

The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News January 2023

President's Report

Ann LoCascio, President



As we transition to 2023, I am thrilled to introduce myself as the new Board President. I am a life-long lover of history and a native of Freeport, Illinois. I grew up three blocks from the Ste-

phenson County Historical Society, housed in the 1857 Taylor Mansion on 3 beautifully wooded acres of arboretum. I and my sister visited the museum so frequently during summers in the 1970s that the live-in caretakers started admitting us to the museum even on days when it was closed, tickled as they were by our enthusiasm for Victorian design, log cabins and farming exhibits.

I was first introduced to Elgin in the 1990s. I would drive out from Chicago to visit a friend on Monday nights for dinner and a double feature of Beverly Hills 90210 and Melrose Place. After a stint in Kansas City, my husband and I moved to Elgin due to our shared love of old homes. He is convinced that Victorian houses are ghost-prone, so instead we found ourselves in one of Elgin's charming brick Tudor cottages built in the 1920s.

A creative director in my professional life, I started volunteering design work at the Elgin History Museum in 2006 after meeting our amazing Director, Elizabeth Marston, at a volunteer fair. I've also been a docent, served on the Cemetery Walk committee, and been a board member since 2020.

Joining me as Vice President is John Devine. He spent his career teaching history at Elgin High School. He's recently retired, and we are looking forward to utilizing his extensive historical knowledge. We are also welcoming two new board members, Nick Freeman and Tish Calhamer. Nick brings a background of advertising production and Tish is the Community Engagement Manager at the Gail Borden Library.

I want to thank Al Walters, the outgoing president of the Historical Society Board, for his four years of service. We've all been living through history-making times since the Covid-19 pandemic began in 2020, and Al has done a great job shepherding the organization through uncharted territory. He and his wife Kathy, gamely pivoted to online silent auctions for two years, when we couldn't host our annual in-person gala event. And he's done it all with a big smile and much enthusiasm. He's been an invaluable resource of community outreach, keeping us connected with local churches, Edgewater and Benjamin Moore Paint.

Al will be taking over as Program Committee Chair from Betsy Armistead. She is stepping down after four years, after doing a great job switching to virtual presentations when the Museum was closed due to Covid-19 restrictions and then back again when the state lifted restrictions.

Many thanks to outgoing Vice President Tricia Grosser, who guided the Museum through the STEPS certification process over the past two years.

I also wish to thank Jim Anderson and Barry Danielson for their years of service. They are transitioning to board emeritus status. Their experience is helpful as they continue to serve on the finance committee.

All of us at the Elgin History Museum look forward to an exciting 2023 as we continue with the Museum's mission of collecting, preserving and interpreting Elgin's heritage for the enrichment of our community.

Welcome New Members

- **Grace Richard**, the Museum's newest Life Member!
- Holly Hudson
- Ted and Sara Larkin
- Bill Lowe
- George and Jill Moore
- Doug and Angie Schaefer
- Renee Sweeney

The Crackerbarrel

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

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Thank You Donors!

General Donations

- Signal Hill Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution
- Linda Eder
- Marti Jernberg
- John Navin

In Memory of Mira Wojciechowska

Betsy and Dwight Armistead Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham
Bill Briska David Siegenthaler

Giving Tuesday

| | |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Anderson, Jim and Sara Ellen | Jones, Richard |
| Bak, Donald | Kemerling, Mary and Tom |
| Barnhart, Jerri and Ken | Kerr, Susan |
| Bennett, Jeffrey | Lange, Ron and Kathie |
| Biesterfeld, Gary | Larson, Paul R. |
| Bost, Marianne | Laukes, James |
| Bradburn, John | Laura Stroud |
| Briska, Bill and Fran Cella | Lee, Maureen and Tom |
| Brown, Betty | Locascio, Anne |
| Burkart, Janet and Gordon | Lutz, Natalie |
| Burke, Christopher; | Lytle, Miriam |
| Burnidge, Charles | Marco, Rebecca |
| Calhamer, Tish | Marston, John and Elizabeth |
| Caughlin, John and Peg | Marston, William and Kathy |
| Chevalier, Carol and Jim | Martin, Dorothy & Dick Meier |
| Chipman, Ann | Martinez, Rosamaria |
| Conn, Craig | McLaughlin, Barbara |
| De La O, Jose | Muchow, Linda and Stephen |
| Devine, John and Ana | |
| Downes, Anne | Nawara, Beth and David |
| Dulabaum, Mary | O'Haire, John and Claudia |
| Dunning, Charles & Patricia | Olson, Cliff |
| Dyer, Maurice | Pearson, Dave |
| Emma Marston | Priebe, Aaron |
| Gabel, Terry | Renard, Candy & Rein, Mike |
| Garza, Laurel | Renner, Richard |
| Gathman, Carol | Rock, Linda and Jeff White |
| Ginsberg, Susan | Rozek, Jane |
| Gregory, Mary and Martin | Rush, Carrie |
| Grosser, Maureen | Russell, Wayne and Jeanette |
| Grosser, Patricia and Jeff | Schock, Edward and Karen |
| Harris, Ricky | Schroeder, Judy |
| Heinmiller, Wayne | Struve, Gordon |
| Heise, Georgeann and Ted | Sundquist, Christen |
| Horton, Doug | Swiertz, Maureen |
| Humbracht, Lyndon | Tepe, Judi and Vern |
| Hyser, Susan | Turnquist, Jerry and Kathleen |
| Jocius, Patricia and James | Walters, Daniel and Lynne |
| | Youngren, Peggy and Steve |

Upcoming Events

Check the website for current information. Events take place at the Elgin History Museum unless otherwise noted. elginhistory.org/events

January 27, 7:00 P.M.

History Trivia Night Fundraiser

Think you know Elgin history? Come test your knowledge at Trivia Night! Questions will be simple enough for amateurs and another level of detail will be added for pros. Beer, wine and cheese, and dessert will be served along with a slice of Elgin history. 1st, 2nd, and 3rd prizes! \$25.00 per person.

Visit elginhistory.org/events for details.

February 11, 11:00 A.M.

Volunteer Appreciation Brunch

We want to thank our volunteers for their hard work and dedication to the Museum. **This is an invitation only event.** Invitations and details to come.

February 18, 1:00 p.m. to 3:00 P.M.

Susan B. Anthony Birthday Party

Celebrate that women can vote with a party for Susan B. Anthony's birthday! Annette Baldwin, women's historian, presents "Necessity By Choice" focusing on the work of Suffragettes.

Exciting New Education Programs Offered

Rebecca Miller, Museum Educator

The Museum is offering several new popular programs. The first is a walking tour of Bluff City Cemetery, available year round. The tour gives a history of Bluff City Cemetery, a discussion of grave marker symbolism and highlights the burial sites of several notable Elginites. The format has been great for high school students and home school families. They have enjoyed the beautiful landscape and unique content.

The newly opened Museum exhibit on the Fox River has inspired an educational program, “Waterways.” Kids learn about how the Fox River shaped Elgin and how Elgin has, in turn, modified the river. Using drone footage of the river, a nearly full scale reproduction of an outhouse, model mill wheels and a floor graphic of the river, sixth-grade students can see how important water is to Elgin’s story. One group added a visit to the Kimball Street Dam and met with the Friends of the Fox River for a lesson on conservation as well.

The most popular new program has been “Old and New.” In this program, second-graders learn why things change and how to tell something “old” from something “new.” The Museum provides many opportunities for hands-on exploration, from “old” rotary dial telephones to “new” typewriters. It's all relative! You can expect a lively conversation when holding up a pair of bloomers or a bed warmer for a group of seven- year-olds. It warms the heart to see the responses from these little learners. Their insights about dialing “the minus sign” in a phone number, how postcards are too small to write anything good, and how men's long john underwear are basically just pajamas, have made us chuckle. I think we have as much fun with this new program as they do.

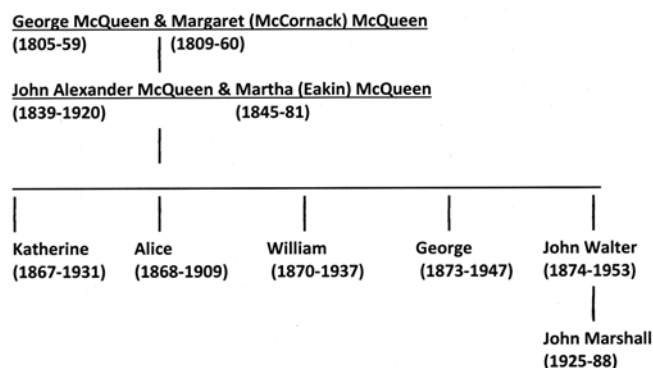


Fox River Water Education Program

The McQueen Family of Elgin – Part Two

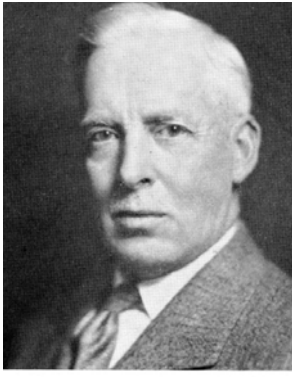
David Siegenthaler

On returning home from the war, John Alexander McQueen purchased the Plato Township farm from the other heirs and for several years raised sheep before switching to dairy farming about 1871. In November 1865 he married Martha Eliza Eakin (1845-81) in Chicago Heights. Martha was the daughter of Stewart and Catherine Eakin, both natives of Ireland. John and Martha had five children: Katherine Margaret (1867-1931; never married); Alice Jane (1868-1909; Mrs. Robert A. Harper); William Charles (1870-1937); George Stuart (1873-1947); and John Walter (1874-1953). Martha died of typhoid fever at age 35 in 1881. In 1884 John married Martha’s sister, Mary Catherine Eakin (1855-1919), in the state of Oregon. John and Mary had one child, Stuart Akin (1886-1956), and were divorced in 1886. John Alexander McQueen passed away December 7, 1920, at age 81. He, Martha and three of their children – Katherine, William and George – are buried in the Memorial Washington Cemetery, along with his parents, two of his siblings (William and Jeanette) and two of his grandchildren (Harold and Martha).



McQueen Family Tree

Katherine, John and Martha’s eldest child, graduated from Elgin Academy and Rockford College. She then taught in country schools before starting work at the Gail Borden Public Library in 1893. In 1900 she became head of the Gail Borden Public Library reference department, a position she held until her death in 1931. Alice also graduated from Elgin Academy and Rockford College. She became the first female teacher at Lake Forest College through the influence of Alfred Welch, her former principal at Elgin Academy. Alice resigned her position in 1899 to marry Professor Robert Harper, head of the University of Wisconsin botanical department. The couple had no children.



W. C. McQUEEN

William (“Will”) C. McQueen graduated from Elgin Academy and attended Knox College in Galesburg. In 1894 he married his second cousin Irene Elizabeth McCornack (1870-1958), daughter of Andrew and Isabella McCornack. Will worked on the family dairy farm with his father for several years, then worked for the railway mail service from 1898-

1918, during which time he lived in Chicago and Elgin. In 1918 he returned to farming and the family home at “McQueencroft.” In 1926, when the City of Chicago decreed that only milk from tuberculin-tested cattle could be distributed there, Will conceived the idea of an organization of farmers dealing solely in milk from “TB-Tested” cows. That same year the Pure Milk Association was organized with 348 members and Will was elected its president. This group became the dominating factor in the cooperative marketing of milk in the Chicago area, and when Will retired from the presidency in 1933 its membership approximated 15,000 dairy farmers. Will was also one of the organizers and a past president of the Kane County Farm Bureau, and was the “father” of the Kane County Farmers’ Mutual Insurance Co.

Will and Irene had two children: Harold (died in infancy in 1894) and Martha Isabella (1896-1971). Martha married George A. Freeburg (1884-1952), a structural engineer, in 1922. After George Freeburg retired in the late 1940s, the couple moved to “McQueencroft,” Martha’s former home. Martha would be the last member of the McQueen family to live at “McQueencroft” when she sold it in 1967 and moved to California. For 128 years it had been the McQueen family homestead.

George S. McQueen graduated from Elgin Academy and was a lifelong dairy farmer. In 1895 he married Jennie May Mink (1875-1936) and the couple had five children: Margaret (1896-1976; Mrs. Valdemar Mattsen); Harry (1897-1978); George Earl (1899-1977); Ruth (1903-88; Mrs. Orville Morse); and Olive (1910-77; Mrs. William Schneider). Jennie was killed in a car accident in Indiana. The family lived across the street from “McQueencroft.”

John W. McQueen graduated from Elgin Academy, attended Beloit College and graduated in 1900 from Harvard University. In 1903 he graduated from Harvard Law School and was admitted to the Illinois bar. After practicing law for two years in Chicago, he returned to Elgin in 1905 and had an active practice here until 1951, when his son John M. succeeded him. John W. was a longtime board member of both the Old People’s Home and Elgin Academy.



John W. McQueen

In 1914 John W. married Florence Sawyer (1881-1916). Tragically, Florence died in 1916 while giving birth to their only child, Jane, who was stillborn. In 1920 John W. married Margaret McCredie (1884-1962). They had one child, John Marshall (1925-88). When Margaret’s father William died in 1927, she inherited his 1891 home at 722 Douglas Ave., an excellent example of Queen Anne-style architecture. This home remained in the McQueen family until 1996, as the home of both John W. and John M. McQueen and their families. John W. passed away in 1953 and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

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John M. McQueen graduated from Elgin Academy, Northwestern University and Northwestern Law School. He spent two years in the Army Air Force in WW2. After passing the Illinois bar exam in 1951, he joined his dad’s law firm, where he practiced until his death. About 1950, John M. married Jo Ann Jenkins (1925-2013; in 1992 she married Gregg Ziegler) and the couple had three children: John M., Jr., Robert S.; and William E. John M. was a director of the First National Bank of Elgin for about 25 years, and a past president of the Elgin Jaycees and the Elgin United Way. John M. passed away in 1988 and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; obituaries; newspaper articles; 1898 Kane County history; Ancestry.com. John A. McQueen home photo by Charles Burnidge; John W./John M. McQueen home photo from Historicegin.com; "Led On! Step by Step" (autobiography of Rev. A. Toomer Porter); Newspapers.com research by Laurel Garza; monument photo by Judy Van Dusen.

Holiday Tea 2022

The Museum held the annual holiday tea on Dec. 2. It was very well-attended and everyone enjoyed the lovely carols sung by the Carolers.

Thanks to everyone who baked goodies for the Tea and helped set up and clean up afterward.



Old Town Carolers in front of the "e-fireplace"

The Elgin Windmill

George Rowe

The Elgin windmill that stands on Foundry Park (along Route 31 between Kimball St. and Highland Ave.) is located exactly where it was born, at the Elgin Windmill Company formerly located there.

When steam-powered trains began to spread across the US in the 1830s, the steam engines required water every 20 miles; that demand spawned the "farmer's windmills" that pumped the water needed. The Elgin Windmill Company began in the early 1870s. At that time there were six windmill companies in Batavia. The Elgin Windmill Company would thrive until 1946.

Supply and demand drove the price of a windmill to a level the average farmer could afford and windmills were purchased to supply water for cattle, crops, or the family domicile.

This particular windmill was built for the president of the company, George Peck, in 1921. He was building a house for his son on the western edges of Elgin, now the northeast corner of Larkin and McLean, kitty corner from Larkin High School.

The windmill provided water for the home for over 50 years. When city water became available, the windmill was no longer needed and was slowly engulfed by surrounding trees and foliage.

Sharp-eyed historian (and Museum board member at the time) Maurice Dyer somehow learned that it was built in Elgin. His friend Whitey Reiser guided Maury to Whitey's cousin Frank Engel, from Hampshire IL. Frank was a windmill enthusiast. In 2004, Mr. Dyer organized a team to take down the windmill and restore it. The team consisted of Frank Engel, a crane operator, Elgin emergency personnel (paramedics, just in case), Model T club members, and Barbara Carlson Thurnau, daughter of former windmill company employee George Carlson. My wife, Marge Rowe, was president of the Museum that year, so I visited the site to watch the windmill come down.

And down it came! Soon the windmill was removed from its tower and was laid to rest on one of Frank Engel's flatbed trucks. The wooden cistern and the disassembled tower followed, with many Model T club members helping to load the tower sections onto a flatbed trailer to be hauled to Mr. Engel's farm. I was tasked with ripping shingles off the roof of the small spring house that enclosed the tower.

The tower legs had to be cut out of their concrete base. Frank Engel presented a cutting torch, and asked if I knew how to use it. Having about five minutes of experience with said tool, I found myself cutting off the tower legs. Frank's sage advice was "don't start anything on fire."



Windmill disassembly day, Oct 2004. Ron Barclay, Whitey Reiser, Maury Dyer, Marge Rowe, Elizabeth Marston, Frank Engel, crane operator (on trailer)

Maury made an agreement with the Museum and Mr. Engel. Frank Engel would refurbish the windmill and store it until the Elgin History Museum could find a suitable place for relocating it.

Fast forward to 2012. I had become president of the Museum. I had no idea what I was doing, but I had a good idea of what to do with that windmill. As I began my first meeting as president, I asked about plans for the windmill we had acquired so many years earlier. I was sure there would be a pregnant pause, and I would be able to shift its ownership to Frank Engel, the farmer who had an obsession with windmills.

Mr. Dyer saw me coming. Maury suggested installing it at the new Foundry Park, along Rt 31. Maury explained that the windmill was built on that site in 1921. The board felt the same way, and voted to erect the refurbished windmill at Foundry Park.

So began an endless cycle of meetings with City Council members, the mayor, Batavia windmill expert Bob Popek, and just about every person in between. The windmill had stood on Larkin Ave. in a "spring house," a small concrete block building around the base of the tower. The steel tower was built by John Murphy's tower company. Mr. Murphy would go on to start the Elgin Street Sweeper Company.

Maury Dyer was emphatic that the new site should include a similar spring house. City planners said the city would allow for the windmill, but there was "no way" a spring house could be built around the base.

Plans had been laid out by Eric Pepa, an architect from Allen Pepa Architects. Eric had done other projects with the Elgin History Museum and provided architectural plans for this site. The Museum contacted many companies about pouring a concrete base for the windmill. Finally, Lamp Inc. came forward with a bid, and with help from the city, poured the foundation.

The day before the windmill was to be erected, I was installing base plates on the new foundation, guided by my friend, instructor and coach Ron Barclay. I was amazed each 10" x 10" steel plate fit perfectly over the bolts the Lamp Inc. workers set perfectly into the concrete. The tower base would be welded to the plates when the windmill was installed.

The next morning, Saturday, Ron Barclay, myself, Maury Dyer, and Maury's team of workers from the Elgin Model T Club arrived at 7:00 a.m. to meet the trucks of Ralph Engel. Mr. Engel volunteered all of his efforts at no charge. He had taken down the windmill, repaired and stored it on his farm in Hampshire, and waited calmly for 10 years until the Museum decided what to do with it. When we finally found a place to put it, Mr. Engel graciously helped us with every step.

It was decided we needed to clean up and repaint the original tower. Mr. Engel provided space on his farm to complete this work. Museum member Al Walters, a

sales rep for Benjamin Moore Paint Co., contributed his time and effort to supply the best possible paint for the tower, at a discount.

Many Museum members spent quite a few weekends at the Engel farm cleaning, priming, and painting the tower segments.

Frank Engel and I met at the base of the tower one morning, and he explained that installation would be much easier using his lift. He handed me the keys, turned on the lift, showed me how to operate it, and said good luck! Next thing I knew I was up in the air scraping, cleaning and painting the tower.

After a few weekends the tower was painted and Frank had the windmill ready to be installed. Maury Dyer tentatively asked how long installation would take. Could Frank get it done in a week? Frank said he could do it Saturday morning!

The next Saturday the Museum crew assembled bright and early. Maury organized tasks to be completed as Frank Engel's trucks came into view: one trailer with the windmill, one with the tower, and one with the lift to assemble the pieces. By noon, the windmill that had been built on that exact site in 1921 was now turning in the breeze for all to see!

Maury Dyer had quite a vision when he decided to save the windmill from its original site on Larkin Ave. He assembled an entire crew to remove the windmill from its Larkin Ave site and secured a place at Frank Engel's farm in Hampshire to rebuild and store it until a new site could be selected.

Fast forward to 2019. The windmill took quite a beating during one particularly hard windstorm. Late that fall, Museum friend Nathan McCracken was taking his normal morning walk past the site when he noticed some of the blades were bent and a metal strut was hanging off the structure.

Museum Director Elizabeth Marston contacted Paul Behrands from Champaign IL to inspect the mill mechanism. Paul came to Elgin, took the mill off the tower, and took it to Champaign to complete the repairs.

By the summer of 2022 it was finally ready to be reinstalled. Paul brought it here on a fine summer day, and once again Ron Barclay was on hand to assist. The repaired mechanism had to be assembled on site, as it could not be transported in one piece. The mill was then secured to a crane and up it went. Paul was already on top of the tower, 60 feet in the air, hollering instructions to his crane operator. It was about 1:30 in the afternoon, and storm clouds were forming in the northwest.

Rain was forecast to start in five minutes, but the real threat was lightning. Paul finished the install and came down just as the rain started. We retreated to our vehicles to wait out the storm. Half an hour later we were back at work, helping Paul pack up, and helping city workers stack the plywood used to protect the turf from

the heavy trucks. By four o'clock Paul and his helper were headed back to Champaign, but not before mentioning that the cistern located halfway up the tower badly needed painting.

The cistern is an original part of the windmill. Built of cypress wood, its purpose is to store pumped water for later use, and it has a capacity of about 500 gallons. It is empty now that there is no need to store water.

Elizabeth Marston rented a lift to complete the work. Al Walters recommended the correct paint and contacted Chris Shreve, the painter who did much of the painting on the Cobblestone house. City of Elgin workers helped put down the plywood once again, a task done every time heavy vehicles drove on the park. Chris completed the painting in just a few days. Thanks to Chris, and Greg Hulke (Parks and Rec Superintendent) and his crew.



Chris Shreve painting the cistern, July 2022

Except for the concrete pad, the windmill project was accomplished by volunteer labor and donations. All maintenance and upkeep is provided by the Elgin Area Historical Society.

The Historical Society provides its exceptional exhibits and projects like this one from donations from interested people like you.

Changes for 2023

New Membership Rates

Starting in 2023, membership fees for individuals will be \$35 and for families \$50 per year. Many costs associated with running the Museum day to day have gone up and fees have not increased in ten years. The Museum is always working hard to find new ways to bring more value to your membership. Members get free admission to most events, 15% off in the gift shop, a subscription to the bi-monthly Crackerbarrel newsletter, and free guest passes.

New Admission Rates

The Museum admission rates for 2023 are as follows:

- Adults: \$5.00
- Children under 18: FREE

New Member Benefit

The Museum is now part of the Time Travelers program. Time Travelers is a reciprocal membership network for historical museums and societies throughout the US.

<https://timetravelers.mohistory.org/institutions/> lists the many different institutions that are part of the program. There are 46 participants in Illinois alone! Each offers different benefits such as free or reduced admission, gift shop discounts, free parking, and much more.

Other Programs

The Museum is proud to be a part of the following programs:

- **Elgin Township Senior Access Pass**
Free admission to all Elgin Museums along with many other benefits.
For instructions on how to get a pass, visit: <https://elgintownship.com/seniors/> or call 847-741-2045.
- **Blue Star Museum**
FREE Museum admission from 5/20/23 through 9/4/23 for active-duty military personnel and their families, including National Guard and Reserve.
- **Passport to Adventure**
Receive discounted rates at Museums and Nature Centers in Kane and DuPage Counties; some are FREE. Stop by the Museum to get your "passport" that includes all participating institutions.

ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



Collections Corner: Volunteers Wanted

A recent donation to the Museum collection is this Elgin National Brewing Company keg, donated by Jim Bledsoe. The National Brewing Company was located at 157-161 Brook Street from 1905-1917. The National Brewing Company closed because of prohibition. (Photo: Ira Marcus)

The Elgin History Museum is looking for volunteers to help with data entry projects related to items in the Museum collections. Learn more about Elgin history and help make the collections more accessible. Choose a day and time during Museum open hours Wednesday – Saturday 11:00 am-4:00pm. Are you interested in interacting with the public and being a docent? You can docent and do data entry. Call or email the Museum for more information.

