



# Crackerbarrel

VOLUME 47 NUMBER 2  
MARCH 2010



## President's Report

Mary Hill, President



Dear Members and Readers,

The annual Volunteer Lunch took place on Saturday, February 27. A great way to start the new year was to honor those who help keep the Museum and Society moving forward. The value of a volunteer counts in the budget process and helps offset employee costs.

Our volunteers perform a variety of tasks at the Museum, such as data entry, the archiving process from beginning to end, and exhibit planning and building. New volunteers have come our way and continue to do so.

We are grateful for the time volunteers give in carrying out the mission of the Society.



## About the Program Committee

David Nelson, Program Chairman

As the Elgin Area Historical Society program chairman, it has come to my attention that many people may not understand what the program committee is responsible for and how they accomplish their job. Therefore, I thought it would be appropriate to inform our membership.

Our Bylaws state that we should develop at least five programs per year. The Committee is responsible for the details of a program, including publicity, refreshments donated by members, setup and take-down, and all program introductions.

We are now presenting ten or eleven programs per year. Five of them are presented by members who donate their time and talents without reimbursement. The rest of our programs require payments. The average cost per program is about \$250.00. As a history society, we are allowed two programs per year from the Road Scholar Speakers Bureau of the Illinois Humanities Council. We must write grants and the Council approves and pays the program's fee. Programs are free to Society members, except for the Cemetery Walk, the annual dinner/brunch, and the benefit.

The present program committee has accomplished three firsts since the beginning of 2009. They are:

- **Contracts for all programs starting in 2010.**
- **Programs are planned one year in advance. (We are now working on programs for 2011.)**
- **Presenting a Benefit for EAHS on Nov. 6, 2010.**

Speaking of the Benefit, we have been very fortunate to engage Mr. Joe Wiegand, the nation's premiere Theodore Roosevelt repressor. In 2008 he toured throughout the United States. His tour culminated with performances in the East Room of the White House and Theodore Roosevelt's birthplace in New

## The Crackerbarrel

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The Crackerbarrel welcomes reader contributions.  
Next deadline April 20, 2010

 Visit our website [www.elginhistory.org](http://www.elginhistory.org)

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York City. Mr. Wiegand will present this program at our Benefit on November 6, 2010, and also in one of our middle schools on November 5, 2010.

Additional information about this program will be provided in future editions of the Crackerbarrel. Please mark your calendar for the 6th of November. This is one event you will not want to miss.

Also note that the 2010 benefit and all of our programs are open to the public! So bring along a friend or two, or more!

## Upcoming Programs for 2010

*David Nelson, Program Director*

The following schedule of events for 2010 is tentative. Check the website for the latest details.

<http://www.elginhistory.org/events.html>

**February 27:** Volunteer Luncheon, details TBD.

**March 3:** Museum re-opening

**March 21, 12 - 3 pm:** General Meeting & Exhibit Grand Opening. Dan Miller of Gifford Park Association will be the guest speaker, discussing Elgin's architecture.

**April 18:** General Meeting: WWII Pearl Harbor Survivor Charles May

**May 7, 7 pm:** 100th anniversary of the Watch Factory Observatory. Program at Watch Factory Observatory

**May 15:** Artifact Garden at Museum: Dedication of Watch Factory Bell, Cornerstone, and Road Marker

**May 20, 12 noon:** Brown Bag Lunch: International Museum Day; Depression Glass Presentation. Personal collections of Carl Flaks, Dana Olsen, and Mary Hill

**June 13:** Outing/Aubrey Neville  
Details TBD

**June 17, 1pm:** Brown Bag Lunch  
Columbian Exposition of 1893

**June:** Walking Tour of Elgin: Date TBD

**July 4:** Fourth of July Parade

**July 15, 12 noon:** Brown Bag Lunch  
Made in Elgin

**August 19, 12 noon:** Brown Bag Lunch  
Mike Alft, Slide Show

**August:** Walking Tour of Elgin - Date TBD

**September 12, 1-3 pm:** General Meeting  
Program: Bertha Palmer

**September 26, 12-5 pm:** Cemetery Walk  
Bluff City Cemetery

**October:** Elgin History Fair/Extension Date TBD

**October 17:** General Meeting, time TBD:  
Program: Woody Guthrie (tentative)

**November 6:** Society Benefit featuring Theodore Roosevelt reprints Joe Wiegand

**Nov. 7:** Annual Brunch/Auction & General Meeting.  
Program: Teddy Roosevelt

**December 4, 2010:** Holiday Tea  
Featuring Elgin Children's Chorus

## Elgin National Road Race Marker

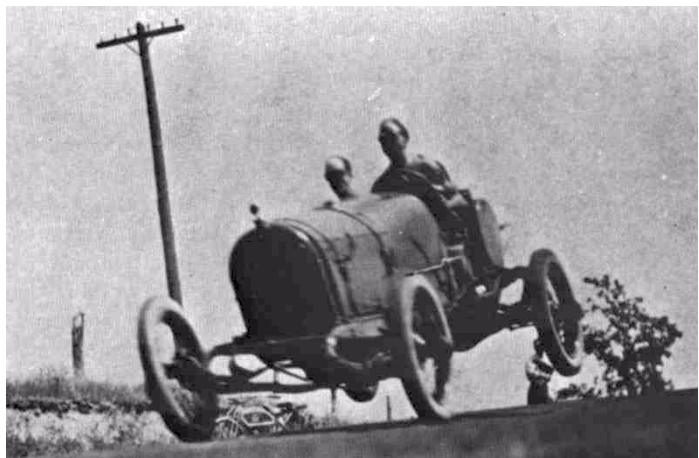
*Bill Briska, Treasurer*

This year is the 100th anniversary of the first Elgin National Road Race. The annual event was held nine more times. The early races were milestones in American automotive history. Attendance was on a spectacular scale by the standards of the 1910s with more than 50,000 spectators arriving in a city whose population was roughly half that size.

Fund raising for an state historical marker to be placed along the race course has been going on for a few months. The results have been encouraging with more than half the estimated cost having been raised so far. We need to finish fund raising well before the dedication ceremony which is set for August, 2010 and are reminding people interested in contributing to this project to do so soon.

The fund raising effort is something of a milestone. Previously, state historic markers were paid for by the City of Elgin Heritage Commission. However, due to a

severe cut in the Commission's budget we are undertaking this effort as part of public/private partnership to help the Commission do more with less. Tax deductible contributions for the marker can be made to the Elgin Area Historical Society.



*Scene from the 1910 Road Race*

### Road Race Marker Donors

A total of \$2,355 has been donated for the Road Race Marker as of February 19th. Thanks to all who have donated.

- Blizzard, Harry and Phyllis
- Briska, Bill
- Damisch, Scott
- Eder, Linda
- Elgin Industries
- Elgin Riverside Club, Inc.
- Elgin Toyota
- Elliott, Lucy and Mark
- Emmert, Chuck
- Harwood, Barbara
- Maurice Dyer
- Miller, Dan and Patricia
- Model T Ford Club
- Nelson, David J. and Dolores
- Newhouse, Benjamin
- Rakow, Tom and Sue
- Ralph Helm Inc.
- Rock, David and Kathleen
- Rowe, George and Marge
- Schneider, Delores
- Shales, John and Marlene
- Skaggs, Kathy
- The National Bank
- Vossler, Jackie
- Walters, Elizabeth
- Ziegler, Gregg

### New Exhibits!

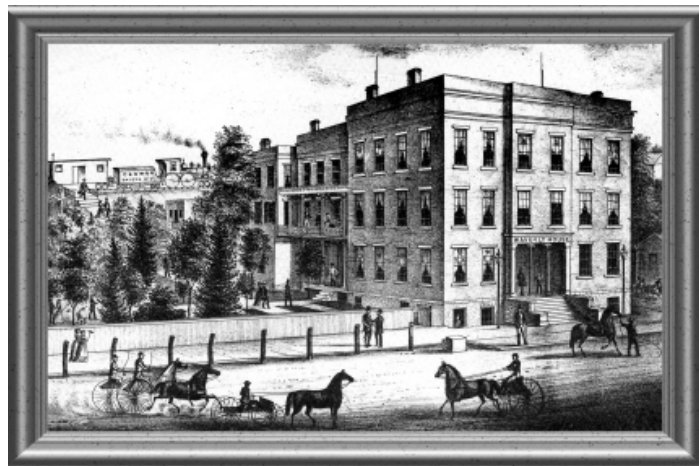
The Elgin Area Historical Society's Annual Exhibit Opening will take place on Sunday, March 14th, 2010 from 12 p.m.-3 p.m. We hope you can join us for the Grand Reopening! There are four new exhibits:

- **Explore Elgin Area Architecture**
- **River to Rails: Elgin in the 1850s and 1860s**  
This is phase 2 of the Museum Timeline Project. The exhibit features stories of immigration to Elgin, and the development of businesses, schools, and government as Elgin becomes a city.
- **Time from the Stars: 100 years of the Elgin Observatory**
- **A Tisket, A Tasket: Collection of Baskets**

The open house program includes:

1-2 p.m. Elgin preservationist Dan Miller will talk about Elgin's architecture and its amazing variety.

2-3 p.m. Demonstrations and hands-on activities at each of the new exhibits.



*The Waverly House hotel was built on State Street in 1853—a grand resort hotel for guests from all over the Chicago area.*



*The settler's cabin exhibit*



*The railroad comes to Elgin in 1850 and depots are built on the east and west sides of town.*



*Though he never lived in Elgin, two-time Chicago mayor B. W. Raymond invested heavily in Elgin from the 1830s through the watch factory in the 1860s.*

## Elgin Community College

Jim Anderson

A book was recently published entitled *The Community's College: Sixty Years of Elgin Community College*.

After World War II ended, many of the returning veterans were eager to enroll in college and take advantage of their GI Bill educational benefits. To help meet this demand, the University of Illinois created a one year extension program at a number of cities in Illinois. The one in Elgin was at Elgin High School from 1946 to 1948. As a freshman at Elgin High in 1946, I can remember helping a veteran in my algebra class.

With the ending of the University of Illinois program, the Elgin Board of Education made a very courageous move and created Elgin Community College. The school has always had dual objectives: to provide two years of college credits to students going on to four-year schools; and to provide a variety of vocational courses to people not seeking a degree.

The college was originally located in the same building as Elgin High School. As a senior at Elgin High in 1949, it was confusing to meet people in the halls who I knew were a year ahead of me. Most of the college classes were in the northwest wing of the high school, a nice modern addition. Some classes were held in the high school classrooms, and the high school and college gym classes were held together. Some new teachers taught exclusively in the college, but some of the veteran staff taught both high school and college classes. Thus an Elgin High School student could have the same teacher in high school and in college.

Most of us looked at our days at ECC as a wonderful opportunity to earn two years of college credits for a tuition of \$50 a semester. Our lounge on the second floor was a great place to hang out, though the President's office and his secretary's were alongside. Most of us lived at home, so expenses were minimal. Some of us worked during the school year, and everyone worked in the summer. Jobs were easy to find then.

With the start of the Korean War in June 1950, the thought of military service was always in the background. Students making satisfactory progress toward a degree were exempt from the draft until graduation, but every now and then someone enlisted to get it over with.

The difference between the original college and today's sprawling campus can best be shown by comparing the schedule of classes. When I enrolled in 1950, our schedule of 35 classes required just one side of a mimeographed sheet of paper. The course catalog mailed to residents of District 509 is now much larger.

Another way of comparing then and now is to look at the administrative staff. In 1950 it consisted of a total of two: the President, and his secretary.

During my first year, the male-female ratio was overwhelming male. For my second year, things changed to a more balanced ratio when the Sherman Hospital nursing students began taking classes at ECC. Two marriages occurred among students who met while attending the school.

In June 1952, graduation ceremonies were held in the First Methodist Church. While the first class had 22 students, ours had only 20. Almost without exception, our class transferred to four-year schools, with Northwestern University and the University of Illinois being the most popular. Our class produced accountants, teachers, engineers, sales reps, one attorney, and one veterinarian. Of the six alumni I keep in touch with, all completed bachelors degrees and then entered the military for two years. Six of us were drafted into the Army and one was drafted into the Navy. We all married with no divorces, and with one small exception, spent our working careers with the same employer.

The book is available at the Museum gift shop for \$25.

## 2009 Annual Report

Elizabeth Marston, Museum Director

### Significant Accomplishments

- *Deep Roots, Green Future: City Planning in Elgin* exhibit opened at the Gail Borden Public Library in May. The exhibit traveled to Elgin Community College in October.



- *River to Rails: Elgin 1835-1910* opened the first phase of the Museum's Timeline Project.
- The replica of James T. Gifford's original log cabin, the first structure built in Elgin, was reconstructed behind the Museum.

### Exhibits

The Museum opened two new exhibits:

- Phase 1 of *River to Rails*
- *Deep Roots, Green Future*

Existing exhibits *Piano in the Parlour* and *Made in Elgin* were moved to other locations in the Museum.

### Membership

Membership in 2009 was 267 households, approximately 801 members, bringing in \$11,205. In 2009, 75 people volunteered an impressive 6,882 hours. As an in-kind donation, volunteer time for 2009 is valued at approximately \$60,000.

### Programs and Events

1,793 people attended the Society's 22 programs including "Survival on the Prairie," the River to Rails Exhibit Opening, the Indianapolis WWII presentation by the late Michael Kuryla, the Observatory Program and Tour, the bus trip to the Cuneo Museum, Log Cabin Raising Party, the Cemetery Walk, the Elgin History Fair, the interesting presentation on the Eastland Disaster, and of course the Holiday Tea.



2009 Cemetery Walk characters portrayed by Linda Rock and Mike Alft



Jerri Barnhardt at the 2009 History Fair

### Outreach

The Society and Museum participated in the Downtown Farmers' Market, U-46 Teaching American History Partnership, the ECCO Rain Barrel Project, the Mayor's Awards, the Heritage Commission Plaquing Program, and the Elgin Police Department exhibit project. Board members, staff, and volunteers consistently promote the importance of preservation and Elgin heritage to the Elgin community.

### Education

Our education programs attracted 1,941 students, an 18% increase over last year, in 90 programs. New programs include two week-long Museum Summer Camp programs for kids aged 6-12, and a new Pioneer Program for elementary students. Speakers Bureau volunteers went out into the community and gave 5 programs on a variety of topics.

## Collections

The Collections Committee accepted hundreds of items relating to Elgin history from 74 donors in 2009. The Courier News Negative Index was added to the Society's website in a searchable format.

## Communication

### • Publications

*There Used to Be, Volume 3* was approved for publication in 2010. The Museum Store sold \$5,500 worth of books.

### • Crackerbarrel

6 issues were published during 2009. Digital color copies of the newsletter were added to the website. The Museum started a Facebook Fan Site in October and currently over 200 friends receive updates and news.



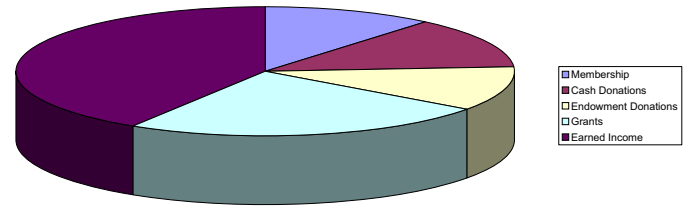
2009 History Fair "Hands-on" Educational Activities

## Museum Store

The Store sold \$2,270 in merchandise and added a line of Society logo clothing and accessories.

## Budget

The total Museum actual budget was \$114,438 in 2009. Our income is shown in the following chart.



EAHS Income Sources, 2009

Most of our income was earned through publication, research, and store sales; admission to programs and events; and sponsorship of exhibits and events.

## Welcome New Members!

*Jerri Barnhart, Membership Chair*

- Ray Brown
- Diana Menke
- Bill and Ruth Ristow
- Brett Weiss and Family

The Society recently upgraded the membership software. As a result, there were a few glitches in membership cards. If any member would like a new card, please request one from the Museum.

## Cash Donations—Thank You!

- Geraldine Hagemann, \$25
- Jean Keltner, \$25
- Rosella Menke, \$30
- Kane County Historical Society Dissolution Funds, \$636.11
- Doug Tomsha, \$81 in honor of Miriam Lytle
- Jackie Vossler, \$75 for office supplies with a discount card

## Wish List Donations

- Thanks to Jeff Biss and Crackerbarrel editor Rebecca Marco for donating office supplies, file cabinets, CD jewel cases, and a paper shredder to the Museum!

## Elgin Township Divorce Records

David Siegenthaler, Museum Researcher

Does your family history need spicing up? Does it lack juicy gossip and scandalous behavior? Well, maybe you should check your surnames in the Elgin Township divorce records index. You can find this index online at the Elgin Genealogical Society website ([www.elginroots.com](http://www.elginroots.com)) or in a 3-ring binder at the Elgin Area Historical Society Museum. The dates of the divorces cover the time span from the mid-1870s through the early 1960s. The records themselves total about 5,000 divorce files and are housed at the Elgin Area Historical Society Museum, 360 Park St.

Divorces are often messy, embarrassing affairs and the details are often hushed up, so don't assume that you are already aware of any divorces among your ancestors. It has been noted that years ago before the era of no fault divorces the cause of divorces was almost always one or more of the four "A": Abuse, Alcoholism, Adultery or Abandonment. The court transcripts in these files are filled with sad, tragic, cruel and even comical stories. If children are involved, you may uncover information that links families together.

To view the contents of these files at the Museum, keep in mind the following: Museum hours are Wednesdays through Saturdays, Noon to 4 pm, except January and February when the Museum is closed. Admission is \$3.00 (free to members) and copies cost 25¢ per page (10¢ for members).

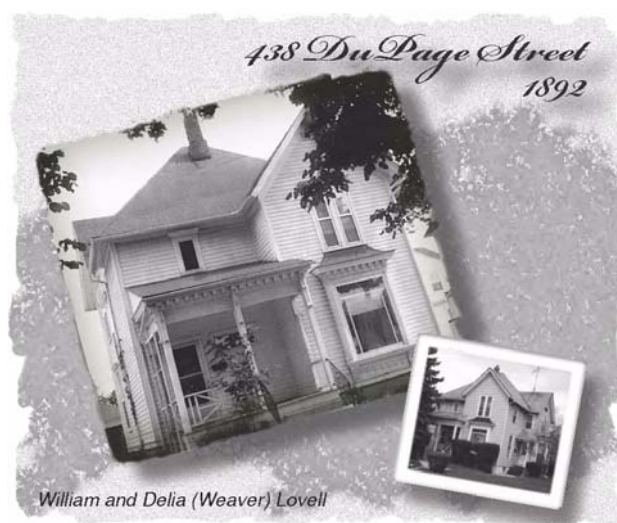


## New Book to be Published Soon

Rebecca Marco, Editor

In keeping with the architectural theme of this year's new exhibits, the Society will soon be publishing Volume III of *There Used to Be* by Steve Stroud. The book follows the pattern of Volumes I and II, in which current photos of Elgin homes and structures are compared to old photos showing the original appearance of each building. A history of each building is also included.

Old-house owners in Elgin might be lucky enough to find their home included in the new volume. Even if a particular building of interest is not included, the book is a great resource for those interested in determining the appropriate look when refurbishing their older homes. The book will be available in the Museum Store soon.



A sampling of *There Used to Be* Volume III, coming soon to the Museum store

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



## Spring is Coming—the Sap is Rising

*Rebecca Marco, Editor*

Now is the time when daytime temperatures are high enough to induce tree sap to rise. In response to the temperature differential between day and night, the sap begins to flow upward from the roots of the tree during the day.

From ancient times, humans have taken advantage of this and tapped the trees to drain off some of the sap. Though mostly water, the trees do produce sugar, and with the application of heat, the water can be boiled off to produce sugar syrup. A lot of boiling is required: 40 gallons of maple tree sap produces only a gallon of maple syrup. Though all trees produce sap, the concentration of sugar is highest in trees of the *Acer* family (maples), with sugar maples having the highest concentration.

One legend says a Native American woman left her dinner simmering under a broken maple branch. The maple sap dripped into the pot all day and when the woman came back, she was surprised to find her meal bathed in a wonderful syrup. Maple syrup has a lower caloric value than honey, corn syrup, or brown sugar and is made with no preservatives.

The process is simple: a hollow metal straw, known as a spile, is drilled into the tree. The spile is angled downward and a bucket is placed below it. As the sap rises and falls in the tree each day, some of it drains out through the spile and into the bucket. The collected sap is boiled at 219°F for hours in a building known as a sugaring house, allowing the water to boil off. When the sugar concentration reaches a specific gravity of 1.37, the product can be classified as maple syrup.

Though we usually associate maple syrup with Vermont and New England, it can actually be produced anywhere with sufficient mature trees to tap. Commercially available syrup is still produced and sold in Funk's Grove IL as well as many locations in Wisconsin, New Hampshire, and Canada.

