

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News July 2020

President's Report

Al Walters, President



As I write, Illinois is preparing to enter Phase Four of the Governor's Covid-19 recovery plan. This means the Museum is gearing up to re-open July 8, along with many of the state's other museums.

Reopening the Museum is important not only for sharing Elgin's story, but also because the Museum's financial health is partially dependent on revenue from admissions, visitor donations, school field trips, adult programming, and Museum store sales. These income streams were stopped by the shutdown.

The shutdown added extra urgency to this year's Board Fundraiser. A successful fundraiser partially compensates for the reduced cash flow from other channels. The Museum leadership team wondered if the country's economic woes would put a damper on Museum members' responses to the Board's fundraising request. What role would the virus play?

Well, the results are in...and they are outstanding! The pre-virus business plan optimistically budgeted for \$14,000, a slight increase over recent years. I am proud to report that receipts now total more than \$20,000. It is especially gratifying to see that the average gift amount, and the total number of gifts, increased over last year. Notably, this year's organic growth in giving was augmented by several exceptionally generous donations from dedicated members.

This year we asked donors to direct how they want their gift to be used. Choices include: Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Project, Youth Education and Programming, David Nelson Memorial Adult Programming Fund, or General Museum Operations. Demonstrating the diverse interests of our membership, all four funds were supported, with the largest amount designated for the Cobblestone project.

This generous giving will help the Museum and its Board of Directors financially navigate the Covid-19 shutdown. Please know that every donation, large or small, makes a difference. Collectively, we simply cannot say thank you loud enough. By the way—it's not too late to mail a check if you have been meaning to, but just haven't gotten around to it! Thank you!

Museum Opening July 8

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director



After being closed for nearly four months due to the Covid-19 pandemic, the Elgin History Museum will reopen on July 8, 2020. The Museum's hours will continue to be Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday, 11-4 pm. Members receive free admission, guest admission is \$3. The following few safety measures for members, guests, volunteers, and staff will be in place:

- Everyone must wear protective face coverings while in the Museum.
- Hand sanitizer will be available.
- Contactless payment is appreciated. Admission can be paid online ahead of a visit, or visitors may place cash admission fees into the donation box. Museum store sales can also be paid online or by credit card.
- Visitors will enter at staggered times, and each group of visitors will start their Museum tour in different wings. Six-foot distancing between groups is required.
- Volunteers and staff will clean and sanitize exhibit areas and bathrooms during open days.
- Some interactive exhibit components have been removed.

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline August 20, 2020

 Visit our website Elginhistory.org

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

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Sunday August 23, 2:00 P.M.:

The Secret Presidency of Edith Wilson

Online virtual presentation by William Hazelgrove

Thursday September 10, 12:00 Noon:
Lunch at Home: Elgin Railroad History

Online virtual presentation by Andy Thompson

Saturday September 26, Sunday September 27:
Bluff City Cemetery Walk

Sunday October 11, 2:00 p.m.: Annual Meeting
"French Fiddle Tunes and Tall Tales" presented by
Dennis Stroughmatt

Saturday November 7, 5:30 p.m.:
Annual Benefit Gala, at Holiday Inn and Suites in
Elgin. Oktoberfest theme with music from German
band The Musikmeisters

Saturday December 5, 11:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M.
Annual Holiday Tea

2020 Program Schedule

Betsy Armistead, Program Chair

NOTE: In-person events are tentative due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Check the website for current information. elginhistory.org/events

Every third Saturday of the month, beginning in August, 11:00 A.M. and 1:00 P.M.: Spanish language tours of the Museum

Ira Marcus: "Art in Artifacts" photography exhibit

July 9, 7:00 P.M., Virtual Presentation: Remembering Walton Island

Al Walters presents a virtual tour through the storied history of what is now one of Elgin's greatest assets. Presented by Gail Borden Public Library. Please register on the Library's website to attend this online presentation. gailborden.info

Saturday July 18, 11:00 A.M. Classic Car Cruise leave Museum at 11:30 A.M.:

Please check elginhistory.org and the Museum's Facebook page for details on this event!

August 5, 7:00 P.M., Virtual Presentation: Elgin in the 1950s

1950s in Elgin are remembered by many as the "good old days" and a time of unprecedented growth and prosperity. Historian Jerry Turnquist will take you back to this time to see another side to this era of a booming watch factory and "mom and pop" grocery stores. Online presentation by Gail Borden Public Library. Please register on the Library's website to participate. gailborden.info

In Memoriam

Beth Nawara, Curator



Karen Mathews, a volunteer for the Elgin History Museum, died June 2, 2020. She was an active volunteer on the third floor of the Museum. She helped digitize photographs and she loved organizing the costume collection. Every storage box that she opened she viewed as a new surprise, never knowing what she was going to find inside.

We will miss the joy and enthusiasm Karen brought to her time at the Museum.

Thank You Donors

In Memory of Karen Mathews

Bill Briska

Judy Emmert

Yale Farar

Gail Gerber

Len Govednik

Carol & Steve Koenig

Paula & Anthony Nizzardo

Frank Salvatini

Board Fundraiser Donations

Anonymous	Ligon, Jerry and Kathleen
Abbott, Carol	Locascio, Anne
Anderson, James and Sara Ellen	Marco, Rebecca
Armistead, Dwight and Betsy	Marston, John and Elizabeth
Barnhart, Jerri and Ken	Mathews, Karen and Bill
Barry, Christopher and Jan	McClure, Sandra and Dennis
Barton, Valerie	Miller, Dan
Bendick, Joseph & Lois	Muirhead, John W.
Blizzard, Harry and Phyllis	Nawara, Beth and David
Blohm, Carol	Neslon, Dolores
Briska, Bill and Fran Cella	Neville, Aubrey
Brown, Betty	O'Haire, John and Claudia
Brown, William H. and Sally	Olson, Cliff
Burke, Christopher	Plagge, Carol
Camacho, Mary	Preradovic, Glenna and Mark
Campbell, Rachel C.	Rauschenberger, Tom
Cassell, Charles	Regan, John
Chevalier, Carol and Jim	Reinert, Coral
Childs, Helen	Roller, Jerry & Carolyn
Cook, Bruce	Rowe, George and Marge
Crinigan, Linda and Jim	Roxworthy, Dennis
Crouse, Charles	Rush, Carrie
Cuming, Andrew and Britta	Schock, Edward and Karen
Danielson, Barry and Andrea	Schroeder, Kathleen
Dieringer, Roger	Schroeder, Robert and Judith
Dyer, Maurice (Cust)	Schroeder Jan and John
Eaton, Valerie	Siegenthaler, David Customer
Elliott, Lucy and Mark	Smith, H. Jane
Flaks, Carl and Mary Ellen	Smith, R. Lorece
Gabel, Terry and Sue Brigham	Sopcak, Michael
Galfi, Rudolph and Lillian	Sorton, Judy and Alex
Garza, Laurel and Ivo	Strohmaier, Gayle
Grantham, Al	Stroud, Laura
Grosser, Patricia and Jeff	Swan, Valerie
Harris, Ricky	Teeter, Teryl
Hernandez, Peggy	Vance, Mary Jo
Hoefl, Elizabeth	Vece, Michael
Huber, John	Vierck, Dana and Gary
Jerry Turnquist	Walsh, Larry
Jones, Richard	Walters, Daniel and Lynn
Knoll, Naomi	Weseman, Margaret and Ed
Kostlevy, W & Patzwald, M	Wojciechowska, Miroslawa
Krueger, Margaret	Wojtynek, Judy
Larson, Paul R.	Zawadzki, Margaret
Lee, Maureen and Tom	Ziegler, Phyllis

General Donations

Kris & Jim Heykoop

John & Joseph Muchmore

Eric Selin

Samantha Segura

Chandler & Pamela Swan

Custom Elgin History Museum face masks:
Terry Gabel & Sue Brigham,
George & Marge Rowe

Contributions to parking meter keys:
Sandra Harms
Chad Mensch
Janie Zimmerman
Hannah Eckard

New Exhibits and Resources

The Museum website also offers educational resources for kids. Visit elginhistory.org to download fun activities and watch videos about Elgin history. Resources are available in English and Spanish.

Here are some new exhibits to entice visitors to the Museum following our re-opening on July 8. Hope to see you there!

- Art in Artifacts by Ira Marcus is a wonderful look at material culture. Ira gives a new perspective to common objects by enhancing color, shape and size. Some original objects are displayed next to Ira's photographic artwork.
- The Elgin Kiwanis are celebrating 100 years in 2020. Take a look at their new exhibit to appreciate the club's generous donations to Elgin life.
- Permanent exhibits have been updated with information on Gromer's Grocery Store, Edith Krueger designs, and some new objects have been rotated onto exhibit.

Notable Black Americans in Elgin

Adapted by Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director, from E. C. Alft's "Elgin's Black Heritage"

There are many remarkable figures in Elgin history, including people who shaped the community while being subjected to racism and discrimination. Many history museums tell the story of their town's development from the angle of the wealthy, connected and powerful people who first owned the land and businesses. Equally important is the story of regular people, trapped in the social confines of their own time, who make an impact on local, regional and national levels. Here are a few people who made an impact on Elgin and the world.

The Hall Family

Mary Newsome came to Elgin as a baby on the Contraband train during the Civil War. In 1882, Mary married John H. C. Hall, a free man from Chicago and the son of Rev. A. T. Hall. John had served with the 29th U. S. Colored Infantry guarding Confederate prisoners at Camp Douglas in Chicago during the war. John opened an Elgin barber shop with one of his younger brothers.



Mary Newsome Hall Wheeler with her son Pete

John Hall is significant for his willingness to participate in public life. He is the first Black person to be called for Kane County jury service and the first to run for Elgin City Council. There was some amazement in 1887, when John was accepted as a member for the local post of the Grand Army of the Republic, and a white applicant was rejected.

Arthur (Pete) Hall was the son of John and Mary. He was a tackle on the Elgin High School football team of 1900, which held all their opponents scoreless until they ventured to Minnesota and were overwhelmed by the Minneapolis Central. The next year Pete was elected team captain, and in 1903 became the first Black male to receive an Elgin High School diploma. With no good jobs in Elgin, Pete left for St. Paul, Minnesota in 1906 to train as a barber with his half-brother, Ed Hall. Fond of music, Pete managed a professional quartet for many years and directed the senior choir at his church. He also composed verses for Black periodicals. One poem remembered his mother, Mary, on her birthday:

**Another mile-stone, Mother,
And like the others, it will bring you:
A richer sweetness in each tender smile,
A wiser understanding of the faults in friends,
A deeper reverence for his God, the while
A greater love from me.**

After John Hall passed away, the former Mary Newsome married Lewis Wheeler. A son of this second marriage, Eugene L. Wheeler, served as a ward room cook in the U.S. Navy, 1917-1921, on ships transporting troops to and from France. (African Americans were at that time barred from becoming seamen.) In 1945, when a local unit of the War Mothers was formed, it was named the Mary Wheeler War Mother's Club in honor of the child born in slavery, the wife of a Civil War soldier, and the mother of a veteran of the First World War.



American War Mothers, Mary Wheeler Chapter

John Hall's brother, Gus Hall, had a son named Lloyd A. Hall. He was born in Elgin in 1894 and attended Wing School through the sixth grade, when the family moved downriver to Aurora. Lloyd Hall graduated from East Aurora High School and then received a degree from Northwestern University. After initial failures in finding a job, he was hired by the Western Electric Company over the telephone, only to be rejected when he reported for duty.



Dr. Lloyd A. Hall eventually became an industrial chemist and director of research for Griffith Laboratories, 1925-1959. Listed in *Who's Who in America*, he was granted more than 100 patents and became widely known in the fields of biological and food chemistry for his work in preserving food, such as meat curing products,

seasonings, emulsions, baking products, antioxidants, and protein hydrolysates.

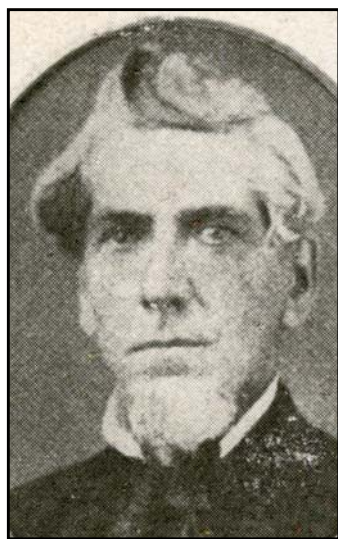
When Dr. Hall was beginning his career in the 1920s, it was believed that spices preserved food, but Hall found that most spices, like cloves, ginger, and pork powder, held large amounts of dangerous molds, yeast, and bacteria. He found a way to purify food placing it

in a vacuum chamber and then adding ethylene oxide gas. "Vacuga" sterilization treatment was later applied to drugs, hospital supplies, and cosmetic supplies. The 20th century scientific contributions made by Dr. Lloyd Hall made him one of America's top food chemists. He died January 2, 1971.

Thanks to the Hall Family of Elgin for their significant contributions over 100 years and three generations.

The Waldron Family of Elgin

by David Siegenthaler



Andrew Jackson Waldron (1816-66), a native of Vermont, came to Elgin in 1845. He and his son Elisha Dunbar Waldron (1848-1924) were both bankers and businessmen who shared their wealth, expertise and time to make Elgin a more prosperous and enlightened community. Both were public servants. Andrew was a two-term mayor (1859-61), county associate justice (1850), township supervisor (1852 and 1862), justice of the peace (1849-53)

and notary public. Dunbar was a 6-term city treasurer. Both were trustees of Elgin Academy—Andrew from 1855-66, and Dunbar from 1884-1902. Both were active in the Universalist Church, where Andrew was one of the original trustees of the Universalist Society of Elgin in 1857, and Dunbar and his sisters donated a new pipe organ.

Andrew was an officer of the Fox River Valley Rail Road (1852-58; this extended the railroad north of Elgin along the east bank of the Fox River) and was one of the first purchasers of Elgin National Watch Co. stock (1864). Dunbar helped organize the Home National Bank (1872) and the Elgin Lumber Co. (1881). Dunbar was an officer of the Elgin Packing Co., the Elgin Butter Co., the Home Savings Bank, the Elgin Gas Light and Coke Co., the Elgin Loan & Homestead Association and the South Elgin Stone Co. Dunbar was also one of the incorporators of the Elgin City Railway Co. (electric street cars) and partnered with William Grote in a thriving real estate business that was responsible for numerous additions to the corporate limits of Elgin.

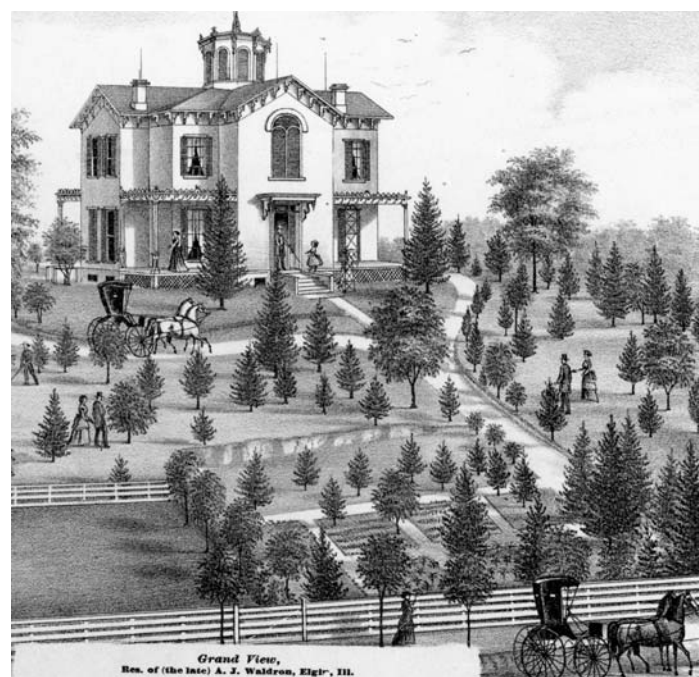
"Grand View," the mansion Andrew Waldron built in the 1850s on top of the hill bounded by Prairie, Gifford, Villa and Channing streets, afforded a great view of the surrounding area and was one of Elgin's show-place homes.

Andrew's ancestors came to America about 1670 from the Coventry, England, area. His father Jonathan married his mother Eunice Dunbar in 1807 in Hartland, Vermont, where Andrew was born February 12, 1816. He learned the merchandising trade and on October 22, 1840, married Calista Smith in Bethany, New York. Calista was born August 21, 1821, in Middlebury, New York. Andrew and Calista came west to Batavia, Illinois, in 1842 and remained there until 1845, when they moved to Elgin.



Map showing Grand View block, c. 1895

Their first Elgin home was at the northwest corner of DuPage and Spring streets. In the 1850s, their 11-room, solid brick mansion, "Grand View," was built on a hilltop at 181 S. Gifford St. This home remained in the Waldron family until 1937. It served as a nursing home from about 1950-67 and was razed in 1976.



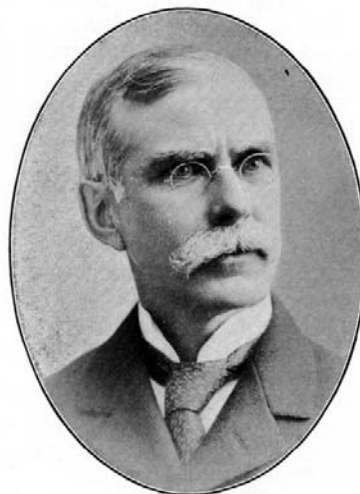
Grand View, formerly at Prairie and Gifford St.

Andrew became a practicing attorney, served as cashier of the Elgin Bank (1856-57) and Home Bank (1863-66), loaned money and sold insurance. Andrew and Calista had three children: Martha Calista (1841-1909; Mrs. Joseph Vollar); Elisha Dunbar (1848-1924); and Bertha Jennette (1860-1945; Mrs. Dr. William G. Stone). Andrew died of tuberculosis at age 50 on April 2, 1866, and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery. His widow Calista married Rev. Holmes Slade, a Universalist pastor, on September 29, 1868, and died at age 67 on September 25, 1888, in McHenry. She is also buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Martha, the eldest child of Andrew and Calista, married Joseph Vollar (1836-1918) in 1868. Joseph was born in Canada and, at age ten, moved with his family to Milwaukee and later to Chicago and Batavia. He served in the Civil War, then returned to work in Batavia and Chicago. After the great Chicago fire of 1871, Joseph moved to Portland, Maine, where he got into the business of manufacturing chewing gum. In 1875 he established his chewing gum business in Elgin and it lasted for 15 years, at three different sites, before going bankrupt in 1890. The second site, a 2-story brick building at 165-69 S. Channing St., is the only one of the three sites still standing, and was the only one built specifically as a chewing gum factory. It was built in 1884 but in 1887-88, Joseph's brother-in-law, Elisha Dunbar Waldron, converted the factory into three residences, known as the "E.D. Waldron Flats." The Vollar family lived in this building for many years. Helen Vollar, a piano teacher and Martha and Joseph's youngest child, lived there for more than 60 years.

Martha and Joseph Vollar had three children: Dunbar Waldron (1871-1929; wife: Grace Bristol); Joseph Truman (1872; died at 7 months in Portland, Maine); and Helen ("Nellie," 1874-1960; never married). Martha and Joseph are buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Bertha, the youngest child of Andrew and Calista, married Dr. William Gleason Stone (1855-1909) in 1891 in New York. Dr. Stone was a physician at the insane asylum in Elgin from 1880-93 and then in Elgin outside the asylum for a few years in the 1890s. Bertha and William Stone had two children: Philip Waldron (1895-1985; wife: Anne Greaven) and Andrew Waldron (1897-1984; wife: Elizabeth Hubbell). Bertha grew up in "Grand View" and returned to live there from about 1929-32, being the last of the Waldron family to occupy the home. Bertha and William are buried in New York.



ELISHA DUNBAR WALDRON

Elisha Dunbar Waldron ("Dunbar"), the only son of Andrew and Calista, was born January 27, 1848. He attended Elgin public schools and the Elgin Academy, from which he had to withdraw due to poor health. After recuperating, he worked at a lumberyard and as a post office clerk. In 1869-70 he partnered in a bookstore and newsstand. Then he moved to Chicago where he engaged in the whole-

sale wood-ware and willow-ware trade until the great Chicago fire in October 1871. Returning to Elgin, he helped organize the Home National Bank, where he served as cashier for 18 years.

In addition to his other positions already noted, Dunbar was a member of the Elgin Board of Trade, a director of the public library, and, with William Grote and others, organized in 1884 the Elgin Improvement Association. This enterprise bought vacant land around new industrial plants, subdivided it into residential lots and sold them to employees. At the time of his death in 1924, he was president of the Home Trust & Savings Bank, a director of the Home National Bank, and treasurer of the Elgin Loan & Homestead Association. He was also president of the Elgin Lumber Co. from 1881, the year he helped to organize it, until his death.

Socially, Dunbar was a member of the Sons of the American Revolution, the Union League Club of Chicago and the Chicago Bankers' Club. In the 1890s, he and his wife Louise established a summer home called "Cliff Cottage" on Mackinac Island, Michigan, that was visited by many prominent Elgin residents.

Dunbar married Louise Town of Des Moines, Iowa, on December 2, 1873, in Des Moines. Louise was born in Rockford, Illinois, January 24, 1851. She was a daughter of John J. and Esther (Graves) Town. Her father was a brother of Morris Clinton Town, an early Elgin banker. Dunbar and Louise had no children. Dunbar died of pernicious anemia December 7, 1924, and Louise died December 31, 1928. They are buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; Kane County histories; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Internet sources; "Elgin Today" (1903); 1872 Kane County atlas; Elgin city directories; federal censuses, etc.

What is YOUR Experience?

In support of peaceful protest and the end to racial discrimination, the Elgin History Museum continues to document current activities through the You Are Living History campaign. The Museum wants to hear your thoughts and feelings on the recent social justice protests. Visit the Museum's website elginhistory.org where you can describe your feelings or observations. Send, email, or drop off photos, video, or items that you think tell the story of this extraordinary time in Elgin's history. All photos and items submitted will be preserved in the Museum's archives and may be placed in a future exhibit.

Through collecting oral and family histories, photographs and film, objects and archival papers, the Museum offers opportunities to talk about injustices and discrimination through facts and memory. The award-winning documentary *Project 2-3-1: Two Box-cars, Three Blocks, One City: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage*, is available on the Museum YouTube channel. Watch it to learn about the fight for African American equality in Elgin, and how that fight continues today. The well-received accompanying traveling exhibit has shown in 15 venues and is available for rent at schools, libraries, and public institutions. The Elgin History Museum is proud to continue educating the public and telling the story of Elgin's heritage for the whole community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed our lives, including the way we interact with each other and make community, share public space, and even our language. The Museum is still collecting your experiences and items related to the COVID-19 pandemic for a future exhibit. Choose from a variety of topics such as: socializing, voting, shopping, and home, family & faith. Share as little or as much as you would like.

We hope you and your loved ones are safe and healthy. Thank you for your continued support!

Cobblestone Update

Rebecca Marco, Editor

A beautiful new solid wood front door with sidelights has been installed at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House, facing Chicago St. Restoric custom-designed and built the front door assembly under direction from Christen Sundquist, the City of Elgin Preservation Planner and Museum board member. Miller Woodworking installed the door. A time-lapse video of the

installation is available for viewing on the Museum's YouTube channel at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vjx7Rh1kjQ4>

The new bathroom on the top floor is now functional. Paul Spiller, owner of Professional Inspections Plumbing in Elgin, donated his time to do all the rough plumbing. Paul recently volunteered to install the bathroom plumbing fixtures, as well as a utility sink in the basement mechanical room. The second-floor bathroom is now functional.

Dan Miller has installed the custom interior window surrounds, closet doors, and a new exterior back door he custom-made for the house. The window surrounds mimic the three original sets that were still present when rehabbing began. Those were stripped to bare wood by John Crowe and will be painted to match the new window trim.

John Crowe finished tooling the mortar on the east side of the building.

All installed interior doors and window trim has been primed and finish painting is underway.

A video tour of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House is now available for viewing on YouTube at:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9FHSUfM-DiU&t=163s>



New front door, installed.

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
 360 PARK STREET
 ELGIN, IL 60120



Collections Corner: New Donations


by Beth Nawara

Have you done some pandemic cleaning and found Elgin-related items to donate? During the past few months, the Museum has received some interesting artifacts in the mail. A large banner advertising Elgin as the shopping center of Northern Illinois is now on exhibit. The donor sent it from Florida. A collection of movie reels, slides, and programs for the Elgin to Chicago Bicycle Race came in from Rock Island.

The Museum has also collected many written submissions and photos for the You are Living History Project related to COVID-19 and Black Lives Matter. Please continue to update the Museum about your experiences through the website, or mail in your thoughts about the past few months.

Images continue to be added to the Museum website at <https://elginhistory.org/research/museum-collections/>. During the past few months, the focus has been on adding people of Elgin and Elgin businesses. There are tens of thousands of photographs in the collections, so there is always something new to see.

34th ANNUAL



ELGIN TO CHICAGO BICYCLE RACE

AMERICA'S BICYCLE CLASSIC

Sunday, October 2, 1960

Sponsored and Underwritten for

THE AMATEUR BICYCLE LEAGUE OF AMERICA

By

GOVERNOR WILLIAM G. STRATTON
OF ILLINOIS

THIS RACE HAS BEEN DESIGNATED AS THE OFFICIAL B.A.R. EVENT IN WHICH CONTESTANTS MAY SCORE POINTS TOWARD THE BICYCLE RACING STARS OF THE 19th CENTURY TROPHY. HARRY BERZ, *Chairman*

START OF RACE: ELGIN NATIONAL WATCH FACTORY TOWER 1:00 P.M.

ARRIVE	ARRIVE
ALGONQUIN 1:30	PALATINE 2:10
CARY 1:45	ARLINGTON HEIGHTS 2:20
FOX RIVER GROVE 1:50	MOUNT PROSPECT 2:40
BARRINGTON 2:00	DES PLAINES 2:50
	PARK RIDGE 3:05

FINISH OF RACE—DEVON AVENUE AT THE WHELAN POOL
(One half mile east of Milwaukee Avenue)