

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News September 2020

President's Report

Al Walters, President



My last two Crackerbarrel columns have dealt with the challenges the Museum is facing during this Covid19 driven time. Sadly, this communication will be no different.

On the bright side, the Museum has been open for our regular business hours since mid-July. Social distancing protocols are in place. The staff and docent volunteers are aggressively working during and after each session to keep the facility sanitary and safe. Not surprisingly, visitor foot traffic has been slow as Elginites adjust to life during a pandemic. While the Museum cannot yet host in-person programs, the collection can be shared with small family groups. So, please consider stopping by with a friend or relative who may not have visited recently. You'll find the Museum safe, clean and inviting.

Programming continues, usually by Zoom or YouTube. On Thursday, September 10, join the Brown Bag Lunch presenter Andy Thompson via Zoom as he details Elgin's long and colorful railroad history. Information on how to log onto the presentation is available on the Museum's website.

Many folks are wondering and asking if the Museum will have a Cemetery Walk this fall. Frankly, much of this spring/summer was spent wondering the same. The answer is YES. The 33rd Annual Bluff City Cemetery Walk, complete with interesting stories of Elgin's past, told through the lives of those who experienced them, will take place. This year's Walk will be presented on-line and can be viewed from the safety and comfort of your home. Viewing information is detailed elsewhere in this issue. I hope to "see" each of you, if only virtually at the 33rd Cemetery Walk.

Understandably, the Museum has converted this year's Fall Benefit Gala into an on-line auction. Historically, the silent auction items and baskets have been the cen-

tral fundraising vehicle at the Gala. So this year, you will be responsible for preparing your own dinner, pouring your own drink, and going on-line to view a recap of this year's Museum highlights. You will also learn if you were the high bidder on one or more of a number of exciting auction items. Learn more on the Virtual Gala and Silent Auction in this issue.

As we all struggle to adapt to this ever-changing social landscape, please know that your continued interest in the Museum, membership, moral support, financial gifts and volunteerism are appreciated now more than ever. Stay healthy.

Welcome New Members

Anne Clarrissimeaux
Jackie & Ira Marcus
Frank and Kathleen Salvatini
William Swick
Dorothy Turay
Sue Yarbrough

In Memoriam

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

Several members, supporters and friends of the Museum have passed away since May 2018. We will miss them all very much. If you know of any other Historical Society members who have passed away recently, please let the Museum know.

Virginia Blietz	David Nelson
Rich Felicetti	Dana Olson
Vernon Hopp	Steve Stroud
Karen Mathews	Hans Zaage
Al Mink	

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
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 Visit our website Elginhistory.org

Opinions expressed herein are not necessarily those of the
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Gala Online Auction

Though the pandemic prevents us from meeting in person for the annual gala and benefit, you get the chance, no matter where you are the first week of November, to bid on donated auction items as part of the Museum's online 2020 Gala. The online auction will be an exciting new part of the virtual fundraising Gala. View donated items online and submit your bids from November 1 to the evening of November 7. More information, including the ability to sponsor the event, will be available as the date of the virtual benefit approaches. As in past years, the auction will feature an array of gift items for all interests. The winners will be announced the night of November 7 during the virtual Gala presentation.

Museum Loses Beloved Catalpa Tree

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

The microburst storm on July 9 toppled the 100-year old catalpa tree in front of Old Main. Fortunately, the tree fell into the parking lot after hours, missing the building and the Elgin National Watch Company bell monument. It fell on the Masonic Temple cornerstone, but did not crush it.



The catalpa tree flowering in June 2020

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

Thursday September 10, 12:00 Noon:

Lunch at Home: Elgin Railroad History

Online virtual presentation by Andy Thompson

Sunday September 27: Premiere of Virtual Bluff City Cemetery Walk

See "Virtual Cemetery Walk" on page 6 for details.

Sunday October 11, 2:00 P.M.: Annual Meeting

"French Fiddle Tunes and Tall Tales" a virtual presentation by Dennis Stroughmatt

See elginhistory.org for details.

Saturday November 7, 5:30 P.M.:

Annual Benefit Gala and Auction, held online

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

Annual Holiday Tea

A new catalpa, donated by Bill Briska and Fran Cella, has been planted in the old tree's place. The Elgin Garden Club, led by Diane Van Wei, is planning new sun-loving plants for the area, with room for the cornerstone. The Carpentersville Masonic Temple will assist in re-mounting the cornerstone near the historic interpretive sign, thanks to Museum neighbor Chad Lacek.

In addition to cleaning up the fallen tree, the City of Elgin performed upgrades and maintenance on the building this year. In the spring, six new, high efficiency furnaces and air conditioning units replaced the old HVAC system installed during Old Main's rehab in the 1980s. Exterior brick was tuckpointed and the stucco patched and painted by Seyller's Masonry. The painters from Celtic scraped and painted all of the exterior window and decorative trim, soffit, fascia, and the cupola.

Kellenberger's Electric installed all-new lighting around the building and roof spotlights for the cupola. Thanks to Rich Hoke and Vanessa Scott from the City of Elgin Maintenance Department for taking such good care of Old Main.



Elgin's Yarwood Family

by David Siegenthaler

Reuben L. Yarwood (1806-1864) came to Elgin in 1844 from New York to manage Simon Newton Dexter's woolen mill, one of Elgin's earliest industries. Reuben also operated the mill's factory store and was elected an alderman on Elgin's first city council in 1854. A short street in southeast Elgin was named in his honor due to his association with Dexter, the former owner of the property that became Sherman's Addition. Reuben's son James R. was a 2-term city treasurer (1862-63) and his grandson George R. was a township assessor for about 15 years (1892-circa 1907).



Louis H. Yarwood (1827-1907), nephew of Reuben, came to Elgin in 1851 and worked for a short time as a bookkeeper at the woolen mill before purchasing a drug store, which he operated for about 15 years. He served one term as an alderman (1863) and was an Elgin Academy trustee (1863-65) and treasurer (1864-65). Louis also worked as an insurance agent and sold musical instruments before being appointed Elgin Township's first library director in 1874, a position he held until 1882. After that, Louis focused on his passion, landscape painting, for which he gained a reputation as an artist of superior ability. Louis' son Marcus D. was a long-time piano teacher. Louis' home, built about 1854 at 373 Park St., still stands and is one of the best examples in the Elgin area of Gothic Revival residential architecture. This daguerreotype of Louis was probably taken in the 1850s by Rodolphus Padelford, Elgin's first professional photographer and a one-time partner of Louis in the insurance business.



373 Park St. today

Reuben's father, Samuel Yarwood (circa 1767-1814), was a native of England and died in New York. His mother was Mary Robinson (circa 1777-1820). Reuben was born September 12, 1806, in Oneida County, New York, where he became associated with S. Newton Dexter in the woolen manufacturing business. Dexter was a brother-in-law of B.W. Raymond, the Chicago merchant-capitalist who invested in many early Elgin enterprises. In the early 1840s, Dexter established a woolen mill in Elgin and put Reuben in charge of it. Thus, sheep became the livestock of choice for local farmers until the dairy boom of the 1850s and '60s.

About 1834, Reuben married Abigail B. Kelsey (1814-1895) and the couple had seven children: James R. (circa 1835-1878; wife: Sarah Jane Walter); Albert W. (1840-1874; wife: Phillie B. Reaum); Salinda M. (1842-1918; Mrs. Julius E. Baker); unnamed infant daughter (died at 4 days old in 1845); Jennette A. (1847-1909; Mrs. Frederick Buttles); Marcus L. (1850-1897; wife: Anna Andrews); and Ella Maria (1852-1921; Mrs. William Hart).

James R. Yarwood helped his dad Reuben run the woolen mill's factory store. In 1856 James married Sarah Jane Walter (1835-1898) and the couple had three children: Cora Louise (1857-1945; Mrs. James D. Smythe); George Reuben (1859-1934; wife: Harriett ("Hattie") H. Stewart); and Charles W. (1864-1947; wives: 1st: Laura Belle Corbin; 2nd: Kathleen Dalby). Apparently, James and Sarah divorced, and Sarah married Elon Sherman in 1875. James died in 1878 in Merced, California. George R. Yarwood married Hattie Stewart in 1891 and the couple had one child, Stuart. George was a photographer, livestock dealer, dairy farmer and horse breeder before becoming Elgin Township assessor in 1892.

Albert W. Yarwood married Phillie B. Reaum in 1865 and the couple had one child, Albert ("Bert"). Salinda was one of the first students to attend Elgin Academy in 1857. She married Julius Baker in 1861 and the couple had two children, Frederic and Wallace W. The Bakers moved west and lived in Minnesota, South Dakota and Iowa. Jennette married Fred Buttles in 1866 and the couple lived most of their lives in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where they had three children: Estella, Mabel and Ethel. Marcus L. Yarwood married fellow watch factory worker Annie Andrews in 1882 and they had no children. Marcus was employed by the Elgin National Watch Co. for 28 years, and worked another year at a watch factory in New Jersey. Ella Yarwood married William Hart, a druggist, in 1875 and they had four children: Edward, Marcus, Louise and George. Mr. Hart was the longtime owner of a drug store at 154 E. Chicago St.

Reuben and Abigail's first Elgin home was built of limestone in 1844 at 102 Douglas Ave. In the early 1850s they built a cobblestone home at 158 Division St. Their limestone home became a boarding house,

then a storehouse for a lumberyard, before being razed in 1902. Their cobblestone home was razed in 1924. Reuben died of tuberculosis July 1, 1864, at age 57, and Abigail died May 2, 1895, at age 81. They are buried in Bluff City Cemetery.



158 Division St.

Henry Yarwood (1801-1860), brother of Reuben and father of Louis, was also in the woolen manufacturing business in New York. Henry was born August 24, 1801, in Brooklyn, New York, and married Katie Ann Wiggins (1800-1845). The couple had four children: Louis Henry (1827-1907; wife: Caroline Drummond); Marcus Samuel (1829-1902; never married); Phoebe K. (circa 1838-circa 1912; Mrs. George N. Raymond); and James Arthur (born circa 1844). Henry came to Elgin in 1853 and worked in his son Louis' drug store. He died July 28, 1860, at age 58, and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Marcus Samuel went to California during the Gold Rush in 1850. In the mid-1850s he came to the Chicago area, where he was engaged in railroad work and then grain trading on the Chicago Board of Trade. After the Civil War he returned to California and lived there until returning to the Elgin area in his later years. Phoebe married George Newcomb Raymond in Elgin in 1858 and the couple moved to Dubuque, Iowa, where they had five children: Harry, Mabel, Grosvenor, Arthur and Bertha. James Arthur fought in the Civil War and the last mention of him was in the 1898 Kane County history, which said he was living in Wyoming.

Louis Henry Yarwood was born November 25, 1827, in Oriskany, New York, where he developed his passion for painting and where he was engaged, like his father and uncle, in the manufacture of woolen goods. Coming to Elgin in 1851, Louis was first employed as a bookkeeper at the woolen mill, then was a drug store owner, and then sold insurance and musical instru-

ments. In 1874 he was appointed Elgin Township's first librarian at a salary of \$35 per month. In 1882, however, Louis was dismissed, despite a petition signed by more than 500 citizens asking that he be retained. The reason for his dismissal may have been, as Elgin historian Mike Alft suggests, because he was more interested in art than books.

After leaving the library, Louis opened an art studio in Elgin and embarked upon a full-time career as a professional artist. In 1881, he was elected the first president of the newly-formed Elgin Art Association. At the second annual exhibition of the association, his 35 productions occupied a room of their own. Reviewing this exhibit, an Elgin newspaper praised his landscapes and marines: "Mr. Yarwood is more than any of our local artists free from any particular style in art. No two pictures of his are worked out in anything like the same vein, and although he paints naturally floral and wood scenes, he is equally at home on scenes of pastoral beauty, or sea scenes in calm and storm.... Mr. Yarwood is in our opinion the most versatile, talented and artistic artist Elgin possesses."

Louis was briefly associated in Elgin with another renowned landscape artist, Albert W. Kenney (1847-1889). One of Albert's paintings was donated to the Elgin History Museum last year and was featured in the March 2019 issue of *The Crackerbarrel*. Albert, who traveled extensively, giving instructions in painting, was born and died in Vermont, but grew up and lived most of his life in Elgin.

On April 2, 1857, Louis married Caroline Janet Drummond (1832-1914). Caroline was born November 3, 1832, in Sherbrooke, Canada, to John and Janet (Lumsden) Drummond, both natives of Scotland. The couple had three children: Willard Henry (1859-1890; wife: May Hunter); Marcus Drummond (1863-1935; never married); and Katherine ("Katie") Daraxa (1870-1918; Mrs. Dr. John Weeks Parsons).

Willard Henry assisted his father in the library before working at the watch factory for about three years. In 1881 he married May Hunter (1861-1955) and the couple had two children: Marguerite M. (1885-1961; Mrs. Harold F. Klock); and Bertram Hunter (1887-1966; never married). Willard was in fragile health for many years. Partly for health reasons, he and May moved to South Dakota for a few years, where both children were born. Then the family lived in Florence, Alabama, for about two years. Willard died of a hemorrhage at age 31 while visiting in Elgin. In 1893, his widow May married Gilbert Snow, superintendent of the Elgin Wind Power & Pump Co., and May and Gilbert had one child together, Ruth (1895-1984; Mrs. Ralph Sherman Lord).

Marcus Drummond Yarwood was a piano teacher, with a studio in the McBride building on Douglas Ave. for over 30 years. Katie D. Yarwood was an accomplished vocalist who attended the conservatory of music at Oberlin College, Ohio. There she met her

future husband, John Weeks Parsons, from Huntington, West Virginia, a dental student. The couple married in 1898 in Elgin and made their home in Cleveland, Ohio, later moving to West Virginia. They had three children: Janet Etta (1899-1988; Mrs. Darwin Abbott Ensign); Dr. Warren Jethro Parsons (1903-1977); and Dr. John Yarwood Parsons (1907-1984).

The Yarwood home at 373 Park St., built about 1854, was initially home to Henry Yarwood's family. By 1861, however, Henry had died and all of his children except Louis had moved out. Louis married in 1857 and all of his children were born and raised in the home. Louis died March 13, 1907, at age 79, and his wife Caroline died November 7, 1914, at age 82. They are buried in Bluff City Cemetery. The home then passed to their son Marcus D., then to their grandchildren, Marguerite Klock and Bertram Yarwood, and then to Marguerite and Bertram's half-sister, Ruth Snow Lord. Ruth sold it in 1969, ending 115 years of ownership by the Yarwood family. The home's Gothic Revival architecture is exemplified by its gable roof, long narrow windows, vertical board and batten siding and barge boards. The windows in the gable are pointed Gothic Revival windows. The tower shows an Italian Villa influence.



Fox Lake by Louis Yarwood, 1905
(Photo by Ira Marcus)

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; Kane County histories; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Kane County Clerk; Elgin city directories; Ancestry.com; federal censuses; HistoricElgin.com; Yarwood painting photographed by Ira Marcus; etc.

Intern Creates Virtual Exhibit

by Muskaan Siddique

I graduated from Elgin Academy and have lived in Elgin most of my life. I am a junior at University of Illinois majoring in history.

I began a 6-week internship at the Elgin Historical Museum, a hybrid of remote and in-person activities. My assignment was the recent history campaign called You are Living History. Specifically, I focused on the COVID-19 crisis, including the economic impact and the social justice protests in Elgin. I attended four protests in the Elgin area and in McHenry for the Museum, conducted many interviews, researched social justice history in Elgin's recent past, and shared the You Are Living History submission site across Elgin so citizens can record their own experiences. I posted about the campaign over social media, and created a PowerPoint exhibit highlighting the COVID-19 crisis in regard to public health, economics, and social justice. The presentation can stand alone and is also viewable beside the physical exhibit at the Museum.

I spoke to Sandy Davila who works with Elgin in Solidarity with Black Lives Matter (BLM). I interviewed Rachel Maley over Zoom about the two protests she set up on June 2nd and July 22nd, as well as about opening her new business, Still Life Meditation, during the pandemic. I also interviewed Erin Rehberg from Side Street Studios on the impact of COVID-19 on their businesses, and attended their first exhibit opening since lockdown on August 7, entitled Lockdown Renaissance. The exhibit features visual arts by Elgin youth. I also interviewed Mike Warren, the Chair of Food for Greater Elgin. Most of my research came from newspaper articles from the *Daily Herald*, *Chicago Tribune*, and the *Chicago Reader* as well as previous historical pieces made by the Museum and the film Project 2-3-1.



Virtual Cemetery Walk

By Lillian Galfi

Are you wondering what's happening with the Bluff City Cemetery Walk this year? With the Covid-19 pandemic uncertainty, it was difficult to decide whether we should hold an in-person event or cancel the event for 2020. Instead, the Event leadership, along with the Museum Board, decided to present this year's walk as a virtual experience. A virtual event will allow the Museum to offer the walk experience to a wider audience, with safety being the number one priority.

To produce the video, the Museum will film costumed actors presenting their characters at the cemetery. The video audience will be led through the cemetery by a costumed guide. The video will be high definition, for viewing on big screen TVs. It can also be viewed on a tablet or phone, but I recommend watching it on a TV.

The 2020 Cemetery Walk video will premiere on elginhistory.org starting at 9:00 A.M. on Saturday September 27, 2020. It will then be available to watch on-demand until October 4, 2020.

The characters featured this year are:

- **General George McClure** served in the War of 1812. He opened the first post office in the Elgin-Dundee area.
- **Ruth Ann Kimball** lived with her family at the Cobblestone house on Chicago St. By 1900, Ruth Ann was considered to have lived in Elgin longer than anyone else.
- Business owner **Paul Kemler** was the proprietor of the Washington House Hotel for 17 years and known to be the nicest man in the city.
- **Dr Joseph Tefft** was Elgin's first doctor and mayor, and was responsible for getting Elgin incorporated as a city in 1854.
- A wealthy dairy farmer, **Peter Burritt** owned 90 pieces of property, many of which remain historical buildings today. He later in life married a much younger woman who changed his life.
- **Elgin Typhoid Epidemic of 1916** affected many watch factory workers. The residents of Elgin had no idea what was causing people to be sick. You will hear from three victims of this devastating disease and its effects on them and their families.

On Sept. 27, login to the Elgin History website at www.elginhistory.org, then click the button to view the walk. The Cemetery Walk video will be available for one week at no charge. Please consider making a donation to the Museum at the end of the video to help with our mission to educate the public about local history and the importance of cemetery preservation.

Elgin's 1920 Palm Sunday Tornado

by Elgin History Museum Volunteer Laurel Garza. Research credit to Elgin: An American History by E. C. Alft.

100 years ago on Palm Sunday, March 28, 1920, there was a series of tornadoes in the Midwest and Deep South with at least 38 significant tornadoes in Missouri, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin, Ohio, Indiana, Georgia, Alabama, and Tennessee. Loss of life and damage to property was extensive. One community in Georgia had over 50 deaths.

Thomas P. Grazulis' book, *Significant Tornadoes 1880-1989: A Chronology of Events*, lists the times, locations, strengths, and damage for each tornado that day. Severe thunderstorms began forming in Missouri and moved quickly through Chicago with four significant events across northern Illinois. The storms crossed Lake Michigan causing considerable destruction in Michigan, Indiana, and Ohio with 14 confirmed tornadoes in Michigan alone, some classified F3 and F4, continuing on through the evening.

At noon on March 28, 1920, an F2 tornado which damaged several barns touched down near DeKalb south of Cortland. The second tornado, estimated to be F3, touched down around 12:05 pm 1.5 miles east of LaFox moving NNE toward Elgin. The third tornado, F4, started near Channahon and moved NE through Melrose Park, killing at least 10, through the Dunning neighborhood of Chicago, killing six, on to Wilmette, and then out over the lake. The fourth tornado was in the Bridgeview area near Midway airport. There was no loss of life recorded for that tornado.

Preceded by a heavy rain, violent hail, and then sudden darkness, the funnel cloud that hit Elgin first descended on Adams St. on the southwest side. It destroyed the home of Van and Goldie Wyrick and their infant daughter, killing Mr. Wyrick. As reported in a "Special to the New York Times" on March 29, Mrs. Wyrick said her "husband had just put our little girl in her high chair when there was a mighty roar and the roof came crashing in. My husband pushed me and my baby out of the dining room and then he was caught." Mrs. Wyrick and her infant daughter survived and moved back to her hometown of Jefferson, Illinois. Racing along Elm Street, wrecking houses and uprooting trees, the tornado turned onto Walnut Avenue, laying waste to three blocks from Billings to Perry.

Clarence Reber was a local mortician who lived on S. Grove Avenue. In a remembrance in the September 1980 Crackerbarrel, Clarence watched out his front window as the storm approached. As the tornado crossed the Fox River at Prairie Street heading toward Fountain Square, "it scooped up the water revealing the

river bottom." Clarence tells that when he heard the George Peck Store, Grand Theatre, and Landborg Shoe Store had been demolished and that a man was buried in the rubble, he headed to the mortuary, which was located between the Congregational and Baptist churches. Both churches had suffered serious damage with injuries and deaths, but the mortuary was undamaged. One lady remarked to Clarence that "the Lord knew you would be needed, so spared your building." Clarence is remembered for his extraordinary efforts—including artwork—on behalf of the Elgin Area Historical Society and its Museum.

Beyond demolishing downtown stores, the roof was torn away at Ackemann's Department Store and the entire second floor of the Wait and Ross furniture store was ruined. The City Hall and the First Methodist Church were structurally weakened. In the *Daily Courier News* on May 22, 1963, Michael Reidy recalled his memory of the storm. "Specifically, he remembers seeing 12 x 12 inch timbers—rafters from the roof of the old Coliseum garage—flying through the air as if they were matchsticks."

Reidy recalls being awestruck by the damage in the downtown business district, and he heard Miland Gieske screaming for help from under the rubble of Peck's Department Store. Gieske had stepped into the doorway of the Landborg Shoe Company seeking shelter from the downpour. Miland was rescued several hours later suffering three fractured ribs. Miland survived the tornado to live to be 87 years old. He is buried in Elgin's Bluff City Cemetery.



Most of the worshipers had left the Congregational Church, but two women and a girl were buried in the debris when the storm forced open the main doors and knocked the brick tower into the main auditorium, sending debris from the ceiling and balcony through the floor and into the basement. One woman was crushed to death at the Baptist Church when part of the brick front fell inward and down through the balcony to the main floor. Had the tornado arrived during the services at these two large churches, the loss of life would have been much greater.

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
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The storm then blew along Dundee Avenue, destroying or damaging residences and shredding the roof and second floor of the Selz-Schwab shoe factory. Barns and thirty head of cattle on two farms along the road to Dundee were destroyed. Light and power were cut off. The National Guard was called out to patrol the streets and prevent looting, and the business district was roped off by 5 P.M.

About 25 houses were destroyed. Witnesses marveled at the freak occurrences. One man was lifted off the ground, twirled around 20 feet in the air and then pitched through a plate glass window, emerging with only a few cuts. Six members of one family were sitting in the parlor of their home at Moseley and Orange streets with the storm picking the house off its base and carrying it down the block, revealing the family still seated. An automobile parked in front of Ackemann's was stripped of its top and body, leaving only the bare chassis. A kitchen knife, blown 200 yards from a residence, was driven 4 inches into a tree. The steeple of the Bethlehem Lutheran Church was snapped off at the base, did a somersault on the way down, and was deposited on the ground in one piece.



Clara Kimball, wife of local businessman William D. Kimball, was killed when a section of wall at the Baptist Church collapsed. She is buried in Bluff City Cemetery. Samuel and Ada Stach (Beverly) were killed while preparing for a performance at the Grand Theatre when the tornado hit. Lulu M. Foote, 64; Elizabeth M. Mowat, 22; and Isabel McConnachie, 11, were killed at the First Congregational Church.

Additional tornado images may be viewed at the Illinois Digital Archives. Recently Elgin History Museum's postcard collection and tornado photographs were digitized and are available online at <http://www.idaillinois.org/digital/collection/p16614coll40/search/searchterm/tornado>