

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News March 2021

President's Report

Al Walters, President



If you tune into Cable Channel 17, Elgin Public Access, you are in for a treat. Soon Channel 17 will be airing Museum Moments. These 60-90 second snippets of Elgin history are being produced by the Museum in tandem with Phil Broxham of Grindstone Productions, Inc.

So just what are Museum Moments? They are short video stories built around a Museum artifact in our collection, but often not in public view. This gives us a chance to poke around in the archives and find some fun artifacts that have stories tell.



The format chosen features a Museum staff member, volunteer or friend talking about the artifact and tying it to Elgin's history. Much of the time the camera focuses on the artifact(s) while the presenter provides the voice over. The selection criteria is interesting items from our collection that highlight men and women, often from under represented communities in Elgin's past. Then the staff and volunteers use their research tools to uncover the artifact's history. Our first four videos included a textile, a photo, an archival item and an object. We are fond of saying that every artifact has a story to tell. We are proud to be able to give a voice to these artifacts.

The Museum will produce 26 Museum Moments. Funding for this endeavor comes from the City of Elgin, the Palmer Foundation and your Museum donations.

We expect each Moment to have a two-week run over the next 12 months on Channel 17, no doubt to be used as filler between programs. The first four are "in the can" as they say. Not a regular Channel 17 viewer? Then keep your eye on our website. As the Museum Moments videos are finished we will be posting them to elginhistory.org and to the Museum's Facebook page.

Some of our friends of the Museum will be asked to be a presenter. We are looking for a wide variety of talent. This could be your big show business break!

Welcome New Members

- Thomas Corron
- Kim and George Corzine
- Meka Francis
- Susan Ginsburg
- Peter Gugliotta
- Robert Kleeman
- Patricia Pretz
- David Rockwell
- John Thiel



The Cobblestone House
Elgin, Illinois

The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline April 20, 2021

 Visit our website Elginhistory.org

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

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March 18, 12:00 Noon Brown Bag Lunch: History of Elgin Symphony Orchestra with Eric Malmquist, Executive Director

Virtual Program. Please register on elginhistory.org



Erik will speak about the development of the ESO from a community to a professional orchestra, with a particular focus on 1979 - present. He will also highlight the tenure of Grammy Award-winning conductor Margaret Hillis and how she may have influenced the rise of women conductors in the generations that followed her tenure.

April 11, 2:00 P.M. Rachel Carson: The Woman Who Launched the Environmental Movement

Virtual Program. Please register on elginhistory.org



In honor of Earth Month, historian Leslie Goddard portrays Rachel Carson, an environmental writer, marine biologist, and author of the ground-breaking 1962 book *Silent Spring*.

May 20, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch: History of Biking in Elgin presented by Tom Armstrong for National Biking Month

Saturday May 22, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m. Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Presentation/Tour. See website for more details soon!

2021 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

Tours in Spanish / Visitas Guiadas En Español

Sabato, March 20 y Sabato April 17

11 am and 1 pm

Please register for in-person tours on elginhistory.org

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

Tour the Museum and explore Elgin's rich history with a Spanish speaking guide! There are two floors of interactive exhibits to explore. Learn about the founding of Elgin, the Watch Factory, Elgin Road Races, and products Made in Elgin. Kids are welcome!

Visitas Guiadas En Español

¡Visita el Museo y descubre la historia rica de Elgin con un guía que habla español! Aprende sobre la fundación de la ciudad de Elgin, la Fábrica de Relojes, las Carreteras de Autos de Elgin y los productos hechos en Elgin. ¡Los niños están bienvenidos!

The Colporteur's Bible

George Rowe

On January 12, 2021 we hosted a meeting at Old Main with author John Thiel and the Corzine family of Dundee IL, who had just discovered some amazing information concerning John's book, *Death of a Colporteur*. John grew up in Elgin, but left for greener pastures (and college) in 1969. (Full disclosure: he is also my relative.)

While growing up, John learned the family story of his great-uncle Frank Thiel, a former employee of Elgin National Watch Company, who left at age 17 to sell bibles to fellow Catholics throughout northern Illinois.

In 1886, Frank was murdered on a cow crossing near Dixon (to this day called Bloody Gulch Road as a result of this murder). John's book tells of Frank's upbringing in Elgin and what is known about his murder.

Jump to the 1990s, when Elgin resident Kim Corzine stopped in at the Milk Pail Mall (Rt. 25 N. of Elgin) looking for antiques and old books. Kim happened to grab a book that appeared to be a salesman's sample Bible. The book seemed to speak to her when a page

slipped out—apparently a handwritten note from the book’s owner. She bought the book and took it home, stowing it on a shelf.

Skip to 2021 (Jan 5th to be exact). Kim and her husband George were watching the History Channel. Something clicked in her mind and she decided to review the book and the enclosed note. The note was from a man named Frank Thiel to his brother John (who lived in Elgin) saying he was doing fine in Dixon, and telling the family not to worry. George was intrigued and Googled the name Frank Thiel. Looking at this wife, he said, “This guy was murdered!”

After a little more research, and some help from Kim's brother Don (a private investigator), the Corzine family was able to make contact with the author John Thiel who now lives in Lacrosse WI.



Bible belonging to Frank Thiel

With the Museum’s assistance, a meeting was set up. Kim and her family, were excited to meet the author and nephew of Frank Thiel, and learn more about the murder that happened 135 years ago. Kim presented John with the sample Bible and the handwritten note from his great uncle Frank.

Mr. Thiel thanked the Corzine family and presented them with a membership to the Elgin History Museum. History at work!

Mr. Thiel’s book *Death of a Colporteur* is available in the Museum Store. He was scheduled to speak on the book but was interrupted by a pandemic. His presentation is set for Thursday, July 15 at noon, as one of the Museum's Brown Bag Lunch Lecture series.



George and Kim Corzine

Thank You Donors

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Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House

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- Kurt and Paula Rowe

The Joslyn Family of Elgin: Part 2

by David Siegenthaler

Edward Swain Joslyn, usually called “Ed” or “Colonel,” was the opposite of his brother Rev. Adoniram in many ways. Both were politically active but never, it seems, on the same side of any issue.

Gifted with rare eloquence and personal magnetism, combined with a power for argumentative debate, Ed was perfectly suited for the legal profession. Though he had little book learning, the bar exam back then required only a few months of preparation. Ed made a name for himself as a Kane County states’ attorney (1857-61). As a prosecutor, it was said that his language skills, voice and cordiality gave him an almost magical power over a jury.

One of Ed’s most notable cases was his successful prosecution of Robert Bruce Chisholm’s interests in the Emma Silver Mine, near Salt Lake City, Utah, in the early 1870s. Chisholm was from Elgin and his legacy includes two well-preserved Gothic Revival homes, at 306 and 402 N. Spring St. The Emma Mine was named after Chisholm’s daughter, Mary Emma.

A man of fiery enthusiasm, intense passions, impulsiveness and intemperance, Ed’s life became increasingly controlled by alcohol. Obituaries in three newspapers all expressed pity that the “evil results of dissipation clouded his life with a mist too deep for his natural abilities to tear away.” Ed passed away at age 58 of “chronic alcoholism.” He was buried in the old Channing St. Cemetery and later moved to Bluff City Cemetery.

Ed was born in the summer of 1827 in Nunda Valley, New York. On November 1, 1854, in Kane County, he married Jane Padelford (1833-1912), daughter of Rodolphus and Mary Padelford, who came to Elgin in 1842 from New York. Ed and Jane had ten children: Edward Fremont (1856-83; wife: Mary Jane Lyon); Fred Merritt (1858-1904; wife: Helen Julian); Frank Wilbur (1860-1938; wife: Carrie Mead); George (1862-63); Mary Genevieve (1863-1930; Mrs. Harvey Goodrow); Rodolphus Waite (1866-1939; never married); Lorenzo Douglas (1868-circa 1930s; never married); Florence (1869-72); Isa Jeanette (1872-76); and Harriett L. (1874-1925; Mrs. Millard Hendrickson). Their family home was at 320 Brook St., which was razed about 1967.

Edward Fremont Joslyn, the first-born child, was, like his father, frequently under the influence of alcohol. His wife Mary Jane (“Jennie”) died in 1880 at age 22 of puerperal fever, leaving two young children, Ada May and Edward Clyde. Edward Fremont’s life tragically ended at age 27 in the summer of 1883 when, in a drunken rage, he shot his girlfriend to death and then killed himself in the Nolting House hotel.

Fred Merritt (“Dickie”) Joslyn, a longtime railway mail clerk, married Helen Julian in 1894 and the couple had one child, Ruth. Mary Genevieve Joslyn married Harvey L. Goodrow in 1892 and the couple had five children: Earl, Harvey Jr., Harriett, Genevieve and Lucille. Lorenzo Douglas Joslyn moved west in the late 1890s and the last reference to him that we have was in the 1930 federal census, when he was living in Oklahoma. Harriett L. Joslyn, a well-known vocalist and church choir director, married Millard V. Hendrickson, a newspaper composing room foreman, in 1899, and the couple had three children: Carroll (died at age four), Sherman and John.

Ed and Jane’s other two surviving children, Frank Wilbur and Rodolphus Waite, both followed in their father’s footsteps as brilliant lawyers. Frank, born April 27, 1860, graduated from Elgin Academy in 1881, studied law and was admitted to the bar in 1883. From 1885-89, he was elected to two successive 2-year terms as Elgin city attorney. From 1892-1900, Frank was elected to two successive 4-year terms as Kane County state’s attorney. From 1909-11, he was Elgin’s corporation counsel, an appointed position. He also served as inheritance tax counsel in Kane County, master-in-chancery of Elgin City Court, as well as conducting his own legal practice.

One of Frank’s most sensational cases, and one of the few that he lost, was the Anthony Petras murder trial in 1914, in which Frank was special prosecutor. Petras, a married man, was accused of brutally murdering his former fiancée, an Aurora woman named Theresa Hollander, in a cemetery. Petras was eventually acquitted after two trials, after Frank was unable to break his alibi during grueling cross-examination day after day.

The trial attracted hundreds of spectators to the Kane County Courthouse, in an era when court battles were a bigger show than any theatrical entertainment.

Frank married Carrie Mead (1867-1945) in 1886 at the newly-built home of her parents at 640 Eastview St., where the couple lived for the first 19 years of their marriage. In 1905, they moved to their own new home at 50 N. Liberty St., a half-timbered, Tudor Revival home. Their only child, Paul Mead, was born in 1894. Paul became a 3rd-generation lawyer and lived most of his adult life in Cleveland, Ohio. Frank was overtaken with a debilitating illness in the early 1920s that caused him to discontinue his legal practice and left him an invalid for the last 17 years of his life. Frank died December 19, 1938, and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.



Frank W. Joslyn

Rodolphus Waite Joslyn (“Waite”), born March 23, 1866, graduated from Elgin High School in 1886 and was a teacher for a couple of years before entering law school at the University of Michigan in 1888. He graduated in 1891, was admitted to the bar and became an assistant professor of law at the University of Michigan. A few years later, Waite began a legal practice in Chicago and relocated to Elgin in 1904. After a few years, Waite’s interests turned more to writing, on legal and historical themes.

Waite wrote legal texts on “Personal Injuries” and “Corporation Law.” In 1908, he, along with his brother Frank, wrote a 2-volume history of Kane County, the last and largest of the five Kane County histories that have been published. In 1927, Waite wrote “Elgin: Past and Present,” an Elgin history that includes many profiles of businesses, business people and institutions. He also wrote a book on the philosophy of happiness. He was active for a time in conducting community forums on various subjects and once led a movement to return Elgin to the aldermanic form of municipal government. Waite never married. He died March 11, 1939, and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.



R. Waite Joslyn

Another Joslyn who was prominent in early Elgin was Alecsius Casimer Joslyn (1835-1916), son of David Waite Joslyn, nephew of Rev. A.J. and Ed Joslyn, and cousin of Frank and Waite Joslyn. Alecsius was born January 29, 1835, at Nunda, New York, and married Lucy Whiting Peterson (1839-1934) on August 30, 1864, at Cobden, Illinois. The couple came to Elgin about 1872 from Rockton, Illinois.

Alecsius was elected alderman for five terms (1881-83 and 1890-91); streets commissioner/superintendent of streets for four terms (1875-76 and 1885-86); and

Elgin Township highway commissioner and treasurer of the board for 22 years (1883-1905). For many years Alecsius was in the oil business in Elgin. Later, his business was purchased by the Standard Oil Co. and he was made the local manager.

Alecsius and Lucy Joslyn had four children: Judson S. (circa 1866-1951); Fred W. (circa 1869-73); Nellie W. (1871-1933; Mrs. Edward S. Eno); and Edward C. (1873-1936). Alecsius died at his son Judson’s home in Rockford on August 30, 1916, and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery. Alecsius, his son Judson and his nephew Robert W. Joslyn (1864-1961) all had homes built in the 800 block of N. Spring St. Alecsius’ home was at 800 N. Spring St. (built 1889); Judson’s home was at 814 N. Spring St. (built circa 1893); and Robert’s home was at 838 N. Spring St. (built 1892).

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft’s books and newspaper articles; Kane County histories; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Ancestry.com; probate files; Elgin death records; Kane County Clerk; etc.

2020 Annual Report

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

From the President

Anyone's review of 2020 can likely be summed up by one word: Covid19. The Elgin History Museum is no different. Because of Covid19 the Museum had to close to the public for much of the year. This meant converting adult programming into virtual events, turning away visitors, holding board meetings by Zoom, and especially distressing to me is the temporary shut-down of our growing school field trip bookings.

It would be natural to dwell on the negative, but I prefer to see the positives. With the help of donations and grants the employees kept working. Memorable programs were delivered in a new format required the Museum to improve video capabilities. Research continued and the public's inquiries were answered. A creative annual Cemetery Walk took place online. Staff and volunteers put on a virtual gala and fund raising auction. The Museum staff instantly understood that we were living through a watershed national event and acted to preserve living history experiences so that future historians will have an inside look at how Elginites coped with Covid. The Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House project progressed through the dedication of donors and volunteers.

All this and much more was made possible by the dedication and generosity of our friends, volunteers and members. 2021 promises to be a transition year bringing us back to normalcy. We can't wait to host in person events again, although Covid has taught us that virtual experiences can reach a wide and interested audience.

Treasurer's Report

Overview

The Society continues to be in sound financial condition. It remains debt free, pays bills in a timely manner, is adequately insured, and has an emergency reserve fund and a growing endowment.

Museum Operations

The budget for operating the Museum operations is separate from budget for the rehabilitation of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House. In 2020, income for Museum operations was approximately \$190,999.

Expenses for Museum operations were approximately \$180,717. The Museum's 4 part-time employees add up to the full time equivalent of 2.1 staff persons.

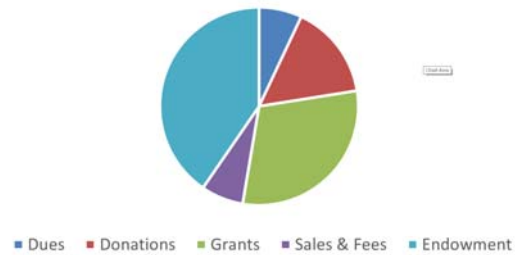
Grants

The Museum received \$69,000 in grants for Covid relief in 2020, including a PPP forgiven loan and the BIG Grant.

Old Main

The City of Elgin provided for Old Main in the 2020 budget. All HVAC units were replaced, the building was tuck pointed and painted, even the cupola, and some doors were replaced and a stone sill. One exhibit space was ruined with water damage. The City ripped out and replaced walls and floors. The old catalpa tree out front came down in a July storm. The City removed the tree, planted a new tree, and repaired the garden path. Many thanks to the City of Elgin!

Museum Operations Income Sources



Museum Operations Expenses



Nancy Kimball House Cobblestone House Rehabilitation Budget

Ongoing work on the rehabilitation of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone completed its fifth year. Per the Society's agreement with the City of Elgin, the Society will raise the funds and manage the rehab. The City will retain ownership of the building and lease it back to the Museum when completed. In 2020, \$84,355 was raised and spent. Major milestones this year were: insulation; drywall; installation of a new front door assembly; a new front porch; hardwood flooring throughout the building; interior trim-out of doors, windows and baseboards; interior painting; and the completion of a working bathroom. Many other smaller tasks were also accomplished.

Endowment

The Society's Endowment Fund has grown to about \$2.8 million. Approximately one-third of the Fund's assets are invested to generate income for museum operations. The remaining two-thirds of the assets are invested in conservative, growth oriented mutual funds and other securities. The overall goal is to help support operations while reinvesting in the Endowment for continued growth of the principal.

Fundraising

For the sixth year in a row the museum participated in the Giving Tuesday fundraising campaign in December. This fundraiser is implemented using media and social networking platforms. The Museum raised \$10,340.15. There were 72 donors, of which 32% were first-time donors who gave a total of \$2,965. Slightly more than half of donors gave more than \$99.

The Board Fundraiser in May brought in \$21,500. The Museum Gala's revenue was nearly \$12,000. The Society's Corresponding Secretary, Ricky Harris sent out 197 thank you letters and acknowledgments for the Museum Gala, Cemetery Walk, Giving Tuesday and the Board Fundraiser, as well as for memorial donations.

Membership stayed steady at 320 households. 36 new members in 2020.

Exhibits

Art in Artifacts: Ira Marcus photographed Museum artifacts and then altered their reality to give the audience a new perspective of the object. Objects are exhibited next to their photograph in the meeting room. The Elgin Kiwanis 100th Anniversary exhibit is also new in the meeting room.

Updates to the permanent timeline exhibits include adding grocery history to the 20th century room and an Elgin photographer's exhibit to the 19th century area. The log cabin section suffered a leaking pipe in early 2020. The exhibit was rebuilt.

Project 2-3-1: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage exhibit traveled to District 300 middle schools in February 2020 and then to ECC in March.

Education

What a year it could have been; what a year it was! When the COVID 19 Pandemic began, the Museum Education department was on a record setting pace for attendance. Over 600 kids participated in programming in the first quarter of 2020 and were expecting to book more before the 2019/2020 school year ended in May 2020. However, the rapid implementation of COVID safety protocols in March led to the cancellation of 11 previously booked programs for mid-March through August. Local school districts soon announced that field trips would not be possible for the 2020/2021 school year either. The Museum quickly created new ways to serve learners.

A series of eight Learn-at-Home worksheets were added to the Museum website and paper copies were placed in Little Free Libraries around town. The Mike Alft children's history of Elgin, *The Story of Our Towns*, was updated for 2020 and made ready for teachers to use in their classrooms. The Museum collaborated with Side Street Studio Arts to produce two short videos for children on Elgin's dairy history and the Elgin Sweeper company. There were also videos produced on the history of Old Main, Elgin suffragist

Dr. Clara Todson, how to do old-fashioned laundry, grave marker symbolism and a "Get Out and Vote" reminder.

There has also been success with a new phenomenon, virtual field trips! The first field trip was held in late 2020, and more were completed in 2021. This virtual format presents new challenges, but also some great opportunities. The Museum Education volunteers have reacted to these changes with their usual enthusiasm, professionalism and creativity. Turns out the staff and volunteers are awesome at virtual field trips too!

Historical Collections

The Collections Committee met ten times in 2020. Donations were received from 87 donors during 2020. About 1,200 items were accessioned into the Museum's permanent, education, or exhibit collections. Significant donations included a collection of Bravo Magazines, Elgin to Chicago bicycle race slides, D.C. Cook publications, a face shield, and Elgin American photos.

Volunteers assisting with the collection included Judson University intern Scott Folo. Bill Brown digitized 257 oversized photographs. Ira Marcus spent 82 hours photographing and processing 481 objects including watches and premium items from businesses in Elgin. Jackie Marcus spent 68 hours helping photograph objects. She also cataloged Sherman Hospital Newsletters, Elgin American photographs, and assisted with the completion of the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board Grant. Laurel Garza cataloged and scanned the postcard collection. Nora Jimenez cataloged objects in the collection.

With the assistance of Trish LeFleur, the Museum implemented the "You are Living History" COVID-19 Project. It started as four questions for people to answer on the Museum website about their experiences regarding the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions are updated as events change. Black Lives Matter and the COVID-19 vaccine each have a question. The project received front page press in the Elgin Courier Newspaper in May, the Daily Herald and in the Grand Victoria Foundation Newsletter.

The ISHRAB grant digitizing Elgin American catalogs, photographs and the "Cases and Faces" newsletters was completed. These images are on the Museum website and Illinois Digital Archives for viewing. About 100 DuBois Opera House programs were cataloged and dozens of Elgin business photographs were digitized. There are now 4,583 photographs, 1,782 objects, and 64 archival pieces on the Museum website.

Museum Store

The Museum Store offers custom Elgin products including the second edition of *Elgin Time*, coaster sets, ceramic ornaments, and Elgin Watch jewelry from a new artist.

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



Media/Marketing

- Museum's social audience grew by 24% for a total of 5,843 followers.
- Email list increased by 24% for a total of 1,097 existing subscribers.
- Increased visibility with 6 Zoom events, and promoting 15 videos created by the Museum
- The Museum received 43 mentions in various newspapers and magazines.
- Published six Crackerbarrel newsletters
- Uploaded three months' worth of WRMN radio programs, Elgin 100 Years Ago. Thanks to Jerry Turnquist, Larry Drafall, Linda Rock, Rich Renner, and David Siegenthaler for researching, writing, and recording this wonderful program!

Collections Corner

Beth Nawara, Curator

Are you slumping over your computer or Ipad while zooming meetings and programs? In February, the Museum accepted into the collection a brochure entitled "Your Posture" published by the Elgin National

Watch Company and donated by Jeff White. The brochure is undated but illustrates that good posture has been important for decades. Other donations that were accepted into the collection include McKinley School class photographs, a water color painting of Old Main by Chuck Cassell, and a Hunter & Hunter mini jug from 1899. Hunter & Hunter was a bar in Elgin. The jug was donated by Marge Krueger.

