

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News March 2022

2021 Annual Report

From President Alan Walters

This time last year I wrote how the Elgin History Museum had weathered year one of the Covid19 storm and optimistically predicted normalcy was just around the corner. So much for my crystal ball—instead, we all dealt with Delta and Omicron during Covid19 year two.

Nonetheless, the Museum soldiered on with creative programming, video field trips for schools, and Zoomed board meetings. Museum staff and volunteers found creative ways to redeploy their talents in order to preserve and present Elgin's rich history.

2021 successes:

- Hosted a live Cemetery Walk with a new format that allowed the Museum to serve more guests and do so with greater efficiency.
- Produced and posted 26 Museum Moments. These are two-to-three-minute videos that highlight a Museum artifact.
- Updated and republished Mike Alft and Bill Briska's book, *Elgin Time: A History of the Elgin National Watch Company*.
- The Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House is nearing completion.
- The Museum was awarded two grants that are partially funding the ongoing digitization effort.



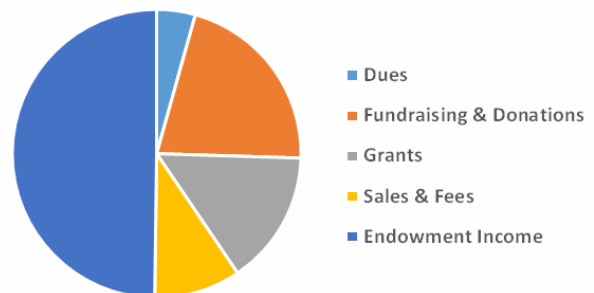
Treasurer's Report – Bill Briska

The Elgin Area Historical Society continues to be in sound financial condition. It remains debt-free, timely in paying bills, adequately insured, has an emergency reserve fund, and a growing endowment.

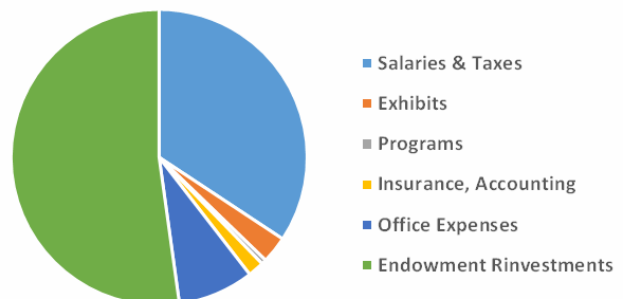
Museum Operations

- In 2021, income for Museum operations was approximately \$155,914.
- Expenses for Museum operations were approximately \$173,246. The difference between income and expense (\$17,332) was made up with money that was already in the bank and set aside for 2021 expenditures.
- The Museum's 4 part-time employees add up to the full-time equivalent of 2.2 staff persons.

Historical Society Income Sources



Historical Society Expenses



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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline April 20, 2022

 Visit our website Elginhistory.org

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Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House Rehabilitation

Donations for the Kimball House were \$23,315. An additional \$27,750 was committed by two grantors for work to be done in 2022. Major milestones in 2021 included installation of the soffit and fascia on the east and south sides of the building, painting, installing the kitchen, finishing the plumbing, installing exterior lighting, beginning native landscaping with Wild Ones group, and many other smaller tasks.

Endowment Fund

The Society's Endowment Fund is managed to provide income for Museum operations and to allow the principal to grow. 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 value of the endowment's investments at the end of 2021 was approximately \$3.2 million.



New Lighting at the Cobblestone House

Grants and Fundraising

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

- Two grants, totaling \$18,781, were received to digitize the Courier News Index Project. These grants, from the Illinois State Historical Records Advisory Board and the Institute of Museum and Library Services, will support digitizing 2,400 negatives showing underrepresented people in Elgin. It also makes the images accessible to the public on the Elgin History Museum website and Illinois Digital Archives. In 2021, 400 Courier News negatives were digitized.
- The Grand Victoria Foundation granted the Museum \$16,667 for Museum operations.
- The State of Illinois granted nearly \$6,000 in Covid relief at the beginning of 2021.
- Giving Tuesday Campaign raised \$8,263. The number of donors increased 32% over 2020.
- Board Fundraiser raised \$20,070
- Museum Gala raised \$14,000
- Cemetery Walk raised \$13,500

Making Space

The Museum entered into a fiscal sponsorship in 2021 with the Elgin Social Justice Collective to raise funds to create a mural based on the board-up art of the 2020 protests, a documentary recording the making of the mural, community conversations on racial equity, and a scholarship for African American students. The project attracted three grants, including Healing Illinois, Illinois Humanities Council, and the Art Works Fund for \$34,000. Sponsors and a T-shirt fundraiser generated another \$3,500. The community art mural has been completed and the documentary will premiere in 2022.

Museum Store

Sandi McClure, Volunteer Store Manager

The publication of the *Elgin Time* book revision helped Volunteer Store Manager Sandi McClure and the Museum Store to make a profit of \$6,500. During 2021, new items were added to the inventory including Elgin Watch and Road Race puzzles, a new ceramic ornament (second of a series of three), custom Elgin Watch jewelry, ceramics, and new publications on compacts, the Chicago Fire, and the Beatles.

Membership – Paul Larson, Membership Chair

At the end of 2021, 327 households were active members. Membership Chair Paul Larson brought in 37 new member households in 2021.

Historical Collections

Beth Nawara, Curator of Collections

- The Collections Committee met 11 times in 2021, reviewing donations from 95 donors.
- About 950 items were accessioned into the Museum's permanent, education, or exhibit collection. Significant donations include 2 parlor chairs from the Hornbeek Farm, "Big Timbers Chips" newsletters, bilingual language class photographs, a ceremonial sword that belonged to Benjamin Gould, coin molds designed by Trygve Rovelstad, and an Excel television made by the Illinois Watch Case Company.
- 3 interns and many volunteers helped catalog objects in the collection and enter collections data into the Museum's software database.
- Ira Marcus spent 130 hours photographing and processing 756 Museum objects, including watches and framed artwork.
- Jackie Marcus volunteered 92 hours helping photograph objects. She also cataloged Elgin Woman's Club directories, and newspapers from the 1840s–1860s.
- Laurel Garza spent over 250 hours cataloging letters and scanning photographs and negatives.
- With the help of Jeff White, the descriptions of 75 milk bottles in the collection were improved.

Exhibits – Museum Staff

- The Museum loaned seven objects related to healthcare in Elgin to Gail Borden Library from February 26 – April 15, 2021.
- Peaceful Board Up Art from the Museum's collection was on exhibit at Elgin High School February 16 – April 1.
- Laotians in Elgin opened as a temporary exhibit in September with a dance performance and Laotian food.
- Here We Are: Elgin, Illinois by Elgin artist Kerri Liu opened in October 2021 with illustrations of Elgin architecture.
- Art in Artifacts was on exhibit at Gail Borden Library November 10, 2021 through Dec. 31 2021.
- New and refreshed exhibits focused on Elgin's early photographers, hometown grocery stores, the Elgin Motor Club, Kerber Packing, Elgin Casket, Elgin American compacts, and Elgin artists Benjamin Downs and John Mosiman.

Museum Education – Rebecca Miller

- 247 students visited the Museum in person, primarily small Special Education classes, scout groups and homeschool cooperatives. 26 group programs were held in total.

- 6 classrooms Zoomed in for a virtual field trip tour of our Log Cabin.
- 5 Play Days, June through December, inviting families to come visit the Museum and try a new hands-on activity. The most popular was our LeeWards inspired ornament craft, which drew 45 visitors. Other events included making rag dolls and learning about log cabin life and old-fashioned chores, including milking our wooden cow.
- Hands-on opportunities were added by completing the telegraph learning station and adding children's worksheets to the 1920 tornado exhibit.

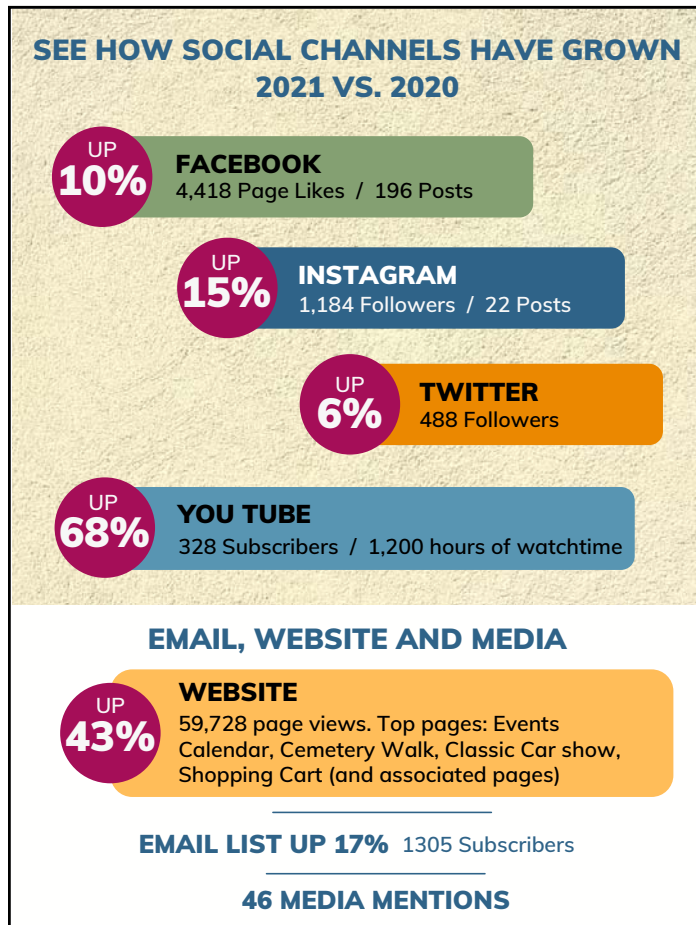


Cindy Laine and Linda Rock at the Hats Off Speaker's Bureau program, January 2022

Publications, Videos, and Media – Museum Staff

- Researched articles for the newsletter and blog posts were written on Lewis P. Andrews, the Elgin Motor Club and Elgin's first traffic fatality, Elgin Christmas Memories, Elgin's Truesdell Bridge, and Ice Skating in Lords Park.
- Produced a 50-year celebration of the Signal Hill Daughters of the American Revolution.
- 26 Museum Moments videos were created in 2021. Each segment features an artifact, photo, archival item, or a textile with a new or forgotten story to tell. Staff and volunteers worked together to choose items, research and write scripts, provide supplementary material, and promote each video. Two sponsors donated \$5,000 to partner with the Museum to produce 26 videos. 12 were released in 2021.

- 12 months of “Elgin 100 Years Ago Today” were researched, written and produced for WRMN radio by Jerry Turnquist, Linda Rock, Larry Drafall and David Siegenthaler. This well-loved programming has been created for every day of the past 30 years.



Graphic by Trish LaFleur, Media Coordinator

Program Committee

Betsy Armistead, Program Chair

All programs were presented virtually; beginning with the May biking program, the majority were also available in-person. Programs covered topics germane to Elgin as well as some topics of broader historical events. Programs offered in partnership with the Gail Borden Library are indicated in the table below.

2021 Museum Programs and Events

Program	Presenter
Library Presentation: “Bet You Didn’t Know This About Elgin History”	Jerry Turnquist
Library Presentation: Elgin Watch History, <i>Elgin Time</i> book	Bill Briska
Library Presentation: “How Sweet It Is”	Linda Rock
African American Heroes and Sheroes	Linda Gorham
History of Elgin Symphony Orchestra	Eric Malmquist
Rachel Carson	Leslie Goddard
History of Community Gardening	Cherie Murphy
History of Biking in Elgin	Tom Armstrong
Hillside Cemetery Tour	Bill Briska

Program	Presenter
Elgin Historic District Walking Tour	Jerry Turnquist
History of Flight in Elgin	Beth Nawara
Fun in Elgin	Linda Rock
American Compacts	Howard Melton
The Murder at Bloody Gulch	John Thiel
Classic Car Show	Dennis Roxworthy
Ernie Broadnax Celebration	
Miss Elgin of 1925	Jerry Turnquist
Carnegie Libraries in Illinois	Annette Baldwin
Capturing History Through the Photographer’s Lens	Ira Marcus
Lao Exhibit Opening	Ket Herena
News of the World (library)	Jerry Turnquist
Art Exhibit Opening – Here We Are: Elgin, Illinois	Kerri Liu
A Date We Will Always Remember: September 11, 2001	Jim Gibbons
Cemetery Walk	Rudy and Lillian Galfi
Neville Buggy Barn Open House	Rachel Neville
Annual Meeting: The Essential Great Chicago Fire	William Pack
Virtual Gala via Zoom	Kathy Walters
Holiday Program: An Elgin Christmas	Linda Rock

- Speakers Bureau: Linda Rock and Jerry Turnquist each presented several programs for various clubs.

Outcomes of STEPS 2021 Accreditation

Tricia Grosser, Vice President

In 2016, a self-evaluation of the Museum's performance and operations was undertaken by board members and staff. In this evaluation five standards were assessed. In those areas the committees reported a “silver level” of progress. In 2021, a reassessment was conducted of the Standards and Excellence program set up by the American Association for State and Local History.

MISSION, VISION, AND GOVERNANCE

Revised: Mission and Vision Statements and By-Laws

Created: Diversity, Equity, Access and Inclusion Statement; Conflict of Interest Statement and Policy; and Constitution was integrated into the By-Laws

MANAGEMENT

Revised and assessed: Donor privacy policy; Risk assessment; Financial protection; and Personnel Policy Manual

STEWARDSHIP OF HISTORIC STRUCTURES AND LANDSCAPES

Created: Long Term Maintenance and Capital Needs Log for Old Main and Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House

Interpretive Plan; Public Use policy for the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House; Emergency and Disaster Preparedness, and a Response and Recovery Plan which includes risk assessment.

Upcoming Events

Check the website for current information.

elginhistory.org/events

March 6, 1:30~3:00 P.M. at Gail Borden Library

Elgin Celebrates International Women's Day!

Guest speakers and dramatic vignettes illustrate the accomplishments of women in Elgin and worldwide.

March 13, 2:00 P.M. at Elgin History Museum

Elgin Working Women with Linda Rock

Meet the hardworking women who contributed to making Elgin a city with character.

March 27, 2:00~4:00 P.M. at Elgin History Museum

Elgin Women's Club 130 Years Exhibit Opening

April 2, 12:00~3:00 P.M., Elgin History Museum

Lao New Year Event

Welcome the Lao new year with music and dance.

April 3, 2:00 P.M. at Elgin History Museum

History of Elgin Mental Health Center

Part of the Library Lecture Series 2022. Bill Briska discusses the history of EMHC and the new material added to the updated edition of the book.

April 11, 7 P.M. at Gail Borden Public Library

Fun in Elgin with Linda Rock

Part of the Library Lecture Series 2022. Get in a summertime fun mood celebrating outdoor fun in Elgin!

April 23, 1:00 P.M. at Elgin History Museum

"Here We Are" Exhibit Close

Bring the family and come color in a stunning new Elgin coloring book illustrated by artist Kerri Liu.

The Tylers of Tyler Creek

David Siegenthaler

George Noah Tyler (1800-97) settled in the Tyler Creek area just north of Elgin along the west bank of the Fox River in the spring of 1835, at the same time that James T. Gifford was settling in the area that became the center of Elgin. The story goes that Tyler was walking along the east bank of the Fox River when he noticed Gifford working on his log cabin up on the hill. Tyler helped Gifford finish his cabin and they became fast friends. Learning that Tyler was seeking a site for a sawmill, Gifford suggested an area two miles to the north along the west bank of the river, where a fast-flowing creek emptied into the Fox. Tyler explored the area and quickly staked a claim.

However, respected Elgin genealogist Viola Swanson, who did in-depth research on the Tyler family in the 1980s, believes George Tyler was a "lost man of history" who should be remembered as "THE first settler in Elgin." She bases this mainly on a questionnaire completed in 1872 by the Tyler family (see "Autobiographies of Fox Valley Pioneers," Elgin Genealogical Society, 1981), which says that George Tyler settled in the Tyler Creek area in March 1835, the month before James T. Gifford settled here. Gifford's arrival in Elgin on April 3, 1835, has been well-documented, but Tyler's arrival in March 1835 presumably relies more on memory.

By the fall of 1835 (according to the same questionnaire), George Tyler's brothers Israel Barber Joseph Tyler (1814-44) and Calvin Ignatius Tyler (1816-91), and their parents, Noah Tyler (1773-1845) and Abigail Barber Tyler (1776-1857), had all emigrated from Claremont, New Hampshire and settled in the Tyler Creek area. The Tyler brothers built their sawmill just north of where Tyler Creek crosses Big Timber Road today. During excavation for the Century Oaks subdivision in the 1950s, parts of what may have been a water-wheel were found there. The exact site of the Tyler homestead is unknown, but may have been on the bluff overlooking Tyler Creek in today's Morning-side Drive area.

The Tylers were Irish Catholics and the first Catholic Mass in the Elgin area was held at their cabin in 1837. Soon, friends and relatives from back East, as well as Irish laborers and farmers already in the Chicago area came to join them in the Tyler Creek area. Many settled in an area a few miles upstream on Tyler Creek, toward the present village of Gilberts. Called the "Barrens," it was a heavily-wooded area at a higher elevation, which was thought to help ward off contagious diseases. In 1841, St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery was established on land donated by George Tyler, along Tyrrell Road in the "Barrens." This cemetery still exists, about a quarter-mile south of the I-90 tollway. Also in 1841, Israel Tyler began building the first Catholic church in the Elgin area, called the "Barrens Church," on the cemetery grounds. Israel died in 1844 and the "Barrens Church," never truly completed, was razed in 1855, the year that other Catholic churches were completed in Elgin and in Gilberts. Israel, along with his parents, Noah and Abigail, are buried in St. Mary's Catholic Cemetery, though gravestones bearing their names no longer exist.

By 1860, the Calvin Tyler farm (George Tyler had sold his adjacent farm in Dundee Township to Calvin by then) was roughly located in what is now the Tyler Creek Forest Preserve and the Judson University campus, plus adjacent acreage to the north. In early 1864, Calvin traded part of his farm to Thomas Todd for the Todd & McNeil grocery store at the southwest corner of Chicago St. and S. Grove Ave. Calvin turned it into a drug store, which he managed for a few years until it

burned down in the late 1860s. Calvin then worked at the watch factory. Late in 1864, Calvin sold the remainder of his farm, thus ending the Tyler family's ownership in the Tyler Creek area.

Subsequent owners of the part of the Tyler farm that became the forest preserve included Finla McClure, John Penney and Alfred Lawrence. From 1898 until at least 1909, Penney and Lawrence donated the use of the Tyler Creek area each summer to the Chicago Commons Settlement House, which conducted a summer camp ("Camp Commons") for boys from Chicago's poorer quarters, who enjoyed a good time and a change of environment. From 1922 through 1924, the Lions Club conducted a summer camp for boys (the 1924 camp included girls) called "Camp Tyler." In 1928, the Kane County Forest Preserve Commission bought 50 acres that included the former camp sites, making it their third preserve and securing for future generations access to one of the most beautiful sites in the County. As one of the commissioners declared at the time, "the Tyler Creek property is without question the most beautiful from a naturalist's point of view that is obtainable in the entire Elgin district."

Noah and Abigail Barber Tyler had eight children, all born in Claremont, New Hampshire. They were an Episcopalian family and Abigail's brother Daniel was an Episcopalian minister in Claremont. However, in 1818, Rev. Daniel Barber resigned his position as rector of the Episcopal Church and converted to the Catholic religion. Abigail Tyler, his sister, and the

Tyler's eldest daughter, Rosetta, converted at the same time and within a few years, the rest of the family, except for George, became converts to Catholicism. All four of the Tyler's daughters, Rosetta, Sarah, Martha and Catherine became nuns in the "Sisters of Charity" order. One of their sons, William, became a Catholic priest, and later a bishop.

George Tyler, at age 20 (about 1821), left home for Georgia, where another maternal uncle was engaged in the milling business. There he remained for some time teaching school. He was a man of superior education, and a master of the Latin and Greek languages. From Georgia, he traveled to other southern states, and lived for a time in Texas, always engaged in the profession of teaching. In 1835, he returned to the North, stopping in Cincinnati, where a sister, who had become a member of a community of the Sisters of Charity, resided. There he was surprised to learn that his entire family, as well as his uncle, had become Catholics. George began to investigate the Catholic religion and soon he was baptized and received into the Church. In Cincinnati, George purchased a horse and rode all the way to Chicago, and then to where Elgin is now located.

In July 1847, Calvin Tyler, 30, married 20-year-old Sarah McCartney (1827-80), and the couple had 11 children. In July 1849, George Tyler, 48, married Sarah's sister, 19-year-old Margaret McCartney (1830-1911), and they also had 11 children. Sarah and



Creek, Wing Park, Elgin, Ill.

Margaret were daughters of Arthur and Mary McGill McCartney, originally from New York, who settled in the Gilberts area in 1840.

Calvin moved from his farm to Division St. in Elgin in 1861, and ran a drug store there for a few years in the mid-1860s. In 1865 Calvin served as Elgin's police marshal. He then worked at the watch factory until the late 1870s. George appears as a Dundee resident in the 1850 and 1860 censuses, which show his occupation as farmer and money lender, respectively. George moved from Dundee to Kansas (where a child was born in 1868) in the mid-to-late 1860s, and then to Missouri (where children were born in 1869 and 1871). In 1872, George moved to Ellis County, Texas, and finally, in about 1873, to Williamson County, Texas, about three miles from Taylor, Texas, where he died in 1897. Calvin, in about 1878, took an extended trip to Texas to visit his brother George. Not long after returning to Elgin, Calvin's



wife Sarah died in January 1880. Soon after that, Calvin moved to California, where he died in 1891 at Santa Maria.

The Tyler Creek watershed covers about 40 square miles. Tyler Creek's source consists of three branches, each beginning just west of Route 47, about 10 miles west of the center of Elgin. It empties into the Fox River at the southern edge of the Judson University campus. Elgin landmarks along Tyler Creek, from west to east, include Burnidge Forest Preserve, Camp Big Timber Boy Scout camp, Valley Creek and Eagle Heights subdivisions, the Eagles Forest Preserve, Wing Park, Tyler Creek Forest Preserve, and Judson University. Tyler Creek's last mile-and-a-half, between Wing Park and the Fox River, has 11 bridges – six foot-bridges, three vehicle bridges and two railroad bridges.

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; "Autobiographies of Fox Valley Pioneers" (Elgin Genealogical Society, 1981); "The Tyler/McCartney Connection" (by Viola Swanson, 1985, 1994); "Golden Jubilee Souvenir; The History of St. Mary's Parish" (1903); "Looking Back at Gilberts" (by Nancy Bacheller and Robert Oury, 2012); Hazel Belle Perry's "Old Elgin Tales" columns; Kane County Recorder's Office online; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce map (circa 2010); etc.



Tyler Creek in Elgin

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



Thank You Donors

General Donations

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- Maury Dyer
- Rebecca Hunter
- Linda Rock

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- James and Sara Ellen Anderson
- Alan and Kathy Walters
- J. I. Festen

In Memory of Harry Blizzard

- Phyllis Blizzard

In Memory of George Bero

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- Tom and Corinne Zangel

In Memory of Don Pielin

- Mary Duewel
- Abbie Ecklund
- Kyla Brittain

Welcome New Members

Tyler Grace
Matt and Becky Marshall
Mary Miller
Dave and Beth Walden