The Crackerbarrel



Elgin History Museum News July 2024

President's Report



Anne LoCascio, President

It might be summertime, but the Elgin History Museum never slows down. We have programs all season long. The Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House hosted a bursting-at-the-seams audience for Dan Miller's presentation on architect William Abell and The Elgin Arts Happy House was hosted in conjunction with Side Street Studio

Both events fulfill one of the goals that was set when the Museum first embarked on rehabbing the building: providing a space on the west side for community gatherings. It took a lot of time, effort and money, but the result was a beautiful space for Elgin to come together.

The Wild Ones have also continued landscaping with native plants at the Cobblestone House, working their way along Crystal Avenue. When I drive by in the summer, I look to see what might be in bloom. The two rabbits in my own yard, Starlight and Cinnamon, (yes, I named them) have been munching away on my own Prairie Winecups, so I live vicariously through the ones draping gracefully over the corner boulders at the Nancy Kimball House.

Museum representatives will be walking in the July 4th Parade with the Heritage Commission. The parade on Douglas Avenue is a great chance to celebrate America and Elgin's history. Jill and George Moore along with Rebecca Miller's family are creating a Bluff City Cemetery for the Museum's parade float, advertising the upcoming Bluff City Cemetery Walk on Sept 21-22.

Speaking of bursting at the seams, we are expecting another record crowd at the Elgin History Museum Car show on July 14. Dennis Roxworthy's creation has been growing in reputation each year and last year the show spilled over onto the back lawn to accommodate all who came for a day of car viewing, music, and Museum visiting.

We hope to see you all summer long.

Welcome New Members!

- · Stephen Crow
- M. Candace Evans
- Carolyn Fischer
- Laura Lightfine
- Sue Lloyd
- Thomas Neylon
- Janet Sebala

Welcome Summer Interns



Summer interns Elizabeth Del Rio and Andrew Bass are working on digitization and accession projects in the collections

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President: Anne LoCascio Vice President: John Devine Secretary: Christen Sundquist Corr. Secretary: Tricia Grosser Treasurer: William Briska

Editor: Rebecca Marco

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.

Next deadline August 20, 2024

Visit our website Elginhistory.org

Upcoming Events

Al Walters, Program Chair

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

July 14, 10:00 A.M. to 3:30 P.M.: Classic Car Show Registration \$15.00, from 9:00 A.M. to 12:00 noon

All years and makes welcome; judged show. Top 50 awards announced by 2:30 p.m. Expect Model Ts to late model show vehicles. Live music, food for purchase and FREE entry to the Museum. The Chicagoland TBird club will have their own separate awards.

July 18, 12:00 noon to 1:00 P.M.: Brown Bag Lunch History of LeeWards and its Merchandising with Linda Rock

LeeWards was an American crafts and fabrics retailer. It was founded in Elgin in 1947. Join Linda Rock for a Brown Bag Lunch that will explore how LeeWards went from a mail order catalog to 100 specialty craft stores nationwide. Linda will also share LeeWards related items from her personal collection! FREE for Members.

July 20, 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M. at Lords Park Zoo You Butter Believe It—Elgin is a Dairy Town! Best for children 3 to 8 years old

Did you know Elgin was once famous for its milk and butter? Six thousand cows can't be wrong! Join us at the Tefft Farm inside the Lords Park Zooto learn why Elgin was once the Butter Capital of the Midwest and how a man from Texas got a library named after him in Elgin.



August 7, 1:00 P.M. to 3:00 P.M., Lords Park Zoo I Saw it at the Lords Park Zoo! Animals from the Zoo's Early Years Best for children 3 to 8 years old

Lords Park Zoo opened in 1895 and was once home to bears, snakes, and even a lion! Come visit the modern Tefft Farm Zoo inside Lords Park and make crafts to help remember the past residents of the zoo.

August 15, 12:00 noon to 1:00 P.M., Brown Bag Lunch: Elgin during D-Day on the 80th anniversary with Jerry Turnquist

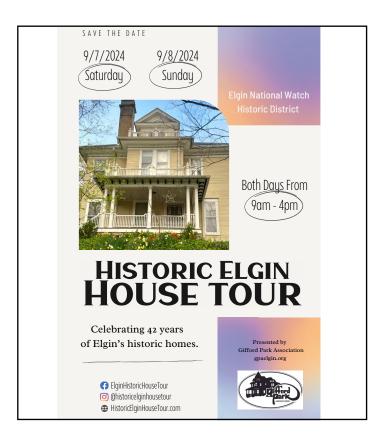
The impact of World War II and D-Day on Elgin citizens both at home and abroad is retold through newspaper clippings and photos from 80 years ago. FREE for Members / \$5.00 for Guests. Please register.

August 23, 6:30 P.M. to 8:00 p.m. Elgin Watch Factory Historic District Exhibit

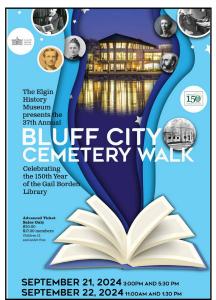
Deb Vruble and members of the district will give a brief overview of the neighborhood. Enjoy light refreshments as you view the new Preserve Your Neighborhood exhibit series!

September 7 & 8: Elgin Historic House Tour Hosted by Gifford Park Association www.HistoricElginHouseTour.com

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Sept. 21, 3:00 P.M. - 7:00 P.M. (tours at 3:00 & 5:30 P.M.) Sept. 22, 11:00 A.M. - 3:00 P.M. (tours at 11:00 & 1:30 P.M.) Bluff City Cemetery Walk Bluff City Cemetery, 945 Bluff City Boulevard, Elgin



Visitors will be guided on a 70-minute tour that showcases gravesites of former residents portrayed by actors in period costumes. In 2024, the Gail Borden Library is celebrating 150 years of service, and all characters featured on this vear's Walk are associated with literacy, books, or the Gail Borden Library. Volunteers at the Elgin History Museum organized this much anticipated event that

attracts hundreds of people each year.
Tickets \$20.00, online purchase only. Member discount.
Check out sponsorship opportunities!

Get To Know Board Member Marianne Bost



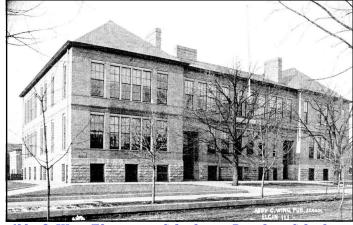
Marianne has been a Museum member for many years, but just joined the Elgin History Museum Board in 2023. Already she has jumped into representing the Museum at the Elgin Patriotic and Memorial Association. As a military veteran and former captain in the Army Airborne Division, Marianne is interested in veteran history and local

organizations, such as the American Legion. Marianne also volunteers for table events and other programs during the year that she can fit around a full-time job and new grand-children. Many thanks to Marianne for her service to the Museum and to the United States!

The Wing Family, Part 2

David Siegenthaler, Museum Researcher

In 1899, two years after Abby Wing's tragic death, she was honored when the Elgin School Board named their new school in her memory. It was built on the site of the "New Brick" high school at the northwest corner of Kimball and Center streets, where Abby once taught and served as principal. The "Abby C. Wing School" still stands, but it closed in 1977 and was converted into the Burnham Schoolhouse Apartments, which opened in 1981.



Abby C. Wing Elementary School, now Burnham Schoolhouse Apartments, at Kimball and Center St.

On the morning of his death, October 31, 1902, William Wing completed his will, in which he gave all of his land north of Wing St. to the City of Elgin for use as a park. This 121.5-acre park was Elgin's largest until the 400-acre Elgin Sports Complex opened in the 1980s. William had offered

at least 20 acres of this property in 1892 for park purposes contingent upon the city developing the site but Elgin's aldermen at the time declined, fearing the expense.

Officially opened in August 1903, Wing Park included a popular site known as Sulphur Springs, as well as Tyler Creek, which flowed through the northwest part. In 1907 a driving club developed a half-mile oval for harness racing in the northeast part of the park. The harness racing ended in 1920. In 1908, a swimming pool fed by Tyler Creek and a nine-hole golf course were completed. The swimming pool has been upgraded several times over the years and today is a thoroughly modern aquatic center. The golf course, believed to be the first municipally-owned course in Illinois, was designed by Thomas Bendelow, America's most prolific early golf course designer. The course was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.

Wing Street bisected the Wing farms. William's farm was 270 acres at the time of his death and extended south to Highland Ave. William's half-brother Edwin's farm, immediately to the west, was 125 acres and extended west to McLean Blvd. In 1906 the Elgin & Belvidere Electric Railway Co. (E&BE) was planning to construct its track into Elgin from the northwest. The Wing heirs gave the E&BE a 20-foot-wide strip of land along the south side of Wing St. from McLean Blvd. to the city limits near the entrance to Wing Park. They also gave the Elgin highway commission an 80-foot-wide right-of-way for a new public road south from Wing Park to Highland Ave. This became Wing Park Blvd. and allowed Elgin to extend its own city railway system to meet the E&BE at Wing Park, thereby increasing access to the new park.

Orlando Ansen Wing, William's younger brother, graduated from Notre Dame University. As a young adult he was engaged in the hardware business and for a time worked in brother William's law office. In 1877 he married Harriett ("Hattie") Weld (1856-1940), daughter of Owen Brown Weld and his wife Elizabeth (nee Kelley). For many years he was engaged in farming and stock raising on his farm on the Dundee road and on the Weld farm just west of Elgin. In about 1888 Orlando moved his family to St. James, MN, but returned to Elgin about 1900 and resided on the Weld farm. In 1902, upon brother William's death, Orlando inherited the Wing Mansion and moved his family there.

Orlando and Hattie had four children: Mary Belle (1878-1915; Mrs. B. Fred Stone, 1901-03; divorced); Lyla Adeline (1880-1959; Mrs. Roy W. Biggar); Owen "Bo" Weld (1882-1958; wife: Alice Blanche Lathrop); and William H. Wing (1890-91; died at 8 months old in St. James, MN). Orlando and Hattie lived in the Wing Mansion until Orlando's death in 1921 at age 72. Their children, Mary Belle (following her divorce till her death in 1915) and Owen and his wife Blanche (beginning about 1916), also lived with them. Following Orlando's death, his widow Hattie moved to her mother Elizabeth Weld's home at

52 N. Crystal St. Elizabeth died only two months after Orlando. Hattie continued to live at 52 N. Crystal St. until she died in 1940. Orlando and Hattie are buried in Udina.

Following Orlando's death, son Owen and his wife Blanche (1888-1962) continued to live in the Wing Mansion till about 1925, when Owen's sister Lyla and her husband Roy Biggar (1880-1967) and their two daughters moved back to Elgin from Merrillan, WI, and moved into the Wing Mansion. For the next 25 years Owen and Blanche lived elsewhere in Elgin but about 1950 they moved back into the Wing Mansion, sharing the home with Owen's sister Lyla Biggar and her family. In 1958 Owen and Blanche built a new ranch home nearby at 1000 W. Highland Ave. but Owen died that year before occupying it. Blanche lived there till her death in 1962.

Of Orlando and Hattie's four children, only Lyla had offspring. She and Roy Biggar were the parents of Dorothy (1910-91; Mrs. Aubrey Lawson Hesse); Helen (1916-2001; Mrs. Stuart Clayton Busse); and a son who died in infancy in Wisconsin. Dorothy Hesse was the last Wing family member to live in the Wing Mansion, moving out in 1981. Dorothy's only child, Victoria Hesse ("Vickie"; 1947-2004), lived in Elgin all of her life. Helen Busse's children are Stuart Jr. (born 1942); Kathleen (1945-2015; Mrs. Richard Schmeling); and John Phillip (born 1949), who still lives in Elgin.

Kate L. Wing, Washington Wing's fifth child and William's half-sister, moved to California in the 1880s. After Washington's death in 1888, Kate's mother Adeline joined her in California. In 1895 Kate married Rev. Silas Sprowls (1844-1915), a widowed Methodist minister with two children. Kate passed away in Los Angeles, CA, and is buried there.

Edwin Willetts Wing, Washington's last child and William's half-brother, married Esther ("Etta") Pierce (1864-1960) in 1886. She was the daughter of James Pierce, a pioneer of Wayne, IL. Edwin and Esther had six children: Alice Margaret (1888-1903); Claude Pierce (1890-1970; wife: Olive Bucklin); Judson Ralph ("Judd"; 1892-1946; wife: Alma Stimpson); Helen Florence (1894-1987; never married); Allan Eugene (1897-1969; wife: Ada Schick); and Raymond Donald (1901-35; wife: Mary Lee).

Edwin graduated from the Northwestern University law school in 1900 and practiced law for a short time. For most of his life he was engaged in farming and stock raising. He was born on the Wing farm immediately west of Wing Park and lived there until 1918, when he moved into the city of Elgin, buying the home of Victor Moody at 265 Hamilton Ave. In 1921 Edwin sold this home to Dr. A.E. McCornack and he and Esther moved to Los Angeles, CA. Their three youngest children, Helen, Allan and Raymond, followed them to the Los Angeles area.

Edwin and his son Judd built up a large thoroughbred Holstein dairy cattle business which they named the "Parkside Dairy Farm." In 1914 a spectacular fire consumed most of the buildings except the residence, but the Wings quickly rebuilt. For about a dozen years Edwin was a major stockholder and officer of the Kerber Packing Co. but sold out to Charles Kerber in 1917. In 1920 Edwin sold his 125-acre dairy farm to C.L. Teckler of Crystal Lake for \$440 an acre, at that time the highest price ever paid for farm land in Kane County. The following year he moved to California, where he and Esther spent the rest of their lives. Edwin died in 1951 and Esther in 1960. They are buried in Los Angeles County, CA.

Judd Wing operated the Parkside Dairy till about 1922, when he partnered with George Powell of Illinois Park in the Powell & Wing sand, gravel and excavating company. In 1928 Walter Geister bought out Mr. Powell and the company became Wing & Geister. Judd and his wife Alma (1888-1946) both died in 1946.

Claude Wing served overseas as an officer in World War 1. In the 1920s he was employed in automobile sales and then by International Harvester for a few years. In the mid-1930s he was living in Aurora and by the mid-1940s in Rockford. He and his wife Olive (1888-1967) retired to Florida in 1961 where they spent the rest of their lives.

Helen Wing moved to California with her parents and worked as a stenographer. Allan Wing also moved to California where he managed an orange grove. Raymond Wing moved to California as well and by the 1930 census was working on road construction in Arizona.

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's publications; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Kane County histories; "Crackerbarrel" (Elgin History Museum newsletter); Ancestry.com; Findagrave.com; Viola Swanson's research; Vickie Hesse's genealogical notes; Kane County Clerk; Kane County Recorder of Deeds; Elgin Death Records; Elgin city directories; federal censuses; monument photo by Judy Van Dusen; etc.



Wing Park Postcard showing Tyler Creek

Carbary and the Greyhounds

Nick Freeman, Board of Directors

It was Saturday, July 13, 1929, and the mood was growing tense. Nearly a thousand people had turned out for the grand reopening of greyhound racing in Elgin. The large new grandstand on S. McLean was filling up, and a band was on hand to furnish music, but the dogs were not yet in their starting positions. Sheriff's deputies were stationed throughout the extensive park. Track workers seemed uncertain. Finally, after several hours of delay, the band leader made the following announcement: "Owing to the fact that the electrical rabbit has gone on the bum, tonight's racing program is called off."

But there was more to the story than a malfunctioning mechanical rabbit.

George D. Carbary was also there that evening. As the recently-elected State's Attorney for Kane County, Carbary had already begun to build a reputation as a staunch enemy of vice in all its forms. Prohibition was the law of the land. Upon taking office the previous year, Carbary had declared war against "bootleggers, vice lords, moonshiners, road houses, slot machine operators, houses of ill-fame, bookmakers, soft-drink parlors, blind pigs and gambling dens." He was said to have conducted 30 liquor raids throughout Kane County in his first week in office.



Kane Co. State's Attorney George Carbary presiding over a bootlegger raid during Prohibition

Illegal gambling in Elgin, including betting on dog races, would not be tolerated. Carbary instructed L. L. Urch, Elgin's sheriff, to post deputies at each ticket window of the track, threatening "immediate arrest and prosecution for agents and bettors" should any tickets be sold. There was no betting that night and no racing. The crowd slowly dispersed and the grand opening was rescheduled for the following Saturday.

Dog racing in Elgin, at the Kane County Kennel Club on McLean Boulevard west of town, had enjoyed brief popularity two years prior. The first 60-day "meet" had seen large nightly crowds, but soon attendance began to drop off. The track closed abruptly several months later "due to financial failure." Many Elginites had invested in the enterprise and lost their money. The 48-acre track and grounds changed hands several times in the interim. The elaborate arched entrance gate began to deteriorate.

But, in early 1929, new owners suddenly appeared and began an ambitious rebuild. The financial backers, identified as Mrs. Eunice Parmenter of Waukegan and Mrs. Hilda DeTienne of Barrington, spent upwards of \$120,000 to enlarge and enhance the original track with an all-new covered grandstand, modern electrical lighting, and other improvements. Their partner was Fred S. "Mickey" Moore, "of Chicago and the west coast," who represented himself as the promoter and general manager of the track.

The new owners' greatest obstacle was the law prohibiting racetrack gambling, but the promoter believed he had come up with a solution. His plan was this: tickets were to be sold at two dollars each as a donation "for the upkeep of dogs and track maintenance." If the dog who was specifically selected by the ticket buyer for upkeep happened to win, the lucky donor would receive a healthy share of the race's combined contributions as a gratuity.

Carbary wasn't having it. "The dogs can run all they want to out there," he told the press, "but there will not be one dime of money bet upon them, nor one dime contributed toward their upkeep by persons hoping for a financial return from their contributions." Thus Sheriff Urch and his deputies were stationed around the track on opening night and the inaugural races postponed.

Then, three nights later, the grandstand burned to the ground.

"Blaze Destroys Grandstand at Elgin Dog Track," the Courier-News headline read. The night watchman reported seeing unusual lights around 2:00 A.M., just before the blaze erupted. After alerting the kennel staff in order to rescue the greyhounds, the fire department was called and rushed to the scene. Because the track on McLean Blvd. was outside the city limits, there was no water available to douse the flames. Chemicals were used to save the kennels, outbuildings and entranceway. Of the 175 racing greyhounds that were boarded, four were killed and several dozen more ran off, most of which were eventually recovered (though it was rumored that some of the missing dogs became the beloved pets of local families). The grandstand was a total loss: \$50,000 in damages was the initial estimate. The two owners stated that there was no insurance coverage and that they had no idea how the fire could have started.

In the days following, thousands of Elginites motored out to McLean Blvd. to personally view the destruction.

Early investigations seemed to point, according to Sheriff Urch, to "incendiarists." Oil-soaked rags were found onsite, along with oil-tainted gunny sacks and traces of gunpowder burns. Carbary, who was closely involved in the inquiry, said, "I am satisfied that the [grandstand] was set on fire by some person or persons."

Many theories as to the cause and potential perpetrators were speculated upon by the local citizenry:

- defective electrical wiring (remember the rabbit)
- rival dog racing interests from Cook County
- disgruntled investors in the original track or creditors thereof
- an anti-gambling fanatic

Two of the most amusing and far-fetched theories were that the track was fired by operatives for the State's Attorney's office, or by a cigarette dropped by a careless aviator flying over the grandstand.

Over the next few weeks, further investigation was conducted and potential witnesses interviewed. One spoke of seeing a car parked near the entrance on the fateful night. On July 23rd, it was announced that Fred "Mickey" Moore had been arrested in Toledo, Ohio, accused of running a confidence game against the track investors Parmenter and De Tienne, and had made off with \$2,000 from each. At first he said he would waive extradition and answer the charges in Kane County. Two officers were dispatched to Toledo to return with the accused, only to learn upon arrival in Ohio that Moore had changed his mind and was determined to fight extradition for trial.

Days later, Moore was also charged with arson based on new evidence: a witness claimed to have seen him at the track around 11:00 P.M. on the night of the fire. It had also been learned that earlier on the day of the fire, Moore had purchased five gallons of kerosene and 18 gallons of Flit, a flammable insecticide. A n

Here the record ends. Newspaper accounts do not reveal the outcome of the case. The site fell into disuse until repurposed as an athletic field, and ultimately became what is now the Town and Country Shopping Center on McLean Boulevard just north of Route 20. There were to be no further attempts to resurrect dog racing in Elgin.

But Carbary continued to wage his crusade against illicit activities. After serving a second term as State's Attorney for Kane County, and three years after Prohibition ended, he entered private practice and worked from his Tower Building offices with distinction and honor, including being named Master of Chancery, and remained active well past retirement age. A life-long Elgin resident, he and his wife, Lillian, raised two sons who followed in his footsteps. One son, Warren Carbary, became Private Secretary to Supreme

Court Justice William J. Fulton. Warren's son, Jonathan L. Carbary, continues the family tradition as a prominent Elgin lawyer to this day.

George D. Carbary passed away in 1973 and is buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Exhibit Updates

Be sure to stop by the Museum to see a few new exhibits this summer!

Many thanks to Max Michelson (below) for offering his amazing collection of Elgin self-winding watches for exhibit at the Museum. Max worked with Curator Beth Nawara to update an area of the Elgin Watch exhibit space. Self-winding watches were only made for a short time, but revolutionized the evolution of watches.



A new temporary exhibit, *Preserve Your Neighborhood!* is dedicated to a closer look at Elgin's five historic districts, local architects and builders, housing styles and all things Elgin architecture. Museum Educator Rebecca Miller created a new graphic way to appreciate the buildings in the Watch Factory Historic District, with architectural details installed by Board Member Dennis Roxworthy. Dennis has a collection of items salvaged from Elgin teardowns. Deb Vruble, President of the Elgin Watch (District) Association, loaned the Museum a neighborhood sign. Board Member Christen Sundquist helped with preservation content. Thanks to all!



Thank You Donors

The Museum is grateful to the Trinidad Aguirre-Armenta Foundation for the Arts, Inc. for donating to the Hispanic Heritage Project!

Cemetery Walk

• Dennis and Laurie Roxworthy

Speaker's Bureau Donations

- · Bill Briska
- Ann Chipman
- Linda Rock
- Jerry Turnquist

General Donations

- Dave Bosely
- Ann Chipman

Dorothy Martin

Dan and Lynne Walters

Lou Malnati's Pizza Fundraiser

Mary Bavido Sandi & Dennis McClure Paul Bednar Rebecca Miller Marianne Bost Jill and George Moore Mark Clemens Beth Nawara Laura Costello Mike & Gayle Politowicz Maria & Pat Crawford Mark & Glenna Preradovic Eric & Katie Fladung Sergio & Kathy Quintanilla George and Marge Rowe Vicki Frederick Tricia Grosser Al & Kathy Walters Mary Kemerling Andrew & Hannah Walters Tibor & Kristine Kovari Jennifer Walters Trish and LaFleur Matt Walters Anne LoCascio John Zimmerman John & Liz Marston Ron Zimmerman



Answers to Last Issue's Trivia Questions

Q: Elgin was once home to which specialty museum? A: The historical radio museum consisted of the collection of Dr. Ralph Muchow, the largest in the world in 1967. The collection was sold at public auction after his death.

Q: Which Elgin manufacturer had the largest factory? A: The Elgin National Watch Company

Q: True or false: Cows can walk up a flight of stairs, but are anatomically unable to walk back down.

A: False. Cows are anatomically able to walk down stairs, but they will go to great lengths to avoid doing so.

Mayor's Awards for the Museum

The Museum recently won two Mayor's Awards from the City of Elgin. One was for completion of the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House restoration, and the other was for Rebecca Miller's resource guide designed for school dis-

trict U-46 educators, *Story of Our Towns*. This guide provides historical information about Bartlett, Elgin, Hanover Park, South Elgin, Streamwood, and Wayne, all towns within district U-46. Congratulations!



Accepting the award for the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone
House are (l. to r.) Bill Briska, Elizabeth Marston (in front
of Mayor Dave Kaptain), Board Member Dennis Roxworthy, George Rowe, and President Anne LoCascio. John
Marston of the Elgin Heritage Commission is at right rear.



Museum Educator Rebecca Miller accepts her Mayor's Award for Story of Our Towns