

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News July 2022

President's Report

Alan Walters, President



A Time to Remember, a Time to Give
On Saturday, June 18, Elgin remembered an adopted favorite son and his wife. E.C. "Mike" and Fran Alft were laid to rest in Bluff City Cemetery. It was the closing chapter of two long lives well-lived and dedicated to community service.

Mike spent decades as a social science teacher at Elgin High, and was a favorite of countless students. Fran had an extended career in the Sherman Hospital lab. While tending to jobs and raising four children the Alfts found time to serve Elgin in many ways: Mike as a city councilman, mayor, historian, library board member and author; Fran, later in life as a volunteer at Sherman Hospital, the Searchers, and the Elgin History Museum. Mike was among the small group of visionaries who re-established the Elgin Area Historical Society in the 1960s. The list of Alft activities could go on and on.

The History Museum was proud to host a luncheon for the Alft family and friends after the interment and before the public celebration of their lives at the Gail Bordon Library. It was a day filled with stories, remembrances, music and laughter, exactly the way Mike and Fran would have wanted it.

Both will be missed at Old Main for their good nature, service and generosity.

Speaking of generosity, June and July are the months when the Museum conducts its annual Board Fund-raiser. This campaign is vital to meeting our budget commitments. Historically, our friends have shown their dedication to Elgin History by donating generously. This year is no different as we are off to a good start.

In early June you likely received a letter and/or email asking for your participation. If you have already responded, THANK YOU. If you set it aside for future

action, perhaps this column will remind you now is the time. Maybe you misplaced your letter or never received one, no problem. A simple donation mailed to the Museum or entered online via our website (elgin-history.org) will be just fine.

We can't do what we do without your support! We are fortunate to have so many loyal supporters and friends. Hope to see you soon at a Museum event.

Welcome New Members

Sarah Bass
John Bradburn
Jerard and Judy Drommerhausen
John and Anne Duffy
Tom and Mary Kemerling
Kevin O'Connor
Nancy Rascher
Dolly Scanlan
Pam Singleton
Bud Wilson
Thomas and Linda Youngren



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

 Visit our website Elginhistory.org

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

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Saturday, July 16, 1:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M.

**Kids' program at Lords Park Zoo:
The Fabulous Fox River
325 Hiawatha Drive, Lords Park
FREE In-person event**

Drop in anytime! Learn about mill races, dams, ice houses and how they fit into Elgin's history. We'll make a model of the Fox River and see if we can harness the power of water.

Saturday, July 23, 2:00 P.M.

**Celebrating 135 years with the Elgin Woman's Club
presented by Jerry Turnquist
In person or Zoom event**

FREE for members / \$3 for guests

In March 2022, the Elgin Woman's Club debuted a new exhibit of accomplishments over the last 135 years. Jerry Turnquist will present a program about the rich history of the Club. Please register for either in person or Zoom attendance.

**Tuesday Aug. 2, 1:00 P.M.-3:00 P.M. Elgin Road Races
at Lords Park Zoo, 325 Hiawatha Drive, Lords Park
No registration necessary, just drop in.**

Learn about the race cars that used to speed down Elgin streets in the Road Race! We'll race model cars, will yours be fast enough to win the trophy?

Upcoming Events

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

**Sunday, July 10, 10:00 A.M.- 3:00 P.M.
Classic Car Show**



Sunday, July 17, 2:00 P.M.

Remembering Route 66 with Leslie Goddard

In person or Zoom, FREE for members/guests \$3.00

In this nostalgia-packed program, Goddard will explore the history of Route 66, the iconic road that linked Chicago to Los Angeles from 1926 until the mid-1980s. Please register for either in person or Zoom attendance.

Thursday, July 21, 12:00 Noon

A Life in Show Business with Richard Bennet

In person or Zoom, FREE for members / guests \$3.00

Richard Bennet, former Elginite and charter member of the Elgin Historical Society, will share stories about his time at Ringling Brothers Circus and in show business. Please register for either in person or Zoom attendance.

Gala 2022

The theme of the Museum's 2022 Gala is Oktoberfest! The Gala will be held at the Holiday Inn in Elgin on October 29, 2022.

There are many ways to help make the evening a success. You can donate a themed basket for the silent auction, sponsor a table centerpiece for \$20.00, donate gift cards to be included in wine bags that will be available for purchase, and/or buy a table of 8 for yourself and friends. More information to follow!



Thank You Donors

- Veronica Clements
- Jennifer Ford
- Sue McIntyre in memory of Cindy Drafall
- Heather Misner in honor of John Devine's Retirement
- Carol Plagge
- Darryl and Janice Smith

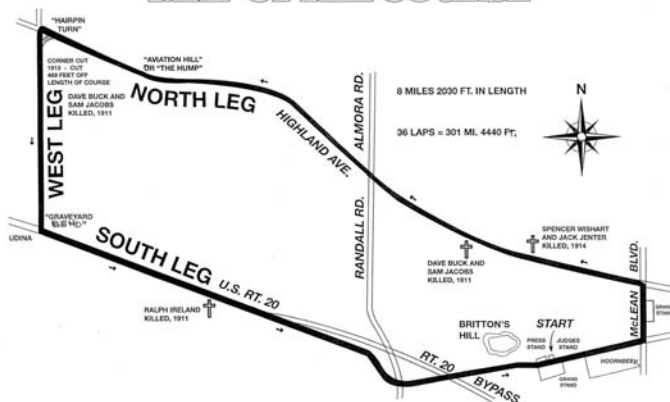
Frank B. Wood, Elgin Road Race Course Founder

David Siegenthaler

Frank Berry "Tootie" Wood (1877-1975) of Elgin was an active member of the Chicago Motor Club in 1909 when the Club sponsored the first national automobile road races in the Midwest at Crown Point, Indiana. Afterwards, Frank, who was chief flagman for the event, learned that the Club was dissatisfied with Crown Point and was looking for a new site. Determined to move the races to the Elgin area, Frank prowled the roads around Elgin and found what he was looking for west of the city: An 8.5-mile circuit with no cross roads, railroad tracks, high hills or towns to pass through. Elgin was only 38 miles from Chicago, could be reached by three railroads, and had a street car line to carry spectators to and from the course. Motor Club officials were impressed, and the Elgin Automobile Road Race Association was formed to raise the necessary funds.

The first Elgin National Road Races in 1910 were a huge success, and Frank's choice of the course site was an important factor. Compared to Crown Point, the Elgin races were faster and safer. And unlike Crown Point, the Elgin races were universally praised and financially successful. Ralph Mulford's winning speed was almost identical to the top speed at the established Vanderbilt course in New York. Frank served as chief flagman for all of the Elgin races through 1920, though he never competed himself.

ELGIN NATIONAL ROAD RACE ASSOCIATION MAP OF THE COURSE



Road Race Course Map

Frank's original 8.5-mile course can still be driven but it has changed significantly in the hundred-plus years since the road races. The biggest changes are the bisecting of the course by Randall Road, a major thoroughfare; the reconfiguration of the south leg by the

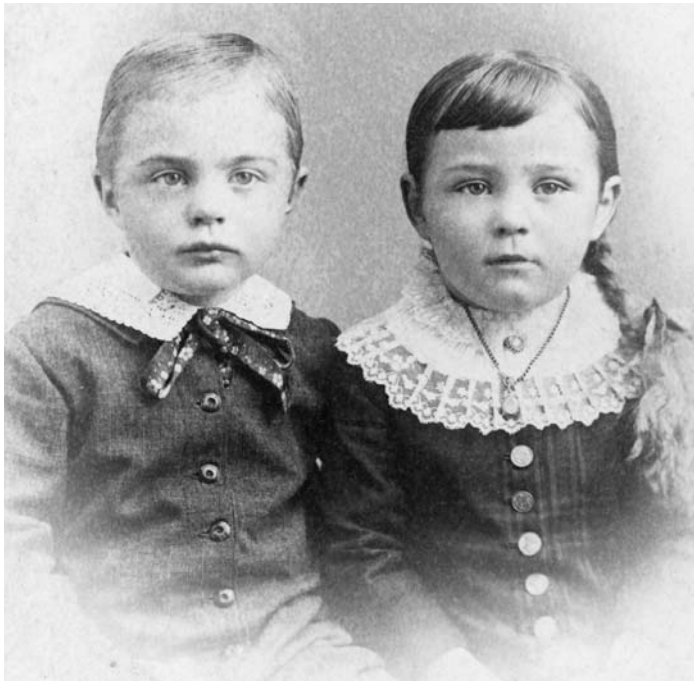
U.S. Route 20 bypass; and Elgin's westward growth, which has brought heavy traffic to these once quiet rural roads.

The son of Delmont E. Wood, a wealthy butter manufacturer and bank president, Frank was employed in his father's bank just after the turn of the century when the automobile came of age. He could afford to indulge in what was at first considered a rich man's hobby. Frank was full of energy and enthusiasm and he loved to drive fast and attract attention. He became, in the words of a local newspaper, "Elgin's first dare devil motorist."

Frank's propensity for speeding led to a spectacular accident on Memorial Day in 1910, soon after he had convinced the Chicago Motor Club to locate the road races in Elgin. Racing east on the Villa Street road (now part of Route 20), he was approaching the EJ&E railroad tracks when he swerved to avoid a farmer's wagon. His car skidded out of control and struck a warning post at the side of the road. The car snapped off the post and its iron cross bar hit him full in the face, shattering both jaws. At least two newspapers said that the injuries were "probably fatal." His mother was reported as saying, "I knew it had to come and that it was only a matter of time."

However, the next day in the hospital, after doctors had spent hours reconstructing his face, Frank's cheerful disposition was on full display when he was smiling, mumbling jokes and making comical signs with his hands. Insisting on attending to business matters a day after the accident, Frank displayed as much enthusiasm as ever for the upcoming road races. The doctor tried to get him to understand the seriousness of the accident by asking him to think what would have been the result if the upper part of his head had been shattered instead of the lower part. Frank considered it for a moment and then mumbled, "Good looking widow." 16 days after the accident, with his head swathed in bandages, he slowly drove his car through downtown Elgin with his wife and infant daughter aboard. After enduring intense pain and numerous operations, Frank recovered fully, though he wasn't able to eat solid food for almost six months.

Frank was born July 26, 1877, in Huntley, Illinois, to Delmont E. (1846-1913) and Josephine Wood (1849-1933). His twin sister, Florence, was tragically killed in a carriage accident at age seven in 1885. His other siblings, also born in Huntley, were Lillian, an invalid from birth, who died at age 17 of tuberculosis in 1889, and Frances ("Fannie") (1874-1963; Mrs. Alfred W. Craven). The family moved to Elgin in 1881, where Frank attended public schools, followed by three years at Elgin Academy (1891-93).



Frank and Florence Wood

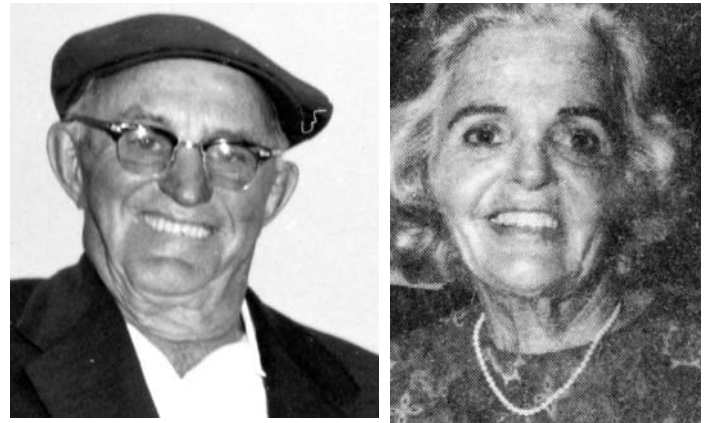
Frank enrolled at Pennsylvania Military College as a member of the Class of 1898. In the summer of 1898, following the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, he was on a business trip in Wisconsin when he was commissioned First Lieutenant in Company B, 4th Wisconsin Infantry. His regiment went to an Alabama camp but was never called to active duty. The Friends of Pennsylvania Military College maintain a website in which Frank is labeled "Storyteller" for his habit of making inaccurate claims, such as him charging up San Juan Hill with Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders, or that he and Barney Oldfield witnessed the Wright brothers trial flights at Kitty Hawk.

After leaving the military in 1899, Frank returned home and worked for his dad's butter company and at his dad's bank. He was a charter member of the Elgin Automobile Club when it was formed in 1904, the year the city first licensed vehicles. He requested license No. 13 for his red Rambler. In 1905 Frank married Florence Baker (1879-1955), a talented artist from Chicago. Their honeymoon was a long automobile trip through the lake region up north. In 1907-08, he operated an automobile garage and dealership in Elgin, selling Ramblers and Fords. Frank was active in promoting the "century runs" sponsored by the Chicago Motor Club. He led one of these 100-mile tours on January 1, 1908. The cars started in Chicago, stopped for dinner at Elgin's Kelley Hotel, where Frank was the host, then drove to Aurora and back to Chicago. Not content with completing this circuit, to win a wager he immediately took off on another 100-mile jaunt to Indiana and back.

In 1909-10, Frank was manager of the Chicago branch of the Knox Automobile Co. In 1911 he was appointed General Executive of the Chicago Motor Club for the

1911 season. For most of 1912 he was superintendent of the Midland Automobile Co. of Moline, and moved his family there before returning to Elgin. From about 1915 through 1920, exclusive of his service in WW1, he was head of the sales department of the Van Sicklen Speedometer Co. In WW1, Frank spent a year in France with a motor mechanics division and was discharged with the rank of major. For the rest of his life he was affectionately referred to as "Major."

Frank lived in his parents' mansion at 170 South State St. (razed 1981) until after his marriage in 1905. In 1908, Frank's parents bought the couple a home at 1100 North Spring St., where they lived until 1920, exclusive of a couple of years, about 1912-14, when they lived in Moline and then at 1170 Cedar Ave. in Elgin.



Frank Wood, 1955; Betty Wood McNabb, 1976



Delmont Wood Home, 170 S. State St.

Frank and Florence had three children. Phyllis was born in 1908 but lived only 30 minutes. Elizabeth ("Betty") (1909-96) was born while the Woods were

spending time at a friend's summer home in Spring Lake, Michigan. Delmont Edward II (1912-98) was born while the Woods were living in Moline.

In late 1920, Frank and his family moved out of Elgin. For years prior to that, the family had spent the winter months at the pecan grove of Sanford Baker, his wife's dad, at Putney, Georgia. Now, after leaving Elgin, Putney and nearby Albany, Georgia, became their home base, though the family frequently moved for brief periods to whatever location Frank's employment took him.

Frank continued to work in various automotive-related executive jobs and eventually moved to Panama City, Florida, possibly in the late 1920s, where he spent the last 40-plus years of his life. Living along the Gulf of Mexico, Frank soon became an avid sailor and yachtsman. He and Florence were living on a 30-acre estate on St. Andrews Bay in July 1941, when the U.S. government took their home as part of the new Tyndall Air Force Base. The couple then lived on their yacht for a time.

Florence was an artist who worked in charcoal, ink, watercolors and oil. She was also a creative designer and a talented musician. She enrolled at the Chicago Art Institute at age 15 and studied under Frank Lloyd Wright, among others. She did illustrations for magazines, newspapers and other media. Florence drew the plans for the first St. Andrews Bay Yacht Club building; for a sorority house at Florida State University; as well as for two Wood family homes in Panama City.

Daughter Betty had an impressive career, as well. An Elgin resident until age 11, she graduated from high school in Albany, Georgia. In 1930, she earned a B.A. in history from Florida State College for Women in Panama City, and then an M.A. in history from the University of California. Returning to Albany, she taught for a year before marrying Harold E. McNabb, the high school football coach, in 1934. After serving in the WACs in WW2, Betty returned to Albany and began a career as a medical records specialist. The State of Georgia hired her as a consultant to set up a state-wide medical record system, a job requiring an enormous amount of travel. In 1951, at age 42, she learned to fly as a way to cut travel time. In 1952 she joined the Civil Air Patrol and less than ten years later had advanced to the rank of lieutenant colonel. In 1958 she became the 8th woman to break the sound barrier, while piloting a fighter jet. In 1959, her dad Frank, at age 82, made his first solo flight in Betty's plane.

Betty Wood McNabb attended the Air War College and in 1964 became the first female officer to receive a diploma. She was international president and a long-time board member of the "Ninety-Nines," an organization for women pilots founded by Amelia Earhart. In 1977 Betty was inducted into the National Aerospace Education Association "Hall of Fame."

In 1969 the McNabbs moved from Albany, Georgia, to Panama City, Florida, to care for Frank, who was now in his 90s and in declining health. Frank died at age 98 on August 31, 1975.

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Newspapers.com research by Laurel Garza; Ancestry.com; Elgin city directories; Crackerbarrel (EHM newsletter); various Internet sources, etc.

Marie S. Templin, Elgin Artist

By Museum Educator Rebecca Miller

Artist Marie Templin was from Elgin, but painted around the world. Not many can claim the same feat.

Young Marie was raised in a home that appreciated art. Her father was a lithographer and her grandfather was a sculptor. Both Marie and her brother Henry Kurt Stoessel would become well-known as painters. Born August 18, 1907 in Kirchain, Germany, Marie was the daughter of Heinrich and Anna Stoessel. Heinrich Stoessel was outspoken against the German government's program of mandatory military service and left for the United States in 1910, sending for his family shortly after.

A Student of Art

Marie had an innate talent for art but still worked to perfect it all her life. She attended Cooper Union Institute in New York and graduated from Philadelphia College of Art. So intent was she on formal art education that she lied about her age to get into the Philadelphia College of Art at age 15. Later the family settled in Chicago where both she and her brother would attend the Chicago Art Institute.

Marie found her way to Elgin in 1934 after her marriage to Louis Templin, a telephone engineer. They made their home at 31 S. Union Street and would have three sons, Lee, Don and Alan.

Marie continued to paint, joining the Wayne Art League and the Fox Valley Art League. She would also teach art at Elgin Community College from 1967-1970. She created a wealth of art, including weavings, silk lampshades, acrylics, and ink washes. However, she was most well known for her watercolor paintings and this is the medium she used most when creating her memorable landscapes.



Marie Templin (1907-1990) worked primarily in watercolors. She studied at the Philadelphia College of Art and the Chicago Art Institute. She traveled to over 50 countries, painting local sights and furthering her art studies. 1962 photo from the collection of the Elgin History Museum, CN 60240.

Around the Globe

Marie Templin's watercolors often share a broad theme. It was remarked, "If you want to know where she's been, ask to see her sketchbook." Marie was an avid traveler and visited over 50 countries in her lifetime. In each, she took the time to paint what she saw. She painted Angkor Wat, a temple complex, in Cambodia. She painted the windmills of Greece and the cathedrals of France. In Central America she painted ancient Mayan ruins. Marie painted the sunset over Jerusalem. Often, these were working vacations where she attended artist's workshops at places such as the Institute Allende in San Miguel, Mexico and the International Art Academy in Salzburg, Austria. In 1978, Marie was one of 75 Americans permitted to travel to China on a tour sponsored by the United Nations. While tourist travel to China is more commonplace now, this was not the case in the 1970s. U.S. residents were banned from visiting China until 1971 when President Nixon re-opened diplomatic relations that had been strained since WWII and the Korean War era. On this trip, Marie painted images of Beijing and the Great Wall.

Many Exhibitions

Her works were exhibited in Elgin many times during events at Sherman Hospital, the Lords Park Pavilion, the Gail Borden Public Library, St Joseph's Hospital, and Judson College. Her last exhibit in 1983 was held in her home at 31 S. Union St. for one good reason. As Marie put it, she had far too many portfolios to carry around. Also, what better place to hear the artist herself tell tales of the trip that inspired each painting. Visitors to the gallery sale could see dozens of paintings on the walls, depictions of two giraffes from her African tour perhaps next to a Spanish seascape.



Marie Templin's last exhibition, in 1983, was held in her home at 31 S. Union St. Elgin History Museum collection, CN37613.

A record of changing Elgin

The people of Elgin owe Marie Templin a thank you, not just for her upbeat landscapes of foreign sites. Marie also painted images of Elgin and Dundee, sites in her own town. The 1960s and 1970s were times of great change in Elgin. The urban renewal projects along the Fox River and in downtown Elgin led to many changes. Several buildings were torn down to make room for new and modern ones. During this time we gained the Hemmens Auditorium, the Municipal Complex, a new Post Office, and an updated Gail Borden Public Library. However, we lost the Elgin National Watch Co. factory, Old City Hall, the Labor Temple, Rinehimer Brothers Manufacturing and others.

Seeing these changes in Elgin, Marie took the time to paint some of these old buildings before they were destroyed. Her record of these stately old buildings are an important piece of history, as well as art. Marie Templin's watercolor of Elgin's Old City Hall can be viewed at the Elgin History Museum, 360 Park Street in Elgin, IL.



The Daily News-Advocate building, southwest corner of Chicago and Spring streets, was torn down in 1974. The site is currently Advocate Park. Marie Templin painted this image of the building before it was demolished. Elgin History Museum collection 1987.069.00



Advocate Park, today, southwest corner of Spring & Chicago Streets.

The Incarceration of Colonel William F. Lynch

By Dave Carlson

In 2013 The Crackerbarrel carried an extensive article describing the life of General William F. Lynch, who is my great-granduncle. That article includes a description of William's actions (while a Colonel) at Shiloh in April 1862, his capture there, and incarceration at Libby Prison. Recently, more information has been found concerning where and when William was a prisoner of the Confederates, and that information is presented here.

In the early part of the war the Confederates were unequipped to handle prisoners, especially the number captured at Shiloh. They moved them frequently

because their presence was a great burden to their captors and the community they were staying in. The prisoners were put into old hotels, cotton sheds, schools or government buildings.

Multiple sources say that prisoners from Shiloh were kept in a field during a rainstorm the night of April 6th after being captured. The next day before starting the march to Corinth, Mississippi, a confederate asked Colonel Lynch for his sword. William's response was to break the sword across his knee and throw it to the ground, making it useless to his captors. On April 8th at Corinth, they were put in railroad cars and sent to Memphis. Here the officers, including General Benjamin Prentiss who was the highest-ranking Union officer captured at Shiloh, were separated from enlisted with the officers housed at City Hall. At Memphis the next morning, officers and enlisted were put back into the rail cars for the trip to Mobile, Alabama. From Mobile, all the prisoners traveled by steamboat up the Alabama River and arrived at Selma, Alabama on April 15th. General Prentiss and all officers from the rank of Colonel to Captain then immediately departed for Talladega, Alabama. General Prentiss' presence at Talladega is mentioned in an April 22nd, 1862 memo from Confederate Major-General Samuel Jones. On the same day the memo was written, the officers were loaded onto train cars and taken back to Selma. After a relatively comfortable period at Selma, General Prentiss and the officers arrived at Montgomery, Alabama on May 25th, 1862. Two weeks later they were moved to Atlanta where they remained a week before going to the new prison at Madison, Georgia. William arrived at Madison on June 21st, 1862.

A copy of a letter written by William to his father Timothy Lynch was supplied to me by a family member. The letter was written from the Confederate prison in Madison, Georgia, on August 9, 1862. In it he mentions having sent letters previously from Selma and Montgomery (in that order). Thus, we have first-hand evidence that after his capture on April 6, 1862 William was a prisoner at Selma and Montgomery, Alabama, and Madison, Georgia before being transferred to Virginia where he was released in October 1862.

At Talladega the officers were held in a building used by a Baptist college. That building is now part of Talladega College, which was formed just after the war. In Selma, they were housed on the third story of a hotel.

From April to December 1862 the Confederates used an old cotton depot in Montgomery to house Union prisoners, many of whom were captured at Shiloh. It was described as being 200 feet long by 40 feet wide and infested with vermin. William was fortunate to have been transferred from there quickly.

The prison at Madison Georgia was on the site of a steam-powered cotton mill. Used as a prison in 1862, it saw use later in the war as a Confederate hospital (May

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Hospital). A Union soldier who was a prisoner there in 1862 later carved a drawing of the prison on the side of a wooden canteen.

A list of prisoners from the Madison, Georgia prison is available on the internet. The document does not give the date when every prisoner departed. William is not named specifically but was probably part of a group of 216 that left for Richmond on October 7th, 1862, with 4 days rations. His time at Libby Prison was thankfully short, as the Richmond Dispatch of October 13, 1862 names him as one of the officers who departed Libby for Varina, Virginia to await a prisoner exchange.

My thanks to Hank Koopman of the Blue and Gray Education Society for providing references and advice.



References: Jeremiah Spillard Papers, "History of the 58th Regt. Illinois Infantry Volunteers"; Prison Account of Lt. Luther Jackson, 12th Iowa. In "A Perfect Picture of Hell", University of Iowa Press; "General Benjamin Prentiss as a Prisoner of War after Shiloh". Facebook post, September 9, 2015 by the Shiloh National Military Park; History of Talladega College; Madison Miller Papers, Diary of Madison Miller. Missouri Historical Society; Letters from Capt. William Warren, 12th Iowa. In, "A Perfect Picture of Hell", University of Iowa Press; Speech by General Prentiss at Chicago, October 21, 1862; Message from Major General Sam'l Jones (CSA) to Hon. G. W. Randolph, April 22, 1862. In, "The War of Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official records of the Union & Confederate Armies"; Archaeological Excavations at the Madison Steam Mill, 9Mg287. Lamar Institute Publication 143, Lamar Institute; Historical Marker Database, Confederate prisons, Montgomery, Alabama; Confederate States of America prison, Madison GA. (webpage); Richmond Dispatch, October 13, 1862.