

The Crackerbarrel

Elgin History Museum News July 2026

President's Report: Our Semiquincentennial



Anne LoCascio, President

America is celebrating its 250th birthday this year, and the Elgin History Museum is joining the celebration with a live reading of the Declaration of Independence on July 8 at 5 p.m. CST. This is a nationwide program initiated by the Hawai'i America250 Commission. We will be hosting along with Fox Valley SAR, Elias Kent Kane DAR, and

Signal Hill DAR. The document will be read simultaneously across all 10 U.S. time zones, commemorating its first public reading on July 8, 1776.

While our mission focuses on preserving and sharing local history, Elgin's story reflects the broader American experience. Since the 1830s, generations of newcomers have settled along the Fox River seeking opportunities for themselves and their families. This event offers a meaningful way to celebrate 250 years of American history and nearly 200 years of Elgin's own heritage.

On August 21, 2026, the Museum will premiere *Nuestras Historias*, a documentary based on oral histories from nearly 40 Hispanic residents of the Fox River Valley. The film will debut at the Harry Blizzard Theatre at Elgin Community College, alongside a companion exhibit. Both will move to Gail Borden Library on September 3 for Hispanic Heritage Month.

For more than two decades, the Elgin History Museum has produced documentaries, exhibitions, and books that preserve, document, and share Elgin's heritage. Past projects include Circle of Time (2002), The Jewish Experience in Elgin (2006), Project 2-3-1: A Story of Elgin's African American Heritage (2015), and Diaries to Prairies (2018).

Our latest project highlights the contributions of the Hispanic communities that have been part of Elgin since the 1920s.

We invite you to join us for both events to celebrate Elgin and America.

Welcome New Members

Joan Albert	Michael Kuehl
Matthew Cavanaugh	Kay Petit
Debra Henderson	Diane and Marvin Solberg
Judi Jensen	

Thank You Donors

Dave Bosely in memoriam of Nancy Kawasaki

Bruce and Mary Cook for preservation at Hilltop Cemetery

Larry Drafall in honor of 3 women with great impact at EAHS: Elizabeth Marston, Joyce Pellicore and Cindy Drafall

Sheila Freeman for Museum Gala 2026

Rosamaria Martinez in honor of Filiberto Martinez

Al Patten in honor of Beth Nawara

General Donations	In honor of Elizabeth Marston
Terry Gabel and Sue Brigham	Jennifer Ford
Judi Jensen	Laurel Garza
Rachel Neville	Carol Gieske
Ann Rubin	Miriam Lytle
Lorece Smith	Erin Rehberg
	Marge and George Rowe

Monthly Recurring Donation	
Evan Fry	Patricia Harkin
Rudolph and Lillian Galfi	Dorothy Turay

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.
Next deadline August 20, 2026
Visit our website Elginhistory.org
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2026 Events Calendar

Al Walters, Program Chair

Check the website for current information. Events take place at the Elgin History Museum unless otherwise noted. To buy tickets, you can scan the QR codes or buy online at elginhistory.org/events-calendar

**July 8
4:30 P.M.** **Declaration of Independence Reading**
Hear the words that changed history. Local leaders, educators, historians, and volunteers will read the Declaration aloud, just as it was shared with the public in 1776. Free outdoor event, bring a lawn chair.

**July 11
9:00 A.M.-
3:30 P.M.** **Annual Classic Car Show**
The Museum's most anticipated summer tradition returns! See vehicles of all years, makes, and styles. Free event includes free admission to the Museum. Registration onsite 9:00 A.M. - 12:00 noon. \$20 per vehicle. No preregistration.

**July 16
12:00
noon -
1:00 P.M.** **Brown Bag Lunch: Elgin and WWII with Jerry Turnquist**
Using newspaper stories and pictures from 80 plus years ago, this presentation will retell the story of how World War II affected Elgin citizens at home and abroad.

**August 20
12:00
noon -
1:00 P.M.** **Brown Bag Lunch: Elgin's Roads with Andy Thompson**

**August 21
Reception
1:00 P.M.
Documentary
2:00 P.M.** **"Hispanic Heritage: Celebrating Culture and Community" Documentary and Traveling Exhibit Premiere**
Elgin Community College, Blizzard Theatre
Celebrate the stories, traditions, and contributions of Elgin's Hispanic community. The reception features food, music, and hands-on activities for kids, followed by the premiere of a powerful documentary that anchors a new traveling exhibit exploring six generations of Hispanic history in the Elgin area. Please RSVP.

**Sept. 10
12:00
noon -
1:00 P.M.**

Brown Bag Lunch: Grocery Stores with Linda Rock

Linda shares the history of neighborhood grocery stores in Elgin and tells the story of one particular grocer, Libbie Samuelson. Please RSVP.

**Sept. 26
3:00 P.M.
5:30 P.M.
Sept. 27
11:00 A.M.
1:30 P.M.**

Bluff City Cemetery Walk **Tickets \$20 Members / \$25 Guests / \$15 Jr/Sr High – Tickets will be on sale soon!**

Visitors will be guided on a 70-minute tour that showcases gravesites of former residents portrayed by actors in period costumes. The Museum is celebrating the United States semiquincentennial for the 2026 Walk with the inspiring theme of "Hometown Heroes," featuring citizens representing selfless service.

**Oct. 18
2:00 P.M.**

Annual Business Meeting with Brian "Fox" Ellis as John Adams

John Adams will share the history of the steps leading to the Declaration, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, then lead a discussion about our rights and responsibilities, our shared history, and a hopeful future.

Annual Meeting portion includes the election of officers and short reports on Museum status, lasting about 20 minutes. FREE for Members / \$5 for guests. Please RSVP through the website.

**Nov. 15
2:00 P.M. -
4:00 P.M.**

Illinois Brass Band playing the music of the Watch Factory Band at First Methodist Church, 216 Highland Ave., Elgin

History sounds better in brass! Join the Elgin History Museum and the Illinois Brass Band for a special concert at the First Methodist Church. The program features special selections resurrected from the Museum's archives! This performance is a joint fundraiser supporting both organizations. Tickets on sale soon!

**Nov. 21,
10:00 A.M.
- 4:00 P.M.
Nov. 22,
10:00 A.M.
- 2:30 P.M.**

Take Photos with Santa at the Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House, 302 W. Chicago St. Elgin

The historic Nancy Kimball Cobblestone House, is the perfect setting for your festive photos! Book a 15-minute time block and bring your own camera to take photos however you like. Santa will be there—he's pet-friendly and sensory-friendly. Bring along your favorite props to make your photos unique! Plus, enjoy a holiday craft activity and light snacks for a little extra cheer. Tickets on sale soon.

**Dec. 5,
1:00 P.M. -
3:00 P.M.**

Holiday Tea: The Legend of St. Nicholas with Terry Lynch

Terry Lynch portrays the Old English Father Christmas, sharing the global origins of St. Nicholas and the history behind our favorite Christmas traditions.

Indulge in a generous spread of sweet and savory treats prepared by our amazing Museum volunteers. This is a holiday tradition you won't want to miss! Tickets available soon.

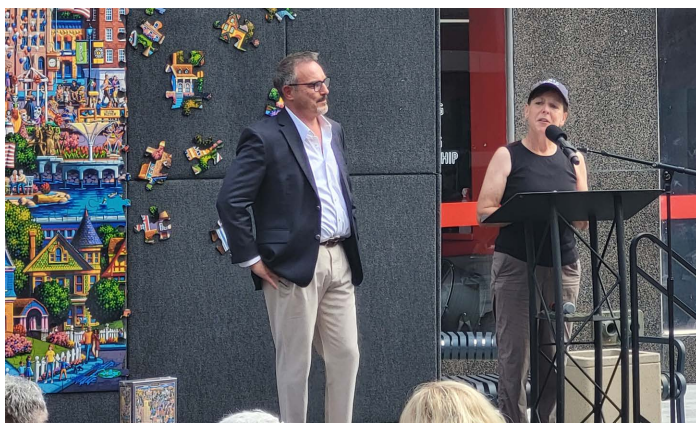
Limited-Edition Elgin Jigsaw Puzzle Now in Museum Store

Want to own a piece of beautiful Elgin public art? The Museum Store has the newly unveiled Elgin Cityscape Puzzle! Part of the nationwide **Land That I Love** project, this puzzle is a celebration of Elgin's character and landmarks. The puzzle is an original Elgin cityscape by artist Eric Dowdle. His colorful painting features local schools, customs, events, businesses, and landmarks. Each puzzle includes an information sheet about the places shown in the image.



The original painting on which the puzzle is based was unveiled by the artist on June 27 in DuPage Court (a small section of the painting, featuring Old Main, is shown at left). Puzzles are sold exclu-

sively through select local retailers for a limited time, and are available in 500-piece (\$24.95) or 1,000-piece (\$27.95) boxes. Pick one up on your next visit to the Museum, or contact the Museum at 847-742-4248 or museum@elgin-history.org to have yours shipped directly to you.



Elizabeth Marston, shown with artist Eric Dowdle, was among those honored for their contributions to Elgin.

New Exhibit Spotlight

Visitors are invited to the Museum's brand-new exhibition, "Game On, Elgin: The Places and Players of Our City." This exhibit celebrates Elgin's incredibly rich sports history.

It traces how Elgin evolved alongside its most iconic sporting venues and the legendary athletic figures who called them home.



Football Helmet c. 1930s

Brought to life through a curated collection of sports artifacts from Elgin's athletic past, the exhibit lets you step back in time to the days of local legends and historic games. Whether you are a lifelong sports fan or a local history buff, this collection offers an unforgettable look into

the competitive spirit that shaped Elgin.



Curator Beth Nawara, Ron Lange and Jen Haley working on the new Sports Exhibit

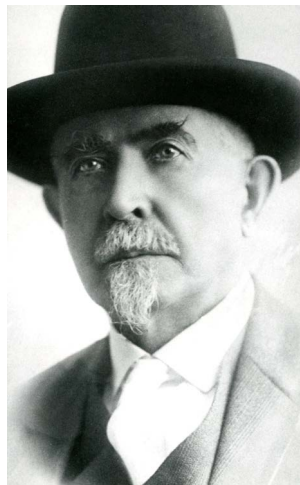
Other new exhibits highlight Elgin's celebration of America's Bicentennial in 1976 and the sacrifice of Corporal Eriverto Ortiz, a U.S. Army soldier killed in action (KIA) during the Korean War on September 22, 1950.

Corporal Ortiz was listed as missing and unrecoverable for over seven decades; during that time, his family relocated to Elgin but kept his memory alive. In late 2024 the military successfully identified his remains using advanced DNA testing. He was finally brought home to Elgin before being laid to rest at Bluff City Cemetery.

Visit the Museum to experience these exhibits firsthand—admission is always free for our valued members.

Dr. Alban L. Mann, Elgin's Public Health Pioneer

David Siegenthaler



An Elgin native, Dr. Mann (1859-1943) served as Elgin's city physician from 1889-91 and 1912-37. He believed in disease prevention through proven scientific methods, such as sanitation, vaccinations and quarantines. He was instrumental in the establishment of Sherman Hospital in 1888, Elgin's first general hospital. He was the first president of the local Anti-Tuberculosis Society, organized in 1911, and was elected president of the Kane

County Medical Society in 1915. He was an outspoken advocate of the compulsory registration of all births prior to the enactment of state legislation, which took effect in 1916.

In 1912, at his own expense, Dr. Mann began organizing a laboratory at City Hall for the use of Elgin doctors. In early 1916, the City of Elgin significantly added to the laboratory apparatus, which was placed in Dr. Mann's new office in the O'Beirne building (just north of City Hall). Facilities were available for the testing of food, milk, and drinking water; and for the examination of blood, sputum, and swabs. Thus, testing and diagnosis of disease cultures could be done promptly in Elgin rather than sending them to Springfield.

In July 1916 Elgin experienced the beginning of a typhoid epidemic that peaked in August and September. Over 200 residents, mostly watch factory workers, were stricken and 26 died. Rumors spread that the city's water supply was the cause. Dr. Mann worked long hours during the epidemic, abandoning his private practice entirely for three months. He determined that the city water was safe, as was the milk supply. He advised people not to drink from springs and shallow wells.

Because the typhoid cases were centered at the watch factory, the water supply there received the most scrutiny. Dr. Mann's initial testing of watch factory water, presumably from their reservoir located next to the observatory, showed the water to be safe. Later testing, at the factory drinking fountains, showed otherwise. With assistance from watch factory personnel, Dr. Mann traced the source of contamination to a leaky valve that separated the factory reservoir

water from the river water system used in the factory's industrial operations. Water from the two sources became mixed, resulting in contaminated river water reaching the drinking fountains. The valve was repaired and the water lines were disinfected with steam. Dr. Mann received high praise from the state board of health. In his annual report for 1916, he called attention to "the utter disregard by the laity in general and by a few physicians in particular of the very specific laws governing the prompt reporting of infectious diseases."

Dr. Mann was also chiefly responsible for stemming the influenza and smallpox outbreaks of 1918, the diphtheria epidemic of 1921, and the scarlet fever cases in the winter of 1925-26. He was chairman of the committee that organized the Elgin chapter of the American Red Cross in 1917. In 1926 and again in 1930, he personally supervised the vaccination of 1,000 or more schoolchildren against smallpox. He provided his services free of charge for the residents at the Larkin Home for Children from its beginnings in the 1890s.

A self-described "fighter," Dr. Mann was an outspoken critic of garbage accumulation, public drinking cups, spitting, the housefly nuisance, and those who disregarded health laws. He once asked the Kane County state's attorney to bring charges against three physicians who were not reporting cases of communicable diseases. He advocated the quarantine system, whereby those with infectious diseases were confined to their homes for a period of time as a way to limit the spread. A quarantine sign was posted at those homes warning visitors and delivery people to stay away. At least once he had a woman arrested when it was reported that her quarantined son was playing in a next-door neighbor's yard. In 1926 the former Larkin Home for Children built a small quarantine building in their backyard that still stands. This allowed them to separate contagious disease cases without quarantining all the children.

In 1922, after personally inspecting several food establishments, Dr. Mann threatened to prosecute violators of the laws governing the protection of foodstuffs from flies. "You can bet your life that I read the riot act to one man," Dr. Mann said. "He has promised to clean up his place. If he fails I will have him arrested."



Dr. Alban Mann c. 1937

Despite limited finances, Dr. Mann carried on a determined program of disease prevention throughout his career as a public servant. In his later years Dr. Mann gave up his private practice to focus entirely on public health service. His zealous enforcement of health and sanitation rules and the quarantine system caused many to regard him as a short-tempered fanatic, often abrupt and tactless.

Alban Leo Mann was born in Elgin on September 22, 1859, the first of nine children of Michael and Margaret Mann. Michael Mann (1832-95) and Margaret O'Connor (1834-1926) were both born in Ireland and in 1850 both arrived in Elgin, where they were married in 1858. Alban's siblings were: Blanche (1861-1931; Mrs. Albert Hagopian); Godfrey (1863-1920); Agnes (1865-1942; Mrs. Frank Hurlburt); Margaret "Maggie" (1867-1937; never married); John (1870-1904); Joseph (1872-1872); Mary (1874-1950; never married); and James (1877-1941).

Michael Mann's family lived at 365 Jefferson Ave., a home that still stands near the corner of Mann Place, a short street established in the early 1890s on Mann property, which was subdivided in 1915. Michael Mann had several occupations in Elgin: harness-maker, telegraph operator, carpenter, bookkeeper and grocer. In the 1870s and '80s, Michael manufactured and sold a patent medicine called "Mann's Cathartic and Blood Purifier."

At age 17, Alban left the public high school a year early to become a prescription clerk for a few years in the drugstore of Kelley & Hart. He then enrolled in the Bennett Medical College of Chicago (now the Loyola University Stritch School of Medicine). Alban graduated first in his class of 53 at Bennett Medical College in 1883 and was chosen class valedictorian. In 1884 Dr. Mann went west and for nearly a

year practiced medicine in the rugged mining camps of Utah and Nevada. He returned to Elgin in 1885 and practiced medicine here for the next 52 years. In 1887 Dr. Mann joined the Illinois National Guard, retiring in 1892 as a surgeon with the rank of major.

On January 5, 1887, Dr. Mann married Bertha Sophia Kohn (1856-1940), daughter of Charles T. and Dorothea (Andorff) Kohn. The Kohn family emigrated to America from Germany in 1854 and moved to Elgin in 1858, where Charles Kohn operated a meat market. Dr. Alban and Bertha were married in the Kohn family home at 392 E. Chicago St. and lived the rest of their lives in that home, except for two years on River Bluff Rd. in the mid-1890s.



The Mann family home at 392 E. Chicago St. in 1951

Dr. Alban and Bertha had two children: Alban Whitford Mann (1889-1976) and Margery Mann (1896-1989; Mrs. Percy Armitage). Alban Whitford Mann became an electrical engineer who was employed in South America and Mexico for many years. His middle name paid tribute to Dr. Henry K. Whitford (1829-1912), Dr. Mann's medical associate and mentor. Margery was one of the first babies born in Sherman Hospital, at a time when hospitals were considered dangerous, disease-prone environments with high infection rates and poor antiseptic practices. Dr. Mann sought to change that image and insisted that his wife give birth there as an example for others.

Bertha Mann passed away in 1940 and her husband, Dr. Alban, passed away in 1943. They are both buried in Bluff City Cemetery.

Acknowledgments: Mike Alft's books and newspaper articles; obituaries and other newspaper articles; Kane County history (1898); federal censuses; Ancestry.com; Findagrave.com; various internet sources, etc. Monument photo by Judy Van Dusen.



Hello Goodbye Party Kicks Off New Era for Museum

On May 29th, over 135 Museum and board members, community partners, staff, families, and friends came together to honor Elizabeth Marston on her well-deserved retirement, looking back on her years of incredible dedication and leadership as Museum Director.



The retirement party was very well-attended.

The evening was also a joyful welcome for longtime Museum Educator Rebecca Miller, who is stepping into the role of Museum Director as Cristina Colunga assumes the role of Museum Educator.

It was a wonderful night of shared stories, laughter, and optimistic buzz for the Museum's next chapter. Thank you to everyone who participated, and please join in wishing Elizabeth and Rebecca the absolute best for the future!



New Museum Director Rebecca Miller and retiring Director Elizabeth Marston at the retirement party on May 29



Left to right: Museum Educator Cristina Colunga, Museum Director Rebecca Miller, outgoing Director Elizabeth Marston, Museum Curator Beth Nawara, and Media Coordinator Trish LaFleur at the retirement party



A painting of the Marston home by local artist Charles Cassell was presented to Elizabeth as a farewell gift.

More Marston Honors

In May of this year, retiring Museum Director Elizabeth Marston was presented with the City of Elgin's highest award for service, the Mayor George Van de Voorde Outstanding Service Award. This award pays tribute to a person who has demonstrated exceptional long-term dedication to preserving and promoting the city's culture and history. It is a fitting capstone for Elizabeth's distinguished career of exceptional community service.



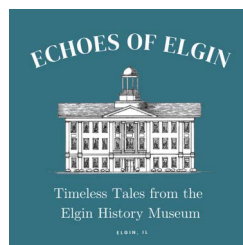
Elgin Mayor Dave Kaptain presents the Mayor George Van de Voorde Outstanding Service Award to Elizabeth Marston

In Memoriam: Verna Homewood



Verna Homewood passed away May 9, 2026. Verna became a Lifetime Member in 2005 and was a perfect fit as Museum Docent. She greeted visitors, helped with programs, and gave tours of the exhibits until she moved to Florida. She will always be remembered as a cheerful and generous supporter of the Museum.

Double Your Listening: Museum Podcasts Bring Elgin's Past to Life



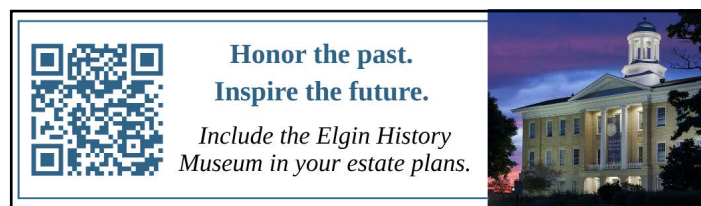
Our digital storytelling initiatives are thriving thanks to our dedicated members! Our flagship show, **Echoes of Elgin: Timeless Tales from the Elgin History Museum**, has officially surpassed an incredible 207 episodes and over 16,600 total

downloads. Published semi-weekly, recent episodes have explored nostalgic local favorites like the Kelly Hotel restaurant, the Blue Moon cocktail lounge, and the 30-year infrastructure battle behind Elgin's Route 20 bypass.

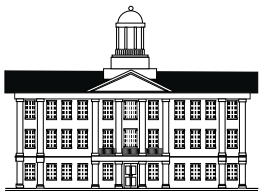


Did you know the Museum also produces a second audio series? Be sure to subscribe to the **Elgin 100 Years Ago Podcast**. This unique program delivers historical news headlines directly from Elgin's original vintage newspapers. Researched and recorded by

society members Alan Walters, Nick Freeman, Tricia Grosser, and Linda Rock, each episode features short, punchy vignettes covering 1920s city hall politics, sports, and society gossip. Recent episodes took listeners back to the spring of 1926 to discover the history of Blum's Ice Cream Parlor and a hilarious local "monkey on the loose" incident! Stream both fantastic shows on your favorite podcast platform, or find the most recent episodes on our website under the "Elgin History" menu.

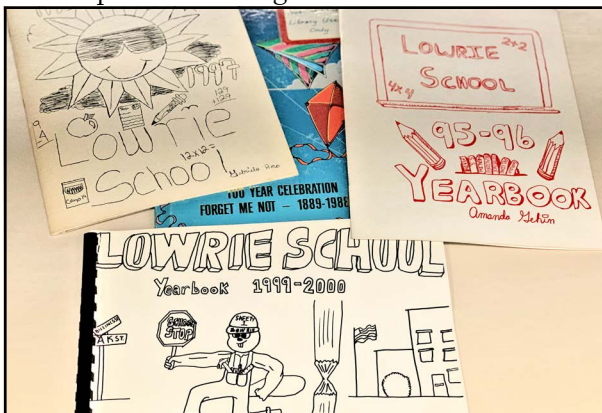


ELGIN HISTORY MUSEUM
360 PARK STREET
ELGIN, IL 60120



Collections Corner: Closing Schools

At the conclusion of the 2025-2026 school year, Lowrie, Washington, and Abbott schools closed. Prior to the closures, the Museum was invited to visit Lowrie School to evaluate items set aside for potential addition to the Museum's collection. The Museum was thrilled to acquire Lowrie School yearbooks from 1987 to 2026. This acquisition successfully safeguards nearly four decades of Lowrie School student memories, evolving styles, and school spirit for future generations.



Lowrie School Yearbooks

The Museum was also given two trophies. The first (shown at right), a 1917 “Grade School Girls Athletic League Trophy,” highlights the existence of a thriving, organized girls' sports program operating well over a century ago. The second trophy is engraved as the “First Annual Athletic Meet Sixth Grade Trophy Won By Oak Street School 1909.” This artifact represents early education in Elgin and documents the era before Oak Street School was renamed Lowrie School.

