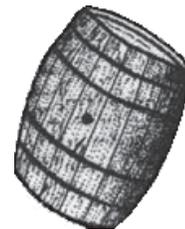


The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News November 2022

President's Report

Alan Walters, President



Fall is usually busy at the Elgin History Museum. This year is no different.

In late September we presented our 35th Annual Bluff City Cemetery Walk. Under the leadership of Rudy and Lillian Galfi, our staff and dozens of volunteers delivered what many think was our best effort to date. The

Cemetery Walk is my favorite event of the year. It is a chance to tell snippets of long forgotten Elgin History and raise a little money too. What could be better?

One month later we hosted our annual Gala. After having to produce our last two Galas virtually, it was a treat to share an evening in person with so many friends. Following the theme of Oktoberfest, The Holiday Inn – Elgin served 150 attendees an authentic German meal complete with German beer. Lively bidding on silent auction items, aggressive purchasing of raffle tickets and the selling out of our always popular Mystery Wine Bags contributed to a night of successful fundraising for the Museum.

Special thanks go to the businesses and members who donated wine, gift cards, raffle and auction items. Many thanks to Kathy Walters who chaired the event and the members of the Program Committee and Museum staff who ably assisted her every step of the way. I also want to thank Betsy Armistead for her able and gifted service. She guided the Museum programming through the pandemic over the past four years. She will be stepping back from the Board.

The fall season also marks the return of school field trips. The kids bring a ton of energy to the Museum as Educator Rebecca Miller and her volunteers assist the teachers in presenting Elgin's unique history to the next generation.

December 31 marks the end of my four-year Museum Board presidency. It has been an honor and pleasure to serve. My task was made so much easier by the dedi-

cated support of the Staff, the Board and the many friends and members of the Museum. Stepping down with me is Vice President Tricia Grosser. I could not have asked for a more supportive teammate. Neither of us are leaving the Board or the Museum. We will both find new ways to serve.

In January, our newly elected President Anne LoCascio and Vice President John Devine take over. Having worked with them over the last several years, I can assure you the Museum will be in good hands.

Please visit soon. We have wonderful programs planned for 2023 and our exhibits are ever changing. Our doors are open Wednesday through Saturday.



Kathy Walters and Marge Rowe with a Gala gift basket

Welcome New Members!

- Ross Abbey
- Irene Andino
- Sarah M. De La O
- Larry and Cindy Gelman
- Ron Godier and Alexis Chitdamrong
- Judy Hayner
- Janine Hnatusko
- Joel Pollack
- Art and Nancy Schueneman
- Beth Small and Family
- Don and Trinkia Waters

The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline December 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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December 17, 12:00 - 3:00 P.M. LeeWards Ornament Program. Admission charged. Make a LeeWards style ornament at this fun family program!

Thank You Donors

General Donations

- Mary Ellen Flaks, Youth Education Fund
- Shawn Rogers
- Dr. Michael Johnson, DDS
- George and Marge Rowe in honor of Mike Alft

Board Fundraiser

- Grant Born
- Marge Krueger
- Dolores Nelson

Speaker's Bureau

- Linda Rock
- Jerry Turnquist
- Alan Walters

In Memory of Jerry Roller

- Anderson, James and Sara Ellen
- Beth, Nancy
- Breitmayer, Wendy
- Briska, Bill and Fran Cella
- Burnidge, Richard
- Danielek, Nancy
- Grosser, Patricia and Jeff
- Haacker, Barbara
- Haacker, Dorothy
- Haworth, Marilou
- Hopper, David
- Oine, Lois
- Rabe, Donald
- Roller, Linda
- Rowe, George and Marge
- Stroud, Laura
- Youngren, Linda and Thomas
- Zollers, Patti

Upcoming Events

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

November 27, all day, Online ONLY
Museum Store Shopping Specials!

Get your holiday shopping done early!
Purchase a gift online from the Museum store and help the Museum! Special discounts and product bundles will be available.

November 29, all day

Please make an online donation to the Museum on the National day of giving. It's easy to do!

December 3, 1:00 - 3:00 P.M.
Annual Holiday Tea

In person and Zoom presentation FREE for everyone. Celebrate the holidays during this annual tradition at the Museum. Holiday treats, punch, and tea will be served. The Olde Town Carolers will perform!



In Memoriam

Mira Wojciechowska passed away suddenly on November 8th. Mira was a dedicated and hardworking Museum volunteer for the past 10 years. We will miss her very much.

Museum Gala 2022 Sponsors

- Armistead, Betsy
- Bost, Marianne
- Briska, Bill and Fran Cella
- Calhamer, Tish
- City of Elgin
- Corbett, Rita
- Flaks, Mary Ellen
- Gabel, Terry and Sue Brigham
- Galfi, Rudolph and Lillian
- Garza, Laurel
- Locascio, Anne
- Marcus, Ira and Jackie
- McClure, Sandra and Dennis
- Museum Store
- O'Connor, Kevin
- Regan, John
- Rock, Linda
- Rowe, George and Marge
- Roxworthy, Dennis and Laurie
- Turnquist, Jerry
- Walters, Alan and Kathleen

The McQueen Family of Elgin – Part One

David Siegenthaler

For generations, the McQueen name in Elgin has been associated with the legal profession, as John Walter McQueen and his son John Marshall McQueen were Elgin attorneys for a combined span of 82 years, from 1905 to 1987. The McQueen roots in the area, however, go back to 1839, when Scottish immigrants George and Margaret McQueen and their four children came to Kane County. The family settled about six miles northwest of Elgin in the Tyler Creek area, along what today is Highland Ave. The youngest family member at that time, John Alexander McQueen, only a few months old, would grow up to be a Civil War hero and the father and grandfather of the Elgin attorneys.

George McQueen was one of the founders of the Washington Reformed Presbyterian Church, which was organized in 1842. A church building was built soon after that on land donated by Alexander McCor-

nack, George's brother-in-law, just north of the McQueen property. A cemetery adjacent to the church was started in 1847 and is still accepting burials today. The Church ended regular services in 1909. In 1916 the Washington Cemetery Association was established and has met annually at the Church on the first Sunday in June since then. In 1921-22, extensive repairs were made to the old Church. In 1924 a bronze memorial tablet bearing the names of the Church founders was placed on the front of the building. In 1925 the Church was incorporated as "The Memorial Washington Reformed Presbyterian Church of Plato." In 1926 bronze plates, similar to those used in Scottish churches, bearing the names of the original pew holders were placed on the pews.



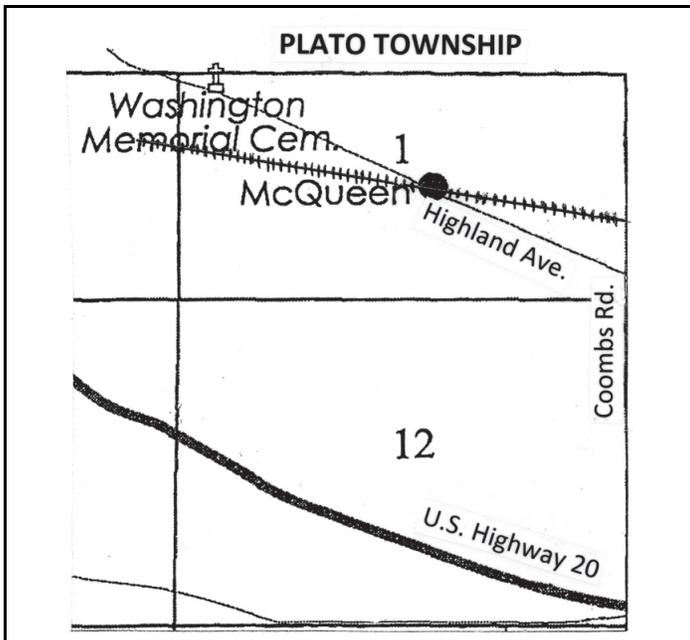
Memorial Washington Reformed Presbyterian Church of Plato

In the mid-1870s, the Chicago & Pacific railway (which became the "Milwaukee Road") extended their tracks westward through the McQueen property. A depot was established just east of where the tracks cross Highland Ave., on the north side of the road about a half-mile west of Coombs Road. In 1885 a post office was established there with John A. McQueen as the appointed postmaster. The site became known as McQueen Station and was a convenient access point for farmers, chiefly dairymen, between the stations at Almora and Pingree Grove. The McQueen homestead ("McQueencroft"), still standing, is in a grove of trees just west of where the tracks cross Highland Ave., on the south side of the road. The post office was closed in 1905 with the arrival of rural free mail delivery from Elgin and the depot is long gone.



McQueencroft today

George McQueen (1805-59), a farmer and hardware merchant in Scotland, married Margaret McCornack (1809-60) in the late 1820s and the couple had three children before emigrating to America in 1836. They lived at Croton Point, New York, for three years, where their fourth child was born. In 1837 Margaret's parents, Andrew and Helen McCornack, emigrated to America, joining George and Margaret in New York. In 1838 the McCornacks came to Kane County and were joined in 1839 by the McQueens, who came here via the Erie Canal and Great Lakes. George purchased 230 acres in the northeast corner of Plato Township, about six miles northwest of Elgin. The Native Americans had left the area only a few years before and some of their wigwags and trails remained in the Tyler Creek area.



Site of McQueen depot and Cemetery

George and Margaret had three more children while living in Kane County, for a total of seven. They are: Ellen (1830-94; Mrs. Alexander Caskey); William (1832-52); Andrew (1835-1910); John (1839-1920); Elizabeth (1841-1928; Mrs. James Rosborough); Jeannette (1844-1903; Mrs. William Christie); and Mary (1846-1904; Mrs. William McEldowney).



John Alexander McQueen was born in Croton Point, New York, on April 14, 1839. He was only three months old when his family came west to Kane County. John grew up on the family farm and attended the public school at Udina. In 1857 he was a member of the first class at Elgin Academy. John then taught school for two years until

1859, when his father died, at which time he returned to take charge of the farm. In August 1861 he enlisted in the Plato Cavalry, originally attached to the 36th Illinois Infantry, the Fox River Regiment, which later became Company K of the 15th Illinois Cavalry.

John participated in many Civil War battles, including Chickamauga and Kennesaw Mountain. When his three years of service ended, John re-enlisted as a lieutenant. The 15th Illinois fought under General William T. Sherman from Atlanta to the sea and then north into the Carolinas. During the Union army's occupation of Columbia, South Carolina, in February 1865, more than half of the city was destroyed by fire. Drunken soldiers looted stores and homes and terrorized residents.

A house occupied by the family of Rev. A. Toomer Porter, a Confederate chaplain, was invaded and ransacked. Coming upon the scene, Lt. McQueen drew a pistol, ordered the vandals to leave and stationed guards at the doors. He also organized a bucket brigade to keep the roof from catching fire from flying embers. He looked after the Porters until the Union forces left Columbia. When he left he carried a letter from Rev. Porter to Confederate General Wade Hampton, or any Confederate officer into whose hands it might fall, asking him to show Lt. McQueen every courtesy in the event of his capture and recounting what he did for the Porter family. "I beg you, by all kind remembrances of the past, for my sake as well as for him who has in the midst of the horrors of that night proved himself a man and a Christian, return to him in his extremity, all the kindness he showed to us in ours."

Soon afterward, Lt. McQueen was wounded in the groin and captured. Rev. Porter's letter saved his life and enabled him to receive special care. When Rev. Porter learned what had happened, he searched for Lt. McQueen and found him in a hospital in Camden, 30 miles northeast of Columbia. Rev. Porter secured his release and was determined to get him back to his unit. It was a risky undertaking, as they were in the midst of soldiers infuriated by the Union army's march through Georgia and the desolation of South Carolina. Even-

tually, however, they reached Raleigh, North Carolina, where Lt. McQueen was released to the Union army after Rev. Porter recounted Lt. McQueen's noble conduct to Confederate generals.

In his autobiography, 30-some years later, Rev. Porter recalled: "I had now travelled over seven hundred miles, by rail, on foot, in a wagon without springs, in a buggy, amidst many dangers, to set McQueen free. I would have travelled seven thousand to show my gratitude to that gallant man." After the war, Rev. Porter established a school for war orphans, both Union and Confederate, in Charleston, South Carolina. In 1883, while in the North soliciting funds, he addressed an audience in Elgin and visited John McQueen.

To be continued



McQueen family monument

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Clues: "Where was it taken?"

Rebecca Miller, Museum Educator

In a recent "A Picture is Worth a Thousand Clues" article we looked at photographs of old Elgin and tried to determine WHEN they were taken. It is also fun to determine WHERE an old photograph was taken from. Let's see what clues we can find in this old photo.



*Can you guess where this photo was taken?
1989.1.673b, Elgin History Museum collection*

The WHEN is easy: late 1883 or early 1884. We know this from clues hidden among the homes and businesses shown in the distance:

- The National House (large white building near top left), a boarding house for watch factory employees, is shown with its 1883 addition.
- The John McNeil home at 162 S. State Street (large white house in center foreground) is shown, but its neighbors that were built in 1884 are not.
- The Elgin National Watch Co. has the additions built in 1883 (large brick building at right).

Figuring out WHERE

Let us start by looking for landmarks in the photo. Many of the homes and buildings are too small to study but one very large and well known Elgin landmark of this time stands out. On the right side of the photo is the largest building in the photo and certainly the largest in town. It is the Elgin National Watch Company factory at 107 National St. We can see its 5-story clock tower, tall dark smokestack and long manufacturing wings. A block away at 200 National Street, we see the National House. Its 3- and 4-story sections offered housing for watch factory employees, close enough to walk to work. The factory was on the eastern bank of the Fox River. National Street runs in an east-west direction and the National House is just a bit further from the camera, so we know this photo was taken looking east.

Where is the Fox River?

The Fox River is difficult to see in this photo, but it's there. The large house prominently shown in the center of the photo sits on the west side of the river. The trees along the riverbank and their reflection in the water on both sides of the river is further evidence that this photo was taken from the west side of the Fox. This home belonged to grocer John McNeil, who had a store in Elgin's Fountain Square and later made a fortune as a wholesale grocer in Chicago.

In case you are thinking, "this was not a hard game, the watch factory and river gave it away, I know exactly what is in this photo." Remember, the game is WHERE was the photo taken, not WHAT is the photo of. The image clearly looks like an "aerial view." But how does a photographer take a picture looking

down at the back of John McNeil's home at 162 S. State, the watch factory and the National House in 1883/1884? From the top of the Elgin Tower Building? No, that's on the east side of the river, and was not built until 1929. Hot air balloon? Helicopter? Drone? No, no and no.

Where was the photographer?

This photo was taken from the top of a 125-foot arc light tower. Seven of these towers were installed throughout Elgin in 1883; including a taller one in Fountain Square reaching 150 ft. These light towers were the only source of street lighting in town for many years. The Daily News reported on November 24, 1883, the light "stole across the black river and made silvery pathways; the very air seemed warmed by the gentle influence." The light towers were at the following street corners: Summit and Spring, St. Charles and Villa, Jackson and Mill, Locust and Elm, Ryerson and South State, Park and College, and in Fountain Square. Our photo in question was taken from the light tower at Locust and Elm.



*Light tower in Fountain Square, September 1896, decorated in honor of presidential candidate William McKinley and Illinois National Guard Company E.
1984.001.116, Elgin History Museum collection*

A Unique View

Four 2,000 candle power arc lamps with carbon rods were atop each tower. The carbon rods had to be changed every two or three days. The man in charge of changing the rods, George Bowen, regularly climbed the steel frames, though some might call them "rickety." It's unlikely that Bowen did, as he was the man who sold the technology to the city. To take our photo, Elgin photographer Stephen Platt trained Bowen on the operation of his camera and it was sent to the top of each light tower for a memorable photo opportunity. These photos are viewable on the Elgin History Museum website and through the Illinois Digital Archives.

The End of the Towers

The light towers were eventually made obsolete as newer incandescent lights were erected at street intersections. The light towers needed regular painting to prevent rust and the constant carbon rod replacement was often neglected, leading homeowners to call for their removal. The Fountain Square tower was taken down in 1903. By 1913 only 4 remained, in contrast to the 435 new street intersection lights. In 1913 the tower at Park and College collapsed when hit by a falling oak tree. The last tower came down in 1920, a victim of the Palm Sunday tornado.

So, the answer to our question of "where was this photo taken" is "from the top of a 125-foot light tower at the corner of Locust and Elm streets." If that was your guess, excellent work!

Oktoberfest Gala

The Museum held a fundraising gala at the Elgin Holiday Inn on Saturday, October 29. Entertainment included Die Musikmeisters playing lively German polkas, waltzes, marches and dance music. They had a cowbell table and a large alpine horn!



Genuine alpine horn!

The Edelweiss Chicago German Dancers performed authentic Bavarian and Austrian folk dances in costume. The buffet dinner included among other dishes pork schnitzel, dumplings, spaetzle, and German chocolate cake for dessert.

Raffle tickets were sold for a Graham's chocolate basket and three Reams Meat certificates for \$100 each. The silent auction had 30 different items for bidding and Gala goers could also purchase a wine bag with a surprise gift card. Great fun for all!



Rebecca Miller with Die Musikmeisters



Terry Gabel, Sue Brigham, and Sheila Freeman



Doug Tomsha, Bill Briska and Kyle Tomsha



Lillian Galfi, Cemetery Walk co-chair and incoming President Anne LoCascio

Thanks to Kathy Walters, Gala Chair, for pulling it all together along with the Program Committee chaired by Betsy Armistead. Program Committee: Ricky Harris, Laura Stroud, Rudy and Lillian Galfi, Mark Clemens, Elizabeth Marston and Trish LaFleur.

Courier-News Negatives Online

Beth Nazwara, Curator of Collections

Were you or a family member involved with a sports team growing up in Elgin? Did you belong to the Wheeler Chapter of American War Mothers in Elgin? Was your picture in the Courier News?

The Elgin History Museum has spent the last year digitizing Courier-News negatives. Here is the link to find the images:

<https://elginhistory.pastperfectonline.com/search>.

The images can also be found on Illinois Digital Archives at this link:

<https://idaillinois.org/digital/collection/p16614coll80/search/>

To find yourself or a family member it is best to search by last name. The Museum received a grant from the Illinois State Historical Advisory Board and a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services to make this project successful. Over 1,000 negatives have been digitized and more are in process. The Museum prioritized under-represented people and organizations in Elgin. The project introduced the Museum to many new people and their stories. The years covered for images digitized is 1936-1986. The 50-year time span enabled the Museum to follow individuals from childhood school and organizational activities to adults shown at their jobs. The Museum collection has approximately 100,000 Courier-News images, all of which will eventually be digitized. Here's a few samples to pique your interest.

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360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



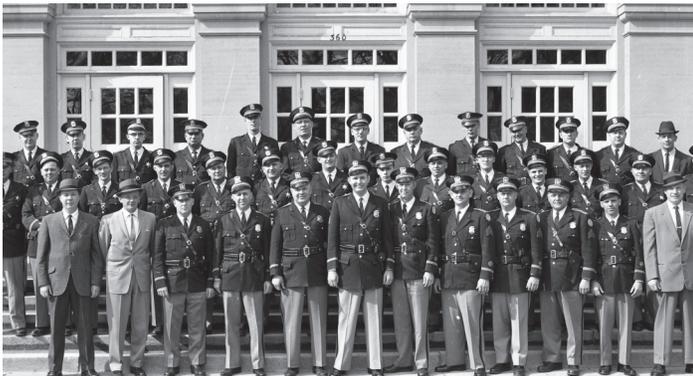
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St. Edwards High School win Catholic Basketball Conference, 1949 CN58920dp2



Cynthia Jackson and Benny Judge in the St. James Style Show, 1971 CN12922a



Elgin Police Officers, 1962 CN60296