction, raffles
- Build a mini cobblestone to take home!

THE ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM  
[www.elginhistory.org](http://www.elginhistory.org) • (847) 742-4248

November 5, 6:00 P.M.

**Annual Benefit and Silent Auction  
Elgin Country Club, 2575 Weld Rd., Elgin, IL**

Leslie Goddard portrays first lady Jackie Kennedy in 1964, as the former First Lady is besieged by sightseers around her home in Georgetown. As she deliberates what to do next, she shares her life story and her years in the White House, her struggle to maintain her privacy from the media, her restoration work, and her efforts to showcase the arts. In a climactic revelation, she recounts her husband's death and comes to a heartfelt decision about how to begin a new life for herself and her children. Hearty appetizers and desserts, plus a full silent auction and raffle. Members \$40.00, Non-Members \$50.00.

December 3, 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.

**Holiday Tea featuring music by North Side Brass  
with David Nelson on piano**

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**Welcome New Members**

*Jerri Barnhart, Membership Chairperson*

- David Aleman
- Karen Beyer
- Jay Copp
- Gloria Jeser
- DeWayne and Melanie Reed
- Jim Stinson

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**Thank You Donors!**

- **John Bertrand**  
in honor of Ken Barnhart's 80th Birthday.  
Happy Birthday Ken!
- **Carl and Mary Ellen Flaks**  
to the Youth Education Fund and Holiday Tea
- **Marge Krueger**  
to the Old Main 160th Birthday Party
- **Richard Renner**  
for the new exhibit, *Elgin American Compacts:  
Designing for America, 1926-1951*
- **Seigle Family Foundation**  
in honor of Richard Renner

**Hillside Cemetery**

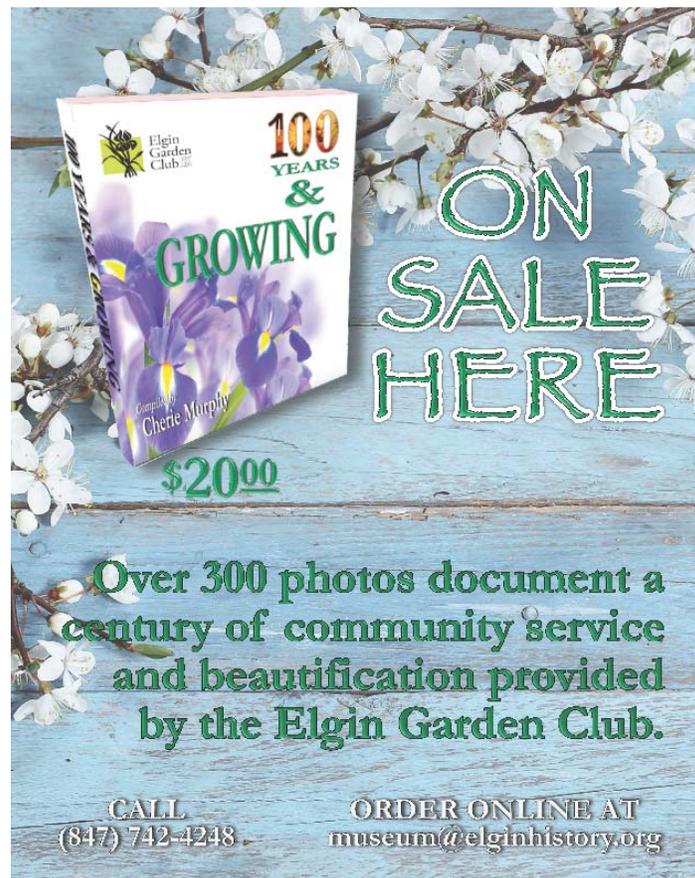
- Jean Catron
- Kathy Grace
- Barbara Harwood
- David Hughes
- David Maxfield
- Donna Mullen
- Mary Ann Poulos
- Tim Sweeney

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**New Elgin Garden Club History Book**

A new book on the history of the Elgin Garden Club is now available in honor of the club's 100th anniversary. The book is \$20.00, and is available online at [www.elginhistory.org](http://www.elginhistory.org) in the Museum Store; at Ace Hardware in Elgin, and at State Street Market.

A book signing will take place at the Kew Gardens lecture at Gail Borden Library on September 20 at 3:30, and will again be offered at this year's Cemetery Walk on Sept. 23. Great gift for a gardener!



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**Museum Updates**

*Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director*

**Seigle Room Opening to Visitors**

The Seigle Room on the first floor of the Museum is used primarily as an Elgin Academy classroom. The Museum and the Academy have partnered to share the room for use as a seminar-style classroom and as a temporary exhibit area.

Many thanks to volunteer Doug Tomsha who installed some of the *Jewish Experience in Elgin* exhibit panels on the walls in the Seigle Room. The Academy also has historical photos of the school in the room and photos

of Harry Seigle, Sr., the room's namesake. The Museum will open the Seigle Room for visitors on Wednesdays and Saturdays.



*Doug Tomsha in the Seigle Room*

### Log Cabin Improvement

Volunteers Jackie and Ira Marcus designed and built an exterior chimney to scale for the Museum's log cabin replica behind Old Main. It upgrades the look of the log cabin, giving docents the opportunity to talk about how pioneers heated their homes. Thanks to Ira and Jackie!



*Jackie and Ira Marcus and the new chimney they built*

## Reverend Nathaniel Clark, Elgin's First Pastor – Part 2

*by David Siegenthaler*

Nathaniel Catlin Clark was born in Benson, Vermont on August 12, 1801 to Joseph and Submit (Dunham) Clark. His boyhood and youth were spent on a farm and in a tannery. When about 19 years of age, during an extensive revival meeting, "he was made the subject of renewing grace," and decided to devote himself to the Christian ministry. He studied for a time with Rev. Cushman of Fair Haven, Vermont and completed his preparatory studies at Castleton Academy. In 1824 he entered Middlebury College and graduated four years later with high honors. He supported himself during his academic training by school-teaching and manual labor.

Clark spent one year as a teacher at Herkimer Academy and then studied at Auburn Theological Seminary, where he graduated in 1832. On October 22, 1832 he married Julia Barrows, daughter of Eleazer and Mary (Hall) Barrows. Julia was born in Middlebury, Vermont on November 3, 1801.

In the fall of 1832, Clark became pastor of the Congregational Church at Shoreham, Vermont. In the spring of 1833, however, a true missionary spirit combined with the urging of fellow Vermonters already in the Chicago area, prompted him to seek a sponsorship from the American Home Missionary Society. That organization agreed to commission him at \$400 per year, less any amount he could raise himself.

Rev. Clark was ordained on May 4, 1833, just before he and his pregnant wife left for the West. Their journey was via the canal to Buffalo, a steamer to Detroit, a stage to St. Joseph, Michigan, another steamer to Chicago, and finally, an old Indian trail to a site near Naperville, where there was a settlement of Vermont natives. Rev. Clark arrived in Illinois on June 29, 1833.

While living in the Naperville area (Lisle Township) from 1833 to 1837, Rev. Clark organized Congregational and Presbyterian churches in the Naperville area (1833), Plainfield (1834), Batavia (1835), Elk Grove (1835), Geneva (1836), St. Charles (1837) and elsewhere. On May 12, 1836, he was invited by founder James T. Gifford to organize Elgin's Congregational Church. In 1837 Rev. Clark moved to St. Charles and in September 1837 became Elgin's first pastor, dividing his time between the Congregational churches in the two settlements.

In 1839, Rev. Clark became a full-time pastor in Elgin and lived there the rest of his life. His home, built in 1841, was at the northeast corner of Chicago and Gif-

ford streets. Rev. Clark was pastor at Elgin's First Congregational Church for a total of about 14 years, during three intervals: 1837-45; 1847-51; and 1860-62.

Rev. Clark also organized churches in Dundee (1841), Udina (1848), Algonquin (1850) and elsewhere. He also pastored at the churches in Dundee (three different times), Udina, Marengo and Ringwood. In "destitute communities" that could not financially support a pastor, he worked under a commission from the American Home Missionary Society. For the last eight years of his life he had no regular assignments, but supplied vacant churches for various periods of time; filled pulpits during pastors' vacations; and preached at Elgin's insane asylum and to Elgin's African-American congregation.

Rev. Clark organized many temperance societies and was a member of the Kane County Anti-Slavery Society—two of the biggest social issues of his day. In addition to his deep involvement in the religious and moral life of Elgin, Rev. Clark was also involved in the city's educational and business life. He taught Greek and Latin in the Elgin public high school and was appointed Superintendent of Schools in 1866, a position he held for two years. In 1861, Rev. Clark partnered with Elbridge G. Howe to open Elgin's "first regular and permanent bookstore."

Rev. Clark and his wife Julia had four children, but they all died young, before their parents. Their only grandchild died at 9 days old, so the Clarks left no direct descendants. Their first child, Mary Caroline (5 Oct 1833-5 Nov 1836), died at age 3 in Naperville. Their second, Henry Eleazer (27 May 1835-25 Jan 1851), died at age 15 of scarlet fever. Their third, Mary Submit (8 Sept 1840-2 Dec 1868), died at age 28 of heart disease. Mary had married Ichabod S. Bartlett only a few months before her death. The Clarks' last child, Julia Rebecca (9 May 1843-21 Mar 1864), died at age 20 of puerperal fever. Julia had married Rev. Fred Oxnard in January 1863 and their only child, Ernest, died only two days after his mother, at 9 days old. Rev. Clark's wife Julia died on June 15, 1884 at age 82. Rev. Clark's brother, Epaphras Clark, came with his family to the Aurora area in 1837. He died in September 1877 at age 87.

In November 1872, Rev. Clark attended a 4-day fellowship meeting at the church in Riley, in McHenry County. Returning home, he caught a severe cold, which turned into pneumonia. He died on December 3, 1872, age 71, and was buried in the old Channing Street Cemetery. In 1919 his remains were moved to Bluff City Cemetery.

His handsome monument, made from a dark-colored Scotch granite, is not his original tombstone, however. That was made from a Mount Maria marble, but it proved unsatisfactory because the cut inscription showed no contrast with the stone, and unless the sun

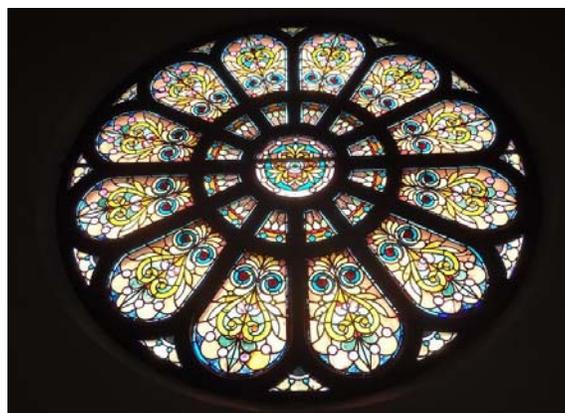
happened to be in the right position the words were illegible. In 1888 the monument was replaced. In 1952, two boys discovered the original monument covered by a dense growth of vines and weeds in a vacant lot and speculation arose as to how it got there. What happened to it since then is also unknown.

"Father Clark," as he was affectionately known by those he served, had a plain but persuasive preaching style. He made no pretensions to style or rhetoric. If his preaching failed to convert his listeners, his living convinced them, for his daily life was filled with kindness and selflessness. It was said that "his life was his most eloquent sermon."

Today's First Congregational Church building, built in 1889, contains a beautiful memorial to its founding pastor in the stained glass rose window prominently adorning the upper center of the front of the Church.



*Rev. Nathaniel Clark's monument in Bluff City Cemetery*



*Rose window at First Congregational Church*

The last words of Rev. Clark, as he was about to leave his disease-wracked body behind, were a heartfelt and joyous, "I'm going home."

*Acknowledgements: Linda Farroh Eder, historian of Elgin's First Congregational Church, did most of the research for these articles. She spent many hours organizing and inventorying his sermons, researching local history sources, and copying and transcribing his microfilmed hand-written letters to the American Home Missionary Society, which are housed in the Billy Graham Center Archives at Wheaton College.*

## 29th Annual Cemetery Walk Coming Soon!

*Laura and Steve Stroud*

Just around the corner is this year's cemetery walk on Sunday September 25, at Bluff City Cemetery from 11:00 A.M. to 3:00 P.M. The first group of guests will go out at 11:00 A.M. sharp and groups will then depart every 15 minutes. The last group goes out at 3:00 P.M. You may come anytime between these hours to tour. The walk takes about 60 to 90 minutes.

This year we will be highlighting historical figures that have not been portrayed in the past. Former Elginites who will tell their stories are:

- **Lucille Burns, Miss Elgin 1925**
- **Col. William Lynch, a Civil War hero**
- **Joseph Pabst, an early pioneer settler who opened one of the first hotels in Elgin**
- **H. Walter Pixley, an expert watch maker at the Elgin National Watch Company**
- **C. Irene Oberg, a pioneer nurse at Sherman Hospital**
- **James Dangerfield, a W. W. 1 Army Captain**
- **Emily Lord, founder of the Elgin Seminary for girls in the 1850s.**

There also will be four vignettes sharing stories of angel monuments, history of Bluff City Cemetery, epitaphs on gravestones and early settler Mary Jane Gifford.

Our awesome costumed guides will again escort you on the route. This year we will be missing one of our dedicated guides and a great supporter of the cemetery walk, Barbara DeMoulin. Sadly, she passed away this summer.

Our portrayers this year will be Linda Rock, Mike Delehoy, Andrew Cuming, August Conte and three new portrayers: Anne LoCascio, James Zingales and Babette Colburn. Vignette speakers will be Barbara

Schloss, Sue Moylan, Ira Marcus, Jackie Marcus and students from John Divine's Elgin High School History class.

We hope to see many of you. So wear your comfy shoes, bring a friend or family member and enjoy an afternoon in a beautiful historical park-like cemetery. Oh yes.....and learn a little history.

Tickets are \$12 in advance and for Elgin History Museum Members, \$15 at the gate, free for children 12 and under. Group rates are available. You can purchase tickets at the Museum, in person or online and at both Ace Hardware stores in town. For more information call 847-742-4248, go to [www.elginhistory.org](http://www.elginhistory.org) or visit us on Facebook. See you at the walk!



*Beloved Elgin historian Mike Alft portrays brewer Caspar Althen in the 2005 Cemetery Walk*

## PO Box 503, Elgin

*Richard Bennett, Life Member*

Because I moved from Elgin to near Baraboo WI four years ago, I decided to close out my family's Elgin post office box, number 503, which we'd had for 90 years. My parents rented the box in 1926. The post office was originally on Spring Street, but was torn down in the early 1960s. I'd see the same people there every day, and we'd chat while getting our mail.

I wanted to keep the box for 100 years, but we cannot know how long we will live. The postmaster once told me ours was the longest PO box rental of any family.

For those of you who might not know, from 1927 to 1967, my family spent summers in a large cottage at Devil's Lake, and winters in Elgin. So when I moved to Wisconsin permanently, it was like coming home.



## Progress at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone

Here are some images of work recently completed at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House on West Chicago St.



*New concrete footing for north wall, to provide adequate support for the slumping wall torn down and soon to be rebuilt*



*Back (north) wall completely removed and structure braced prior to rebuilding*

## David Nelson's Memoirs

*Board member, Program Director and pianist David Nelson is in the process of writing his memoirs. Below is an excerpt. David grew up in Elgin and has spent a lifetime involved with music.*

One of my highlights at Abbott School was the year-end concert in 9th grade, May 1951. I played in the orchestra, accompanied the 9th grade chorus and several vocal ensembles. When the music and applause ended, the 2 Miss Morgans called me to the stage and presented me with the 'outstanding musician of the year' award. I thanked them and gave them both a hug. I was completely surprised.

My sister Carole and I were also presenting programs for church groups and men's and women's clubs. This continued until Carole went to college. She left after one semester and enrolled at the Musical College of Roosevelt University in Chicago. We then continued giving programs. Carole and I presented a Christmas program on the Swedish tradition of Santa Lucia. Carole wore a long white dress and sang Swedish Christmas songs while I accompanied her. We presented this program in many Elgin churches. We were called the 2 Nelsons. Carole did not like that because she said we both have a first name.

On November 14, 1950, I played two solos, and accompanied my sister and the Abbott School sextet in a group of three songs, at the Sears Art Gallery at Elgin Academy. The Elgin Chapter of Fine Arts presented a concert on March 17, 1951, at First Baptist Church. I played a piano solo and accompanied my sister and several other singers. It received a terrific review in the Courier News.

My sister and I admired each other's musical talents. Did we have disagreements? Of course we did, but we always worked them out and never held grudges. From 1949-1955 (when Carole married Maurice Core and moved to Iowa) Carole and I presented classical music recitals. Two took place in big mansions in Elgin and Dundee, IL, both in huge living rooms with Steinway grand pianos and 25-30 guests. We were paid well and treated royally!

The third recital that stands out in my memory took place on September 30, 1951, when we presented her Senior Recital at the Sears Art Gallery. Carole sang songs by Handel, Beethoven, Schubert, and others. I accompanied her and also played two groups of solos by Meefe, Burton, Schubert and Chopin.

Carole's vocal training with Charlo Byars Bohl developed her voice into a rich contralto. She sang many solos in Oratorio performances. Carole and I were always so grateful that our parents saw to it we studied with the best teachers.

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM  
360 PARK STREET  
ELGIN, IL 60120



*Preparations for Annual Spring EHS Concert, 1954.  
Sarah Kirkpatrick, David Nelson, Linda Switzer, Betty Hillmer, Mary Lawrence, and Mary Teske*

Carole and I appeared many times on radio station WRMN in 1949 and 1950. In September 1951 I began my sophomore year at Elgin High School. I was playing in Marian Laffey's concert orchestra and became accompanist for E.A. Hill's A Cappella choir. In October, Miss Laffey formed a trio with Betty Hillmer, violinist, Donald Spuehler, cellist, and myself, pianist. We were soon a big hit. Miss Laffey insisted that we always be paid a small fee, which made us very happy. The best honor was receiving a superior rating for performing Haydn's "Piano Trio in D Major" at the Illinois State Music Contest.



29TH ANNUAL  
**CEMETERY WALK**  
AT BLUFF CITY CEMETERY  
945 Bluff City Blvd. • Elgin, Illinois

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 25, 2016  
11:00 A.M. – 3:00 P.M.

\$12.00 in Advance and for Elgin History Museum Members  
\$15.00 on Day of Event

Free for children 12 and Under • Group Rates Available

Tickets are available at the Elgin History Museum and Ziegler's Ace Hardware

For more information call: (847) 742-4248 or go to: [www.elginhistory.org](http://www.elginhistory.org) or visit us on Facebook