

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News July 2021

President's Report

Al Walters, President



As I write this piece the Elgin History Museum is winding down its annual Board Fundraiser Campaign. While raising money is nobody's favorite task, as a non-profit institution, fundraising is our lifeblood. More on the campaign later in the column.

Fundraising is just part of being a good steward of an institution's finances. Equally important to raising the money is investing, spending and accounting for the money. Let's look at each piece individually.

At the History Museum we consciously create a number of revenue streams to diversify our income sources. We seek donations from our members, we profit from Museum store sales, we search out grants, we charge for youth field trips and some programming, we host a cemetery walk, we strive to expand our membership base, to name just a few. The secret is to have many revenue sources so as to not become too dependent on any one.

An active subset of the Board is the Finance Committee. These dedicated folks draft an annual budget and then meet monthly to track our progress. While we strive to be precise with our projections, we tend to intentionally underestimate revenue and overestimate expenditures. This conservative approach to budgeting means we are much more likely to end the year with a pleasant financial bottom line instead of a disappointing surprise.

How we spend the Museum's money matters too. Every decision maker understands every expense is to be considered. Is this item necessary? Are there better options? Do we really need it now? Have we thought this through? The mantra is to spend the Museum's money as carefully as one would spend their own.

Bequests and memorials are a special monetary source. Unless they are otherwise pledged, we route these gifts into our endowment account. Good financial stewards manage long term investments alongside day-to-day operations. With our endowment, we are laying a foundation for the Museum's long-term viability.

Veteran Treasurer Bill Briska does an exceptional job of maintaining the books. Knowledge is power. Bill's familiarity with Museum's operations and deep understanding of the accounting software means the Board and Staff can make informed decisions on all things financial. Every board meeting includes an up to the moment financial review. As treasurer, Bill also manages the Museum's insurance, audits, tax forms and government reports.

Please know that our board and staff take financial stewardship to heart.

While it is never too late to donate, it looks like once again your response to the Board Fundraiser will exceed our expectations. This is gratifying. We are grateful. To me it means our donors believe we are good stewards and trust us to make the most your generous offerings. We'll never stop striving to maintain your confidence.

Welcome New Members

- Donna Boyce
- Travis Hooker
- Margaret Knorr
- Gary Biesterfeld
- Elizabeth Gardner
- Martha Redeker
- Amanda and John Carlson

The Crackerbarrel

Published bimonthly by the Elgin Area Historical Society
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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline August 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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August 15, 2:00 P.M.: Annette Baldwin presents
Carnegie libraries in Illinois

August 19, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch:
Jerry Turnquist presents **Miss Elgin 1925**

August 21: Model T Car Show and Road Race
Parade Details TBD

September 2, 12:00 Noon: Brown Bag Lunch
Ira Marcus, presents **Capturing History**

An interactive program discussing photography and
documenting history.

September 7, 7:00 pm: Jim Gibbons Presents A
Date We will always remember: **Sept. 11, 2001**

Sept. 25 and sept. 26, 11:00 A.M. - 4:00 P.M.
Annual Cemetery Walk, Bluff City Cemetery

October 10, 2:00 P.M.: Annual Meeting—William
Pack presenting **The Essential Great Chicago Fire**

Nov. 13, 7:00 P.M. Annual Benefit and Gala
Details TBD

Dec. 4, 1:00 P.M.: Annual Holiday Tea and Program

2021 Program Schedule

Betsy Armistead, Program Chair

Check the website for current information. elginhistory.org/events

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 found-
ing 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 Carre-
ras de Autos de Elgin y los productos hechos en Elgin.
¡Los niños están bienvenidos!

July 11, 10:00 - 3:00 P.M.

Classic Car Show at the Museum

Join us for a sale in the Museum Store plus fun on the
lawn, with beautiful classic cars! The event and admis-
sion to the Museum are free. If you want to enter a car,
the fee is \$10.00. Awards ceremony will be by 3pm.
Enjoy music by the Belvederes and other musicians.
Food will be available to purchase. Presented in part-
nership with Chicagoland Thunderbird Club.

July 15, 12 noon: Brown Bag Lunch: **The Story of
the Murder at Bloody Gulch with John Thiel**

Thank You Donors

In memory of Aubrey Neville

Allen, Jerry	Lamp, Luann
Anderson, James & Sara Ellen	Lane, Chuck & Sue
Anderson, Janet & Terry	Leibert, Suzanne
Armistead, Dwight & Betsy	May, Frances
Bell, Sally & Jon	Moneyhun, Carol
Bertoux, Carol	Mulliken, Barbara
Briska, Bill & Fran Cella	Neff, Jeanne & Edward
Church, Marilyn	Nore, Gilbert & Mary
Cole, Bob & Nancy	Peterik, Cynthia
Danielson, Barry & Andrea	Rae, Cynthia
Deboer, Bonia Elaine	Reczkowicz, Fred & Gloria
Diamond, Kathleen	Roberts, Mary
Donohue Family Charitable Fund	Rolling Oaks Farm
Exxes, Mary	Rowe, George & Marge
Fredrick, Mary	Sinnett, Karen
Gabel, Terry & Sue Brigham	Stone, Mary K.
Graeff, Carol	Swan, Chan & Pam
Hardy, Sue & James	Terry, Karen
Hicks, Linda & Philip	Tran, Carrie Cassioppi
Ingersoll, Zoe	Vande Drink, Kenneth & Maxine
Jarcho, Wendy	Vitallo, Margaret
Kepler, John W.	Watkins, Doug & Susan
	Zelko, Frank

Annual Board Fundraiser Donors:

Allerton, Lorraine	Heise, Georgeann & Ted
Armistead, Dwight & Betsy	Hoeft, Elizabeth
Barnhart, Jerri and Ken	Huntoon, Carol
Bartholomew, Steven	Jones, Richard
Bauer, James & Lois	Lange, Ronald & Kathy
Bendick, Joseph & Lois	Larson, Paul R.
Bird, M. Catherine	Locascio, Anne
Briska, Bill & Fran Cella	McClure, Sandra & Dennis
Burke, Christopher	Muchow, Linda & Stephen
Cabell, Lori	O'Haire, John & Claudia
Campbell, Rachel	Olson, Cliff
Cassell, Charles	Plagge, Carol
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Childs, Helen	Roxworthy, Dennis
Conley, Ronald & Mary	Rush, Carrie
Cuming, Andrew & Britta	Schroeder, Kathleen
Cutler, Paul and Sue	Siegenthaler, David
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Emmert, Chuck	Swan, Valerie
Flaks, Mary Ellen	Tatge, Lorraine
Ford, Julie	Thiel, John C.
Gabel, Terry & Sue Brigham	Turner, Jim
Galfi, Rudolph & Lillian	Utt, Norma
Garza, Laurel	Vossler, Jackie
Gathman, Carol & Robert	Weseman, Ed
Grosser, Patricia & Jeff	Wojciechowska, Mirosława
Hallock, Alma	Ziegler, Phyllis

Grants:

The Museum is honored to receive an **ISHRAB** (Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board) grant for \$3,900 to convert the Courier News Index to Past-Perfect, restore 100 deteriorating images, and scan about 1,000 images of Elgin African Americans, Elgin LatinX, and Elgin Asian Americans. Those images will be uploaded to the Museum website and be available for the public to see. This is the foundation of the project to connect the Courier News images and the index together. The grant has a 1-year timeline. Digitizing the Courier News negatives will continue for many years, because there are about 100,000 negatives to be scanned.



The **Arts Works Fund**, a funder collaborative created to help strengthen the management and operations of small arts and cultural organizations in Chicago and Cook County, awarded the Museum \$15,000 for the Making Space Mural and Documentary project.

The project is a partnership of several Elgin individuals and organizations, including the Elgin History Museum, called the Elgin Social Justice Collective. The grant will support Making Space: A Mural and Documentary, a community engagement project inspired by the board-up art created during the 2020 Elgin civil rights protests. The mural and documentary are part of a larger effort to create meaningful conversations on racial equity between different groups and give voice to the young and underrepresented. The documentary team filmed the mural process in June.

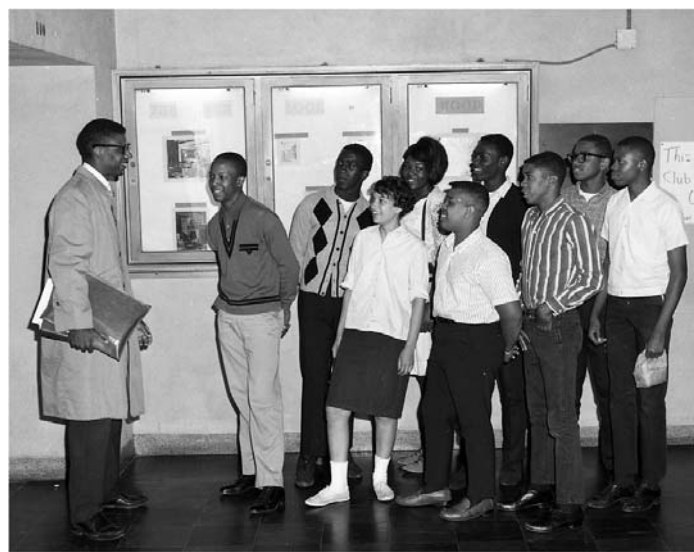
General Donations

SEIGLE'S CABINET CENTER Seigle's Cabinet Center donated three base cabinets for a work counter at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House. Many thanks to the Seigle Family!

In Memoriam

Melvin Copeland Dies at 96

Mentioned in the Project 2-3-1 traveling exhibit, Mel Copeland was the first African American school administrator in School District U-46 in 1973. He was a Tuskegee Airman who volunteered for service during World War II. At six foot, five inches, Mel was too tall to be a pilot, so became a munitions specialist during World War II. He earned two master's degrees, and was the first African American teacher in Bartlett in the 1960s. Mel had a second career, after 40 years as an educator, as a social worker and therapist. He was a life-long athlete who enjoyed playing tennis and made time to be the president of the Elgin chapter of the NAACP. Melvin will be buried at Abraham Lincoln National Cemetery in Elwood, IL.



Melvin at the Fremont Center



Melvin Copeland, 1915–2021

Aubrey Neville Memorial

Museum friend, supporter and history collector Aubrey Neville passed away in early May 2021. Aubrey and Rachel Neville became interested in collecting commercial horse-drawn wagons, particularly milk wagons. Aubrey was an executive at Dean Milk for many years and the milk material culture items, including over 3,000 bottles of all sizes, 50 full-size wagons, wagon toys, milk boxes, and milk processing objects were an extension of his interest in the dairy industry.

Aubrey was interested in many areas of history including the Civil War. He was a member of the Gail Borden Public Library's Armchair Generals and other Civil War discussion groups. He also had an interest in the natural world. He and Rachel restored seven acres of prairie on their property west of Elgin, plus maintained the woodlands, flower gardens, a butterfly garden and peacocks!

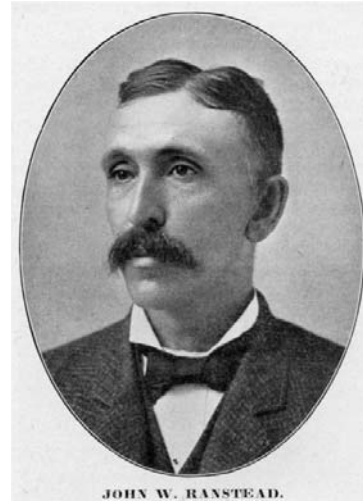
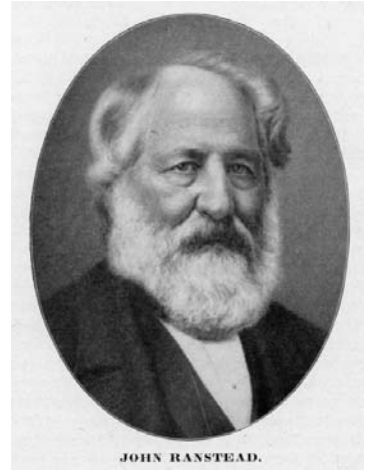
At the Museum, Aubrey was part of the committee that developed *Dairies to Prairies*, a documentary and traveling exhibit. He helped fund the project and appeared on camera with his collection. Each year he allowed the Museum to borrow his golf carts for use at the Cemetery Walk, and twice loaned the Museum his 19th century horse-drawn wagon from his collection for the event. The Nevilles opened their collection and property twice over the years to raise funds for the Museum. Rachel has offered to host another open day with the Museum in fall 2021, so Museum supporters can view Aubrey's collection one more time.

The Ranstead Family of Elgin

by *David Siegenthaler*

In the mid-1830s, cousins John and Marcus Ranstead of Vermont settled in Kane County, near Udina, and over the next few years claimed much land in Plato and Elgin townships. The Ransteads became wealthy by buying up as much land as they could (much of it at \$1.25 per acre from the government) and then selling it to newly-arrived settlers.

John Ranstead was elected a state legislator in 1852 and served a 2-year term. John's son, John West Ranstead, became a lawyer and started an Elgin law firm in 1868 that still exists today as "Brady and Jensen."



John W. was elected city attorney twice, serving 1871-73, and then Kane County judge twice, serving 1873-82. The fact that he was a Democrat elected to serve as judge of an overwhelmingly Republican county attests to the high esteem in which he was held.

In 1892, John W. had a Victorian-style commercial building built at the southwest corner of DuPage and S. Spring streets. His law office was on the second floor of this building, and it continued to be the law office of his son-in-law and then his grandson until the early 1970s. This is one of Elgin's iconic downtown buildings and has become a landmark as "Al's Café and Creamery" since that popular restaurant opened here in 1983. Prior to "Al's Café," the longest-tenured occupant was the Souster-Lasher flower shop, 1940-76.



Ranstead Building on DuPage Ct, now Al's Café

John W.'s home at 4 N. Jackson St. is another Elgin landmark. Located near the crest of a hill, it was built in the early 1870s in the Italian villa-style. In 1897, prominent Elgin architect W.W. Abell redesigned it in the Victorian style. The home just to its north, at 16 N. Jackson St., is a Swiss villa-style home built in 1902 for John W.'s daughter and son-in-law, Janet and Charles Lehmann. Early settlers in this neighborhood recalled the hill as being the site of annual summer Indian gatherings, where feasts, dances and ceremonies took place.



RESIDENCE OF J. W. RANSTEAD.

4 N. Jackson St., pre- remodel



4 N. Jackson St., post-1897 remodel

John Ranstead was born February 18, 1803, in Westmoreland, New Hampshire. He came to Kane County in 1837, joining his cousin Marcus Ranstead, who had arrived the previous fall with Dr. Latimer S. Tyler, all coming from Orange County, Vermont. His grandfather John (1747-77) was killed in the Revolutionary War. His father, also named John (1778-1846), died in Elgin. Marcus (1807-circa 1880) was the son of Roger W. Ranstead (1769-1852), uncle of John. Bushrod W. Ranstead (1814-70), brother of Marcus, came to Kane County in the late 1830s. The Ransteads accumulated thousands of acres of farm land. John built his home at what today would be the northwest corner of U.S. Route 20 and Coombs Road. In 1840 he went to Vermont to marry Mercy West (1813-93), then immediately returned to Udina. John sold, for nominal amounts, land in Udina for a cemetery, a school and a Congregational church. He served in the state legislature from 1852-54 and as Udina's postmaster from 1853-64.

John and Mercy had three children: John West (1843-1915); Eliza Janet (1846-49); and Sarah Ann (1851-1927). Sarah married George H. Britton (1850-1912) in 1870 and they had eight children. The Britton family took over the Ranstead farm in Udina following John's death on February 8, 1868, at age 64. Mercy died January 5, 1893, at age 79. They are buried in the Udina cemetery.

John West Ranstead was born June 14, 1843, on the family farm in Udina. In 1857 he was one of the first students to attend the newly-opened Elgin Academy. In 1858 he enrolled at Lombard College in Galesburg, IL, and graduated in 1863. He then enrolled at the University of Michigan law school, graduating in 1866 with high honors. On April 2, 1867, John W. married Eugenia Adeline Fuller (1843-1905) of Galesburg, an 1862 graduate of Lombard College. He had boarded

with Eugenia's parents while attending college. In 1868 the couple moved to Elgin, where John W. opened a law office that continues to this day. In 1882, after having served two years as Elgin city attorney and eight years as judge of the county and probate courts of Kane County, he devoted the rest of his life to private practice.

It was said that John W. was a master of all details in every case he undertook and judges never questioned his integrity or authority on matters of law. He never wasted time in bombastic eloquence but confined his efforts to a forceful analysis of the evidence. In addition to legal cases, he also built up a lucrative business in real estate loans, transacting almost as much business as a banking institution.

John W.'s law partners were mostly relatives, and included Ezra Rue (husband of his cousin Emma), Perry Fuller (nephew of his wife Eugenia) and Charles Lehmann (his son-in-law). In 1913 John W. partnered with John W. McQueen, a graduate of Elgin Academy (1896) and Harvard University (1900). Following John W. Ranstead's death in 1915, it was McQueen who carried on his law firm. Notable partners and associates of this firm in the last century include John W. McQueen's son, John M. McQueen; Fred C. Churchill; William W. Brady; Alfred Y. Kirkland; as well as Alfred Y.'s son and daughter and son-in-law, Alfred Y. Kirkland, Jr., Pamela Kirkland Jensen and Wayne M. Jensen.

John W. and Eugenia Ranstead had one child, Janet Mercy (1876-1954). Janet married attorney Charles W. Lehmann (1874-1931) in 1899. Charles partnered with his father-in-law from about 1905-12. Janet and Charles had two children: Ranstead Siebert (1902-72) and Justin David (died at two days old in 1904). Ranstead Lehmann became a 3rd-generation Elgin lawyer, serving from 1929 until his death in 1972. His law office was on the second floor of the Ranstead building, the same office as his father and grandfather. However, he was not a member of the law firm that succeeded his grandfather, as that firm had moved out of the Ranstead building by 1920.



Eugenia Ranstead, the daughter of a Universalist minister, was active in the Universalist Church and the Elgin Woman's Club. She was the second lady trustee at Elgin Academy, serving from 1889-1903. Eugenia passed away on November 22, 1905. On July 10, 1912, her husband took a second wife, Julia Merrill (1869-1941), a school teacher

from Aurora. News of the wedding surprised friends, but John W. and Julia had known each other for a long time, were both born in Udina and were distantly related.

In addition to his career in law and real estate, John W. was president of the Home National Bank for many years. He was a temperance advocate, a Masonic lodge member, a public library director and a Universalist Church trustee. His favorite diversion was fishing and he was one of the organizers of the Elgin Waltonian Club. In 1890 he had a home built in Tarpon Springs, FL, where he spent part of each winter fishing.

John W. Ranstead passed away on February 15, 1915, at age 71. Julia, his second wife, continued to live in the Ranstead home at 4 N. Jackson St. until about 1936. She passed away in 1941. John W. and both of his wives are buried in Bluff City Cemetery. Their 22-room mansion served as the Hillcrest Convalescent Home from about 1946-73. Since 1976, it has been home to the Lewis Sampson family, who have restored it back to its original glory as a single-family home.

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; Kane County histories; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Kane County Clerk's website; Ancestry.com; city directories; federal censuses; "Junction 20: The Story of Udina" (John Russell Ghrist, 1995); etc.

Early Elgin Aviation at the Hoornbeek Airfield

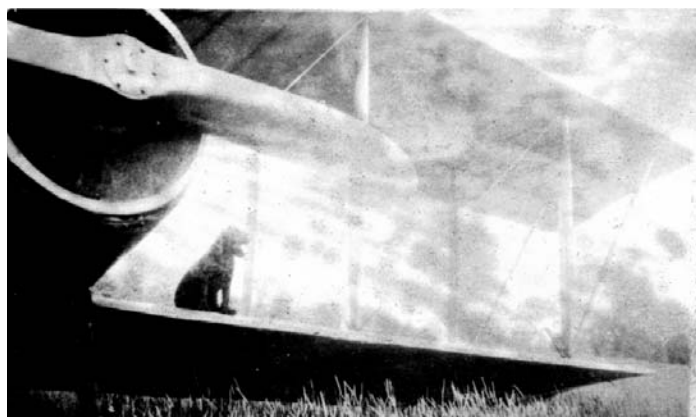
Beth Nawara, Curator of Collections

During the early days of aviation, airplanes landed on airfields. This meant land that was flat and free of obstructions. Many airfields were farmer's fields. One popular airfield in Elgin was "The Maples" more commonly referred to as the Hoornbeek Airfield on the Brewster Hoornbeek farm along McLean Blvd. and Larkin Ave.



Hoornbeek Farm with incoming flight

The family kept an Airship Log from 1915–1921 documenting many of the airships that landed at their airfield including taking photographs of the airplanes. The first airship to land here was in August of 1915. It "was DeLoyd Thompson's when he flew and stunted at the races."



First flight at Hoornbeek Farm, 1915

The Hoornbeeks also kept track of airplanes that did not quite make it safely to their airfield. On May 10, 1919, Lieutenant Ziegler crash landed about two miles south of the airfield. The day after the Ziegler crash, Brewster Hoornbeek and his wife, Olive, were both passengers on their first airship rides on separate flights. They both flew over Elgin in planes on training runs from Chanute Air Force Base in Rantoul, Illinois.



Lt. Ziegler and the wreckage

On May 30, 1919, the Hoornbeeks went to Rantoul for Illinois Day, part of a Memorial Day observance. They witnessed Lieutenant James W. Welch make the field altitude record of 19,500 feet in a de Havilland plane that day. That airship had a 400 horse-powered motor that could travel up to 135 miles per hour. The program for the day's event is in the Airship Log. There was a "formation flight with ships piloted by Chanute Field Aviators." Field Aviators, American Aces or pilots officially credited with having brought down at least five enemy planes during World War I, performed acrobatic flying. Beginning at 8:30 in the evening, "night flying and illuminated demonstrations by local flyers were included in a demonstration of combat conditions and the destruction of an enemy fort by airplanes."

According to the Airship Log, on August 1, 1919 "Society Brand airship arrived from Chicago at 10:00 A.M. It was a Curtis plane with a Curtis motor." It was the first air express package delivery to arrive in Elgin. It brought a shipment of clothing from Chicago to the Mike Plaut Company. The plane had a unique checkerboard pattern on its wings. The local paper reported on the event. "The pilot will be met by a special committee headed by Mayor A.E. Price. An auto truck will rush the merchandise from the field to the store."



Society Brand Airship

On August 28, 1920 during the Road Race, the Airship Log recorded "Blair's and Stewarts only passenger ships. Nelson Kelly landed here with Al Schillo to view the races. John De Palos, DePalma's nephew, an avia-

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ELGIN, IL 60120



tor made a flight with Blair. Parachute drop Dan Heenan.” Ralph DePalma was a Road Race driver and race winner.

The Hoornbeek Airfield became an airport in 1926 with longer runways, a beacon light along Route 20, and a hangar for airplanes. In 1930, there was a fire at the Hoornbeek Airport. By that time most planes and pilots were using the new Elgin Airport at the Earle Kelley Farm along Route 31 and what would become the Route 90 tollway.

For more information on early flight in Elgin, see the Museum Moment on Elgin aviator Dick Peck: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j0QOB1ue54s&ab_channel=ElginHistory-Museum.

Collections Corner

Beth Nawara, Curator of Collections

The Excel Projector Corp. was established in 1933 in Chicago. They made film projectors for home use, usually one or two short reel films. After World War II the Illinois Watch Case Co. purchased Excel Projector Corp. and moved all manufacturing to the Illinois Watch Case factory located in Elgin. Recently, Travis

Kroplin donated an Excel television projector with the original box. It was made about 1949. The film Hop Along Cassidy was also included.

