



## Bill Briska

Bill brings to the Museum and the City of Elgin, Illinois a broad range of historical and architectural knowledge, managerial experience, construction skills and experience as a writer and lecturer.

Bill wrote The History of Elgin Mental Health Center: Evolution of a State Hospital (1997) as an in-depth history of the institution, presented in context with the national trends in mental health care. Bill worked at EMHC for 28 years and after retiring in 2002 he continued to volunteer as the

facility's archivist, answering research questions, cataloging artifacts and preserving vintage images. Bill advocates for the hospital's old burial ground (Hillside Cemetery), giving tours and organizing clean up days. Working with the City and the Museum, Bill raised funds to install interpretive signage explaining the cemetery's significance.

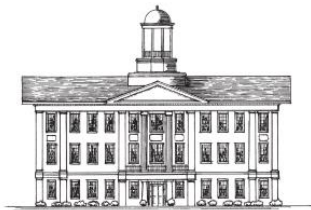
Bill's second book, Elgin Time: History of the Elgin National Watch Company 1864 to 1968 was originally written in 2003 with E. C. Alft and updated in 2020 with additional photographs and insight. The book is the only complete history of this important American manufacturer. Bill is the volunteer curator of the Museum's Elgin National Watch Company collection including creating exhibits and educational lectures, and assisting with research services.

As a Museum volunteer over the past 25 years, Bill has served as a board member and as Treasurer and President. He has assisted in all areas of the Museum from building and writing exhibits and films to fundraising. Recently, Bill lead the effort to re-build the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House.

Bill served on the steering committee of the Gifford Park Association's (GPA) Annual Historic Elgin House Tour for over 20 years. This popular event promotes architectural preservation, local history and neighborhood pride. He has been the

lead author of the extensively researched tour booklet for 10 years. He also served many years as GPA's treasurer or board member. Bill has volunteered for several residential rehabilitation projects.

Six of his eleven years on the Elgin Heritage Commission were as chairperson. Among the many projects he championed, were the city's cell phone tours, and the thematic Bungalow Historic District. For 10 years, he was a member of the architectural review board overseeing the city's four historic districts. Bill also served as the chair of the city's Strategic Plan Advisory Commission, from 2013 to 2018. Bill's focus on grass-roots organizational development over the past 30 years, has led to neighborhood revitalization, preservation and historic appreciation, and Elgin pride.



ELGIN  
HISTORY  
MUSEUM

Booking arrangements are made through the Elgin History Museum. Please email [museum@elginhistory.org](mailto:museum@elginhistory.org) or call 847-742-4248 to learn more.