Elgin: A Women's City

E. C. Alft

ELGIN: A WOMEN'S CITY

E. C. Alft

Women of Elgin, young and old, rich and poor, married or single, come let us reason together, and lend a hand in the world's great work."

Call to Action by the Woman's Club
June 1887

Elgin Area Historical Society
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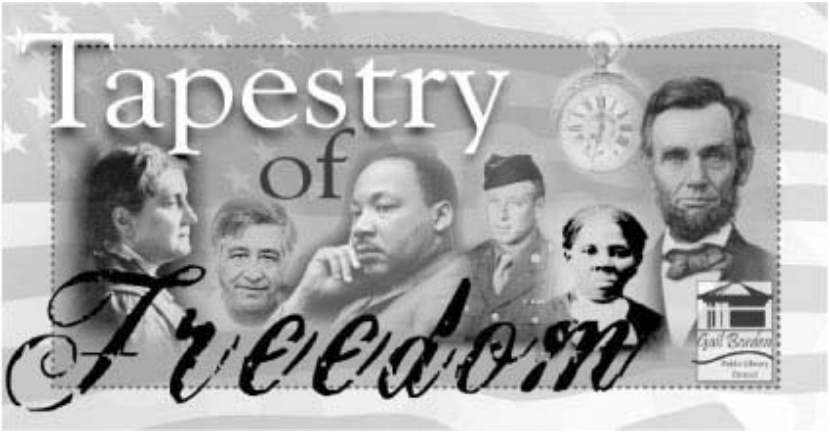

A Tapestry of Freedom is a community project networked by the Gail Borden Public Library District, Elgin, Illinois from February through May 2008. *A Tapestry of Freedom* spotlights the faces, feelings and histories of freedom. Its goal is to promote harmony, respect and unity. Mr. Alft's book provides the central theme for March, Women's History Month. Funding for this grant was awarded by the Illinois State Library (ISL), a Division of the Office of Secretary of State, using funds provided by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS), under the federal Library Services and Technology Act (LSTA) in partnership with the City of Elgin Heritage Commission and the Elgin Area Historical Society.

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INTRODUCTION

A Majority of Women

Elgin is a city that has been greatly influenced by women. Their contributions to its development have extended far beyond the traditional roles of mother and housewife.

Women did not outnumber men in the United States until about 1945. One reason was the deaths in childbirth. In Elgin, males were in the minority according to the 1870 U. S. census. Although unusual, the preponderance of women in this city is not unique. This circumstance can be found wherever local industries have needed their skills.

In 1909 women accounted for 39.2 percent of Elgin's industrial wage earners—a higher proportion than any other city in Illinois and more than twice the ratio in the state as a whole. Many were married, giving their families two paychecks. This led to a relatively prosperous and middle class aura in the city, not always associated with factory towns.

At the Elgin National Watch Company, once the city's leading industry, women's nimble fingers were adept at operating intricate machinery and assembling minute parts. One visitor observed a woman placing 4,000 pivots, a delicate operation, so accurately that only 300 of them varied more than 2/10,000th of an inch. In 1925, when the watch factory's output was nearing its production peak, of 4,216 employees, 2,139 were female.

Many single women watch workers lived across the street from the factory in the National House, a boarding and rooming facility owned and operated by the company, 1867-1932. In addition to lodging, a large dining room served lunches and dinners.

Women could also be seen on the floors of the shirt, shoe,

watchcase, and condensed milk factories. Mail orders at the David C. Cook Publishing Co. were processed in an office filled with women. Cook's built a large, two-story frame house at 814 Brook Street for the firm's editorial employees. Called the Olive Apartments, it was divided into nine private rooms, with a bathroom connected to each. A suite of rooms was located in the basement for the use of the matron. The Community House of the Collingbourne thread mills at 403 Bluff City Boulevard provided accommodations for about 30 women.

Women were active in retail trade as well. A correspondent for the *New York Tribune* reported as early as 1865: "Most of the stores in Elgin have lady clerks. Married women are preferred…After eight o'clock at night there is little time to rest." Some owned their own businesses. Commenting on their neighborhood groceries in 1909, the *Elgin Daily Courier* commented: "One finds the women proprietors exceedingly bright, driving the best bargains possible in the purchasing of goods and selling on credit only to those customers who will surely pay."

Early leaders in the movement for women's rights found an audience in Elgin. Susan B. Anthony came to lecture on women's right to vote in 1876, Frances E. Willard advocated a life of temperance in 1884, and Jane Addams discussed the relation of women to trade unionism in 1899. Carrie Nation in 1907 told them how to wage war against the demon rum.

In 1907 the manager of one store explained the obvious advantage of an Elgin location: "It is well known that the dry goods business of this city is considerably larger than that of other cities in the state which are much larger." That year more than 40 dressmakers were listed in the city directory.

Women founded our two general hospitals, women closed the saloons long before national prohibition, women led campaigns for a cleaner city, and women were largely responsible for the adoption of our present form of municipal government.

A visiting journalist in 1914 could say of Elgin's remarkable women that in addition to all their achievements "on the whole

they are the cleanest, best dressed, best behaved, most modest appearing that I have ever seen in all my travels."

And who would disagree with that?

Early leaders in the movement for women's rights found an audience in Elgin. Susan B. Anthony came to lecture on women's right to vote in 1876.

Milestones in the History of Elgin Women

1867 More than 50 women are employed at the watch factory the year the first movement was completed.

1870 Females outnumber males in the U. S. Census returns for Elgin.

1872 *Lady Elgin,* a periodical edited and published by women watch factory employees, is introduced.

1879 First of the women's study clubs is formed.

1883 Women's Christian Temperance Union is organized.

1884 The Charity Ball tradition begins.

1887 The Woman's Club is formed.

1888 Sherman Hospital is organized and managed by women.

1889 Women successfully campaign for a woman candidate for the Board of Education.

1892 Women vote in school elections for the first time.

1901 The YWCA is established.

1902 St. Joseph Hospital is opened by four Franciscan sisters.

1909 Women assume management of the Elgin Children's Home (now Larkin Center).

1912 A woman heads the newly organized Associated Charities.

1913 Illinois grants women the right to vote in local elections and for Presidential electors.

1914 Women vote to abolish all saloons in Elgin Township.

1925 Miss Elgin goes to Atlantic City.

1927 Girl Scout troops are organized.

1929 Elgin chapter of the League of Women Voters is formed.

1930 YWCA Camp Tu-Endi-Wei for girls is opened.

1931 A woman is placed in charge of Depression relief.

1934 St. Joseph Hospital Auxiliary is formed.

1941 Women begin war production making mechanical time fuzes at the ENWC.

1943 Women join the Elgin National Watch Workers Union.

1945 Sherman Hospital Auxiliary is formed.

1947 The majority of members in the newly organized Elgin Teachers Association are women.

1954 The League of Women Voters successfully promote council-manager government.

1972 Meals on Wheels is founded by Church Women United.

1973 Interscholastic contests are opened to high school girls in basketball, volleyball, softball and other sports.

1975 Community Crisis Center is opened.

1985 St. Edward girls win Class A state basketball tournament.
Men's service clubs begin to welcome women members.

WOMEN IN ACTION

Watch factory train room, 1873, where many women were employed.

Watch Workers

Women were employed at Elgin's watch factory before the first fine-jeweled movement began ticking in 1867. The work was clean, and they could be seated, but the tasks were monotonous and exacting. In the nineteenth century they were at the benches for six ten-hour days each week, and holidays were infrequent.

The Elgin National Watch Co., which produced watch parts by machines, offered jobs that matched women's abilities. Pointing out a woman operative to a visitor, the business

manager explained: “That young lady can cut more wheels in a day and cut them better, than any watchmaker in Europe, and you cannot hire an expert watchmaker, even in that land of cheap labor, for $1.25 a day.” The factory superintendent admitted that women did the same kind of work as men and did it equally well, but the average earnings of women lagged behind those of men. Their estimated daily wage in 1899 was $1.25; men received $2.50 to $2.75. Male employees did not favor wage equality, reasoning that women who had only themselves to support could work for lower wages than a man with a family. The disparity was common to most industries at that time.

The women watch workers in the early days wore two petticoats, a long sweeping dress that brushed the floor, and high button shoes. Visitors often remarked on how well they were attired. In 1915 a YWCA secretary observed that their “dress was not, as a rule, adopted to their work.”

The hours of labor were reduced around the turn of the century. In 1899 employees were given a half-day off on Saturdays during the summer months. A nine-hour day was introduced in 1901, and an eight-hour day followed in 1917. In 1906 a visitor representing the Chicago Woman’s Club and the state labor board reported: “After investigating the leading manufacturing industries of Chicago, I am willing to confess that the working conditions of women at the Elgin National Watch factory are the best I have seen anywhere.”

“Picture the average country girl as she comes to the city of Elgin,” the *Elgin Daily Courier* told its readers in 1909. “You have seen her. Stepping from the trains, halting and gazing about her, her extra wearing apparel in a canvas suit case and the money, a small pittance at most, in a small handbag which she holds in a compulsive grip.”

In comparison with the farms and small towns they left behind, Elgin was a big city with bright lights, streetcars, department stores, vaudeville theaters, and an opportunity to find employment at the watch factory. Although the starting wage was then a dollar a day for men, women were hired at

60 cents for the nine hours. They could work as waitresses at the "Nash," the company's big rooming house, for their meals and were excused from work fifteen minutes before noon for that purpose. The local YWCA maintained a list of respectable homes for rent and provided recreational activities. When her training period ended, and she could earn piecework wages, the average woman employee could make about $6 to $7 a week, and room and board at the National House was $4. No woman, of course, could hope to someday supervise one of the departments, but that was understood.

Although most women did not come to Elgin seeking matrimony, a month seldom passed without marriages taking place among watch factory employees, and the passing of cigars and wedding cake in the departments. The afore mentioned *Daily Courier* article pointed out that "a watch factory girl… will find that the doors of social and personal opportunity are wide open to her and that her chances of alliance with a man of more than usual merit have been greatly strengthened by her experience in Elgin."

At the watch factory, women's nimble fingers were adept at operating intricate machinery and assembling minute parts. This photo was taken in the watch factory's motion room in 1912.

There were drawbacks to working at the big factory. In 1911 officials had to protect women from the noon and evening exit jams. "Squeezed in the crush, knocked against the walls and bumped hither and thither, many women are said to have sustained injuries of greater or lesser extent," reported the weekly *Advocate.* "It has not been unusual for women to fall

in the crowd and be trampled upon before they were picked up again and placed in the moving stream." To remedy this situation, women employees were allowed to quit work at four minutes to twelve o'clock and four minutes to five o'clock.

The watch factory as it appeared in 1887. In 1925, when the Elgin National Watch Company's output was nearing its production peak, of 4,216 employees, 2,139 were female.

In the nineteenth century women worked at the watch factory benches for six ten-hour days each week, and holidays were infrequent.

Study Clubs

Beginning in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, several women's "study" clubs were formed in Elgin, and four continue to be a unique feature of our community heritage.

Emerging from domestic confinement, an increasing number of middle and upper class women attended high schools and colleges. Study clubs were a means of socializing, continuing their education, sharing female values, and exercising leadership roles denied them in a business world dominated by men.

Club meetings offered an opportunity for women to learn, to give programs, organize discussions, speak their convictions, and make group decisions. The clubs usually adopted a flower and colors, and it was once customary for members to answer the roll call with a favorite quotation or other response related to the topic selected for study. For those not presenting the meeting's topic, it was a way to actively participate.

The subjects explored in the early years were formidable. Examples include: The Struggle Between Pauline and Judaistic Christianity; The History of Spain from Alphonso I to Juan II; Chinese Literature; The Discovery and Settlement of Venezuela; Torricelli and the Invention of the Barometer; Sumerian and Chaldean Architecture; The Aims of Civil Service Reform; The Life and Times of Fra Lippo Lippi; The Early History of Greece; The Popes of the Avignon; and the Last Days of Cervantes.

Members were in earnest and determined to 'improve," one club secretary noting that "some time was spent in criticizing the words pronounced." The meetings, usually weekly, were held in homes, which necessarily limited the number of members. Visits to each other's genteel homes, the socialization, musical selections, and the refreshments provided by the hostess, softened the rigor of the programs.

The Every Wednesday Literary Club, which began meeting in 1879 and formally organized in 1880, was Elgin's first study

club. Mrs. L. K. Becker, an Elgin Academy teacher and charter member, expressed the group's purpose in poetry:

Every Wednesday believes woman owes to herself
Be she common Jane Smith or Victoria Guelph,
By reading or study or some other plan,
To make of her talent as much as she can.

At first the topics were devoted to literature, history, art, and the Bible. Later the Club plunged into discussions of contemporary problems, such as the causes of poverty, the evils of the saloon, tenement housing, and the distribution of wealth.

The Club (flower, the pansy; colors, lavender and white; emblem, an open book), drew many of its members from Elgin's leading families. Fathers and husbands were business and professional men. At the turn of the century most of the South State Street mansions were represented. On special occasions members and their guests enjoyed orchestral music while being served elaborate meals. There was a close connection between the study clubs and the growth of Elgin's public library, but for a time the Every Wednesdays had a special relationship. When a new library building opened in 1894, Mrs. A. B. Church, wife of one of the donors, furnished an elegant directors' room provided that it was to be shared with ladies of the Club, one of whose members was the librarian.

Daughters followed mothers into the Club, and today two members have a great-great grandmother who joined back in 1881.

Insignia of the Everyday Wednesday Literary Club.

The Every Wednesday Literary Club inspired the formation of several other study groups. The Marquette Reading Circle, the Clionians, the West Side University Center, the Ramblers, the East Side Study Center, and the Questers were relatively short lived, but the Maecenans (1885), the Perry Literary Circle (1884), and the Brownii (1889) flourished for many years. The Perry, which disbanded as recently as 1994, was the first Chautauqua circle to be formed in Elgin. The Chautauqua movement imposed no uniform programs for local groups, but instead offered suggestions and guidelines.

Today more women than men are enrolled in colleges and universities, and the number of women pursuing jobs and careers outside the home has diminished the time available for meetings. And yet, in addition to the Every Wednesday, three other study clubs are still thriving. They are the Travel Class (1896), the Searchers (1902), and the Matheans (1911). The motto of the Searchers reflects their continuing goal:

Attempt the end
And never stand to doubt.
Nothing's so hard,
But search will find it out.

Photograph of the Perry Literary Circle members in 1895.

Philanthropy

Before the arrival of Social Security, unemployment compensation and other welfare state programs, private charities were the primary sources of assistance to the unfortunate. In these endeavors, women were the main providers, and remain greatly involved even today as government funds are often inadequate.

The Charity Ball

On December 4, 1885, 250 people braved a snowstorm to attend a charity ball in the dining room of the watch factory's National House. It was sponsored by women who were members of the Coffee Club. Preston's Orchestra furnished the music for the dancing from 8:45 to midnight. The program started with a Grand March and included waltzes, quadrilles, an Irish trot, a heel and toe, and a Virginia reel. The women cleared more than $300—a large sum at that time—to relieve cases of distress among the city's poor.

This was the first of the Charity Balls that have been a local tradition for more than a century. They have been held on or around Thanksgiving and in various locations in Elgin and neighboring communities. They were sponsored by the Coffee Club until 1902, when they turned the affair over to the Fideliters. In 1949 the Alpha Pi Phi sorority assumed the undertaking, and later assumed the Fideliters' name. After the early balls, women would personally visit the neediest families to deliver food and clothing purchased with the proceeds. Today the philanthropy is carried out through contributions to agencies serving the recipients.

Over the years the event has mirrored changes in dance, dress, and format. The tango was introduced in 1913, and a jazz band with wailing saxophones played in 1916. The Lambeth Walk was the rage in 1939. Hemlines went up and down, and fabrics ranged

from silk to velvet to chiffon and back again. An account of the Ball in 1920 reported that black velvet trimmed with jet beading seemed to be the favorite gown, but black chiffon and black satin were in evidence. With repeal of Prohibition in 1933, cocktail parties provided the festivities. Beginning in 1958 the event has been a dinner dance.

Associated Charities

Sarah Eppenstein was the driving force behind the formation of the Associated Charities in 1912-13 and served as its president for ten years. Many people had been receiving assistance from three or more charitable organizations, while others in need were neglected.

The Associated Charities was started by a meeting of Elgin women called by the Every Wednesday Literary Club. Its objectives were (1) to systemize the collection and distribution of funds and materials raised for charitable purposes; (2) to keep records concerning the needy and unfortunate; (3) to investigate and see that all deserving cases of destitution were properly and promptly relieved; and (4) to maintain a clearing house for affiliated organizations.

"Identified closely with every civic enterprise for the good of Elgin, Mrs. Eppenstein was perhaps more widely known here than any other woman resident," the Daily News reported at the time of her death in 1923.

"Success of the Associated Charities in Elgin is attributed to Mrs. Eppenstein's efforts," the account continued. "She fostered and mothered it from the beginning. While she came forward on numerous occasions when the organization was in need of financial assistance, Mrs. Eppenstein's efforts were also directed among those who benefited from the society. Frequently she made personal visits among the needy with the result that she was always in close touch with conditions here."

Associated Charities was merged into the Family Welfare Service (now the Family Service Association) in 1931.

The Donors

Among the 40 or more groups affiliated with the Associated Charities was the Donor Club. Eighteen unmarried women of "good character and a willingness to work" founded the "Charity Club" in 1913 to help local charities by contributing funds raised from various annual events. One of its notable endeavors was the establishment of what is now the Elgin Day Care Center in 1920. Another was furnishing a room at the YWCA in 1927. Soon after the Family Welfare Service was formed, the Donors maintained a fund to help needy families pay for tonsillectomies and eyeglasses for their children. Currently in its 95th year, its annual book review is one of the club's sources of revenue. While several civic and service clubs provide charitable donations, the Donors are among the oldest in the field.

Strong Women

Elgin women were participating in activities once considered male prerogatives long before the modern Women's Liberation movement emerged in the 1960s.

One young woman took matters in her own hands when annoyed by a stalker. According to the *Daily Courier,* June 6, 1895, "he had an unsavory reputation, and she dreaded the notoriety of appealing to the law and acknowledging that she had the slightest acquaintance with him. Instead she enlisted the aid of several women friends and sent him a note fixing a place of meeting under a shed where there were several barrels. When he arrived he was seized by the women and forced head downward into a nearby barrel and clubbed with barrel staves."

Another instance of women taking action occurred in 1908. The "Chicago road," now Highway 19, had a deep gully about a half-mile east of Liberty Street. A dangerous and unsightly mire, it had been hollowed out by spring rains and extended for a distance

of several rods and bogged down wagons. It was a constant menace to the comfort and safety of the heavy traffic that used the road.

For months nothing was done by either the Hanover Township road commissioner or the city's superintendent of streets to remedy the problem. Finally, some two dozen young and middle-aged women who lived in the vicinity appeared at the site with teams and wheelbarrows to repair the road themselves. Two of the ladies supervised the work from horseback.

Women drove teams to and from a gravel pit. The wagons were quickly loaded and emptied as stones and gravel were shoveled into place, and a tamping iron was kept busy to make sure the construction was compact and solid. The center of the road was rounded up to make it slope outward instead of inward.

The women knew what they were doing, and the *Daily Courier* expressed its admiration for a job well done: "Care was made to get plenty of rock of considerable size buried down where the frost is likely to make disturbance in the spring. The gravel was also nearly all coarse, barely enough fine gravel being used on the surface to pack in well and bind the coarser material beneath. Now the water instead of running in the middle of the road and tearing dangerous furrows will run at the side and pass away in ditches. If the road can be kept dry in the center, the repair will last for years."

And women were not always the weaker sex. When an Elgin man filed suit for divorce in 1919, the *Daily News* for February 21 gave among his reasons that "she is a strong and powerful woman, weighing upward of 175 pounds and he rather a frail man weighing about 140 pounds, and when a physical encounter was imminent, complainant found it advisable to retreat whenever it was possible, and he did retreat, and that she attacked him with a heavy granite dish pan."

Two Hospitals Founded by Women

In 1887, when Elgin's population was about 14,000, the city's streets were lit by electric arc lamps, and work was started on a water system. Elgin had a horse car line, a new opera house, and a new railroad station. But there was still more to do, and in June of that year a summons was published in the two daily newspapers:

"Women of Elgin, young and old, rich and poor, married or single, come let us reason together, and lend a hand in the world's great work."

The call was answered by more than 30 women who came by foot and horse-drawn carriages to organize a Woman's Club. The members chose "Progress" as their motto, and they were not long in deciding on a project suggested by Rose Adler. They would establish and manage a hospital.

Sherman Hospital

Sherman Hospital as it appeared about 1895.

Learning of the Club's plans, Henry Sherman in February 1888 donated a two-story house and lot on the northeast corner of Channing and North Streets, and the women began soliciting

contributions. Civil War veterans collected more than $400 in a door-to-door canvass. The Elgin National Watch Co. pledged $300 annually. A concert netted $45.25. The young ladies of the Baptist Church furnished a room, and so did the Methodist Church women. Rose Adler donated three bedsteads and bedding. Her husband pledged $25 each year in goods from his clothing store.

The Club borrowed $1,500 with the Sherman property as security and went to work. The entire building was renovated. Walls were painted and decorated, new rugs were laid on the floor, and the well and cistern cleaned. The ground floor contained the reception room, quarters for the matron, a dining room, and kitchen. Upstairs were four patient rooms.

The founding of Sherman Hospital coincided with the arrival in Elgin of many single factory workers, both men and women, who were without homes of their own and families to care for them. When they fell ill, who would help? The hospital was ready on July 7, 1888. "This hospital is open to the sick and all classes without regard to religion, sex or color," headed the list of rules and regulations.

During its first five years on Channing Street, Sherman Hospital cared for 249 patients. There were 12 births and 35 surgeries. The building could not comfortably accommodate more than seven patients at a time, and need was soon beyond capacity. Larger quarters became imperative.

In the fall of 1891, Mrs. George P. Lord presented the Woman's Club with $5,000 for a new hospital at the southwest corner of Center Street and Cooper Avenue. At the cornerstone laying, Dr. Anson L. Clark made a public confession. When the founding of the hospital was first discussed, he had doubts whether women could run it, but he now acknowledged, "how thorough a success has been made of it only those realize who know of the great good accomplished."

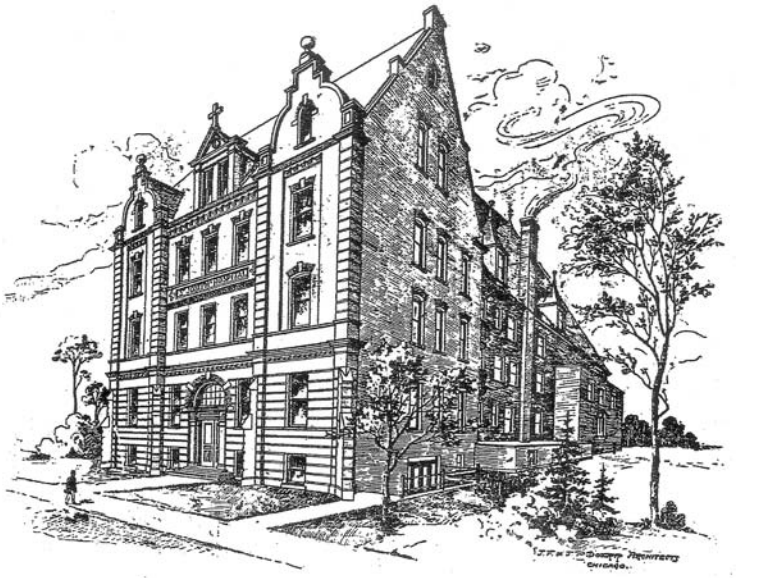
The new hospital was finally ready for occupancy in November 1895. There were seventeen patient rooms, two operating rooms, sleeping rooms for nurses and an apartment for the superintendent. The building was equipped from basement to attic with dumb waiters, dust shafts and clothes chutes.

After a number of subsequent additions, Sherman has become a regional heart center, ranking third in the metropolitan area in the patient volumes for open-heart surgery. It also provides trauma and emergency services, a birthing center, orthopedic care, cancer care, and a comprehensive diabetes center. A new hospital is under construction along Randall Road.

Women comprised about half the work force at the Elgin Mental Health Center until the First World War, when they were the majority until the 1960s. From that time on the employees were about equally divided by gender.

Sherman Hospital Nursing School graduates, 1904.

Provena St. Joseph Hospital



St. Joseph Hospital moved from a two-story frame residence on Prospect Street to a new brick on Jefferson Avenue in 1904.

Like Sherman Hospital, Provena St. Joseph was established by women and administered by women for many years. Led by Sister M. Jerome, the Association of Franciscan Sisters of the Sacred Heart began operations on February 24, 1902, in a two-story, fourteen-room building on Prospect Street. It had been converted from a frame residence. During the first year, 125 patients were admitted, one-fifth of them charity cases.

This original hospital had few conveniences, and a new brick building was opened in 1904 on Jefferson Avenue. A community fund drive enabled a major addition in 1914 that increased bed capacity to 60, and by 1919 the hospital owned the entire 2.2-acre block bounded by Jefferson and Plum, Prospect and Center.

Another expansion, increasing capacity to 150 beds and 30 bassinets, was completed in 1927. That year St. Joseph cared for more than 3,000 patients.

During its first 50 years, St. Joseph admitted 105,842 patients and served as the birthplace of 13,796. The hospital operated a training school for nurses from 1919 to 1948.

In 1973 a new 240-bed building was opened on the west side at 77 North Airlite. The site comprises 33 acres of land. The vacated property was donated to the City of Elgin and became St. Francis Park in 1974. In 1984 a new Regional Cancer Care Center was ready for use. An adjacent medical office building was completed in 1991.

The hospital received a new name—Provena St. Joseph—in 1997 as a result of a merger between the hospital's parent company, Franciscan Sisters for Health Care Corporation, and two other Catholic health care organizations.

Today women staff members are in the majority at Elgin's largest employing business firms and non-profits. They outnumber men at School District U46, Chase Card Services, and the Grand Victoria Casino.

St. Joseph Hospital's nursery about 1928.

The YWCA

"The Young Women's Christian Association," declared the Daily Courier in 1909, "perhaps is the greatest factor in helping the working girl this city possesses." The Chicago Street building was opened in 1906.

At the turn of the century, many women arriving from small towns and farms to find work in Elgin had never been away from home and had little chance for social contact. Hattie Griffin, principal of Lincoln School, was concerned about their need for wholesome recreation. She took the lead in organizing a Young Women's Christian Association in 1901. Any woman of good moral character could join for $1.

Mrs. A. B. Church donated a house and lot at 220 East Chicago Street as a meeting place. The first social and physical activities were scheduled in the watch factory gymnasium on National Street. There were classes in apparatus, basketball, calisthenics, and voice culture. Members wore flannel shirtwaists and bloomers.

Ladies set out in buggies to raise funds for a big new brick building to replace the house. When they solicited Mr. and Mrs. George P. Lord, philanthropists who had contributed

handsomely to the YMCA, Mrs. Lord told them, "Girls will be good anyway. It is the boys we have to look after." The couple later reconsidered, and their donations made the project a reality. The $30,000 building opened in 1906. Its cafeteria served both men and women and provided a source of income for the Y and employment opportunities for members. Cooked food was also sold on a "take out" basis. It became so popular that patrons stood in long lines down the hill on Sundays waiting to enter. A swimming pool was completed in 1913.

"The Young Women's Christian Association," declared the *Daily Courier* in 1909, "perhaps is the greatest factor in helping the working girl this city possesses."

The YWCA first provided living quarters for members by renting two apartments on Dexter Street in 1914. Later dormitories were maintained on Chapel Street and North Gifford Street. The Whitford home next door on the northwest corner of Center and Chicago Streets was purchased in 1918 and remodeled as a residence.

The YWCA's Camp Tu-Endie-Wei (the meeting of the waters), along what is now Highway 25 north of St. Charles, was acquired in 1929. Thousands of girls enjoyed its 22 acres of woodland, creek, and open space until the camp closed in 2006. The camp was sold to the Kane County Forest Preserve District in 2007.

Marie Grolich was the general secretary (a title later changed to executive director) of the Y for 21 years, 1937-1958. Known to the staff and campers at Tu-Endie-Wei as "Aunt M," she was camp director, 1938-1944, in addition to her other duties. In 1970 a southwest side city park was named in her memory.

On Thanksgiving Eve, November 27, 1963 the 57-year-old Association building was destroyed by a fire that also condemned the adjoining residence. A campaign for money to replace the facilities was conducted without a professional fundraiser, took two years, and netted $753,655.22. The new Y extended east to Center Street and was occupied in stages, 1965-1966. The cafeteria included in this modern facility closed in 1971, after an existence longer than most Elgin eateries.

A meeting place for several community organizations, the YWCA spawned the Newcomers Club, the Junior Service Board, the Well Child Conference, and the Business and Professional Women's Club. Its Mothers Club was responsible for the first community Christmas tree in 1913.

The Elgin YW is credited with a model program, the Indochinese Refugee Project. Directed by Joan Berna, it was launched in 1979 in cooperation with sponsoring local churches that provided housing. The Y was responsible for education, vocational training, employment counseling, job placement and social services for refugees from Laos, Vietnam, and Cambodia. The Y also offered programs in childcare, nutrition and shopping. Especially useful to the newcomers have been the classes in English as a second language. Free recreational activities are available to children and youth, ages ten to twenty-one.

Barbara Bush, wife of the President, visited Elgin in 1991 to pay tribute to the local YWCA, a recipient of a $49,000 grant from her literacy foundation. "We had 300 applications," she recalled. "This one had everything we were looking for and it's something people can copy across the country."

The YWCA, the first service agency in Elgin to have an integrated board, continues to serve women, children and their families with programs as varied as child care, citizenship preparation classes, swim lessons, and its "welfare to work" projects. Its achievements are the work of a dedicated female staff and volunteers.

The Right to Vote

Although they could not vote, with the passage of an 1873 Illinois law, women became eligible to occupy any school office created by law and not by the constitution. In 1889 Mattie Lowrie was the first Elgin woman elected to public office under the provisions of this statute. State legislation approved in 1891 allowed women to vote for school officials, and the next year Elgin women cast ballots for the first time and re-elected Lowrie. "We are going to vote," a member of the Woman's Club was quoted in the *Daily Courier*, "because the only hope of the country, so far as temperance and other great issues are concerned lies in the women."

Perhaps because their ballots were initially limited to school elections, women's interest in voting declined in the ensuing years. In 1896 there were 118 women registered to vote in Elgin; in 1900, only 75. In both years more than 5,800 men were registered.

The local struggle for the right to vote heated up in 1909, when women formed the Civic Equality League. Headed by Dr. Clara Todson, it was affiliated with the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, which in turn was an arm of the National Woman Suffrage Association.

In the summer of 1910 the state group, dominated by Chicagoans, organized a series of automobile tours to gain new members in northern Illinois. The tourists were greeted on their arrival in Elgin by a committee of suffragists that included Dr. Todson and Mattie Lowrie. They drove around the business district with "Votes for Women" on a large yellow streamer and used a megaphone to attract an audience to a meeting on Fountain Square. Other meetings were held outside the watch case factory, the watch factory, and the David C. Cook Publishing Co.

Elgin was host in November 1910 to the annual convention of the Illinois Equal Suffrage Association, where the main speaker was Dr. Anna Shaw, president of the national organization. Clara Todson told the delegates that men who opposed their movement were "mostly the liquor men, gamblers and corrupt politicians."

She was alluding to the fear among "wets" that voting women would close the saloons.

Members of the state legislature most sympathetic were "drys." Frances Willard, head of the Women's Christian Temperance Union, and Susan B. Anthony's suffragists were natural allies. The Illinois Presidential and Municipal Suffrage Act was finally approved with the help of drys in 1913. The day the governor signed the bill into law, Elgin women displayed flags at their homes to celebrate. "Bully for Governor Dunne," exclaimed Lillie Hollembeak, president of the Woman's Club. Kate Rundle, then leader of the local suffragists, pointed out: "We are now lifted from the category of imbeciles and criminals and will soon be bona fide citizens, according to law."

The Illinois statute was the first real suffrage measure to be adopted by any state east of the Mississippi. It allowed women to vote for Presidential electors; city, village, and township officials; and, significantly, in local referendums. Separate ballots and ballot boxes for men and women would be necessary because only men could vote for officers listed in the state constitution, such as governor and members of the General Assembly

Lois Hillis, an Elgin music teacher, died a few months before Illinois became the first state to ratify the federal suffrage amendment on June 10, 1919. She was one of the first local women to champion their right to vote and had introduced Susan B. Anthony, pioneer leader in the movement, to a small audience in the Universalist Church back in 1876.

Dr. Clara Todson headed the Civic Equality League in 1909. She believed that the right of women to vote was opposed by liquor dealers, gamblers and corrupt politicians.

Closing the Saloons

For years wives had complained that saloons received their husbands' wages before they arrived home, and many families were victims of alcohol abusers.

Clergymen denounced the evils of liquor from pulpits and revival tents and linked abstinence to Christianity. Prohibition was among the reforms sweeping the country after the turn of the last century, and conflicts between "wets" and "drys" divided politicians.

In 1907 the Illinois General Assembly tossed the controversy to localities by passing legislation that allowed referendums to decide if a township or municipality wanted to be wet or dry. When only men were voting, wets in Elgin had little difficulty winning local option elections in 1908 and 1910. And then came the Presidential and Municipal Suffrage Act of 1913. Women had the ballot, and they wasted little time in using it.

The local option election of Apri1 7, 1914 asked the question, "Shall this town become anti-saloon territory?" It was hotly contested, and the two daily newspapers were filled with big ads and letters to the editor. More than twice as many voters went to the polls than in any previous turn out. The total vote of more than 12,000 came within a few hundred of the total of those eligible to cast ballots.

In addition to saloon owners, the mayor and council members, fearing the loss of license revenue, were allied with the wets, who had the backing of many German-born residents and their families. Wet forces could also cite a long-held attitude expressed this way by an Elgin pastor: "A woman's place is essentially in the home, and much of her charm and dignity is lost when she enters into the battle against some real or imaginary evil."

The drys had the support of some Protestant clergymen and the widely respected president of the Elgin National Watch Co., who wrote a letter urging employees to vote in favor of the

proposal. Their greatest strength was the resolute organization of women, most of them now eager to vote for the first time. Grace Postle, their leader, explained their motivation: "These women have given up everything in the way of entertainment and have sacrificed, in many cases, everything but household duties that could not be delegated to others, and have worked with a grim determination to win—have worked in a way that they could not have done if this were not a vital moral issue."

Woman canvassed the entire township with automobiles and carriages and polled every available voter. "We are not guessing what the women of Elgin will do when they go to vote," declared Mrs. Postle. "We know."

At the mass meetings of drys, women sang their battle hymn, a revised and localized version of the state song. By the end of the first verse the men would join in and together they gave voice to their enthusiasm.

"Elgin is a noted city
Illinois, Illinois.
But it's wet, and that's a pity,
Illinois, Illinois.
But we'll right this by and by.
Underneath the April sky
Elgin women will vote dry,
Illinois, Illinois.
"We make watches, shoes and butter,
Illinois, Illinois,
And we've sent men to the gutter,
Illinois, Illinois.
But we're going to face about,
Drive saloons and blind pigs out,
We'll go dry beyond all doubt,
Illinois, Illinois.
"Tell it out to all the nation,
Illinois, Illinois.
Elgin has the combination,
Illinois, Illinois.
Voting women hold the key
Which will set the city free,
And saloonless we will be,
Illinois, Illinois."

TWELVE PAGES---PRICE TWO CENTS.

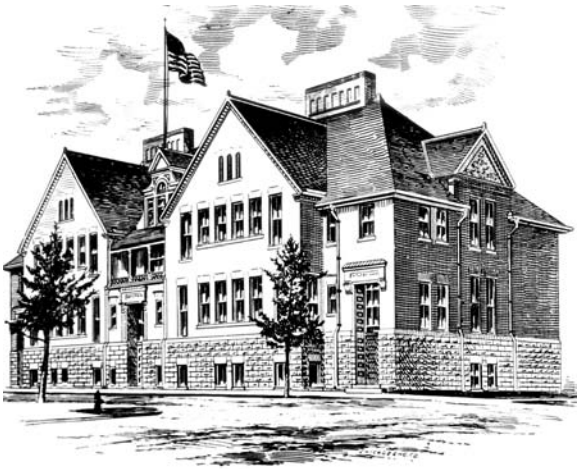
WOMEN'S BIG VOTE SENDS ELGIN INTO DRY COLUMN

On election day wet forces knew they were going to lose when judges and clerks began calling for additional women's ballots, and before the polls closed they were admitting defeat. The drys won, 6,504 to 5,918, and 4,008 women were in the winning column. The men voted wet, 3,733 to 2,506.

The election closed thirty-four saloons in the city and three others elsewhere in the township, but local option did not solve the liquor problem. Adjacent townships to the north and east remained wet, and thirsts could be slaked at River Street saloons in East Dundee and border bars in Hanover. Unlicensed clubs and blind pigs sprang up and some drinking probably shifted to the home. Sometimes a crusade that attempts to resolve one problem creates others.

The Nick Goedert Saloon, located at 170 E. Chicago Street, was one of 34 saloons forced to close after the 1914 election.

Community Crisis Center



The Franklin School, built in 1891, has been the home of the Community Crisis Center since 1987.

In 1974 a husband left his wife and two children without funds. Three of the woman's neighbors on Algona Street—Sally Brown, Rebecca Albert, and Ellen MacGregor—were touched by the situation and began raising funds and recruiting volunteers to establish a place where a woman in distress could get food and shelter. In August 1975 they opened the Community Crisis Center in a large, four-bedroom home on Margaret Place that was first occupied in 1886. The original staff was comprised of the director, Mary Berg, two part-timers—a counselor and a volunteer coordinator—and two Northern Illinois University graduate students who stayed through the night for room and board and a small stipend. Initial funding was provided by Elgin Township.

They met their first battered woman the first week they were open, and her arrival added to the Center's original mission. Within a decade the Center outgrew the home. The First Congregational Church purchased the vacated Franklin School on Geneva Street and donated it to the Center. Funds for remodeling a school into

a residence, close to $600,000, were raised in six weeks from public and private sources, and in 1987 the women moved in. The "Our Future Is Now" fund drive in 1991 raised $250,000 to retire the mortgage, increase the shelter's capacity from 35 to 40, pay for needed exterior and interior maintenance, and provide money to meet utility expenses for three years.

Today the Community Crisis Center has an annual budget of $2.3 million, employs more than 70—most of them part-time and most of them women—and 150 volunteers who help with children's programs, clerical tasks, building maintenance, and fund-raising events. It provides shelter for women and their children fleeing domestic violence, counsels victims of sexual assault, and helps families in financial and emotional distress. In a typical day, 40 people are sheltered, and more than 80 meals are served. All services are free except the batterers' intervention program for abusers, helping them to learn how to resolve problems without resort to violence. The executive director since 1980 is Gretchen Vapnar. The Center never closes, and a 24-hour telephone hotline is answered by a counselor who listens and offers help. For those in distress, the women at the Crisis Center are always home.

FASCINATNG WOMEN

A Bouquet of Notables

A national Women's Hall of Fame was established at Seneca Falls, New York, in 1969. If a local listing were to be made of women who blazed trails yesterday for the liberated women of today, perhaps it would include these names:

Rose Adler (1835-1905) was a leading participant in the Woman's Club's Sherman Hospital project. One of her seven children, Max, donated the Adler Planetarium to the City of Chicago.

Charlene Barnett (1928-1979), Elgin's first woman professional baseball player, was signed by the Grand Rapids Chicks in 1947 and later played with the Chicago Colleens and Rockford Peaches.

Lisa Boehm (1913-2008) was the prima ballerina at the Deutsche Opernhaus in Berlin and the Stadt Theater in Berne. She opened Lisa Boehm's School of Ballet in Elgin in 1954 and gave her last lesson in 2004. She staged "The Nutcracker" at the Hemmens, a community tradition for 33 years.

Myra Colby Bradwell (1831-1894) was a student and later a teacher at the Elgin Seminary. In 1869 she passed the required examination for admission to the Illinois bar, only to be refused because she was a woman. Bradwell appealed her case to the state Supreme Court but was unsuccessful. In 1871 another woman from Rockford, Alta Hulett, applied for admission. She also was denied a license because of her gender. Hulett, with the help of Bradwell and others, drafted a bill prohibiting the use of gender as

a barrier to any profession. It was enacted in 1872, the first anti-sex-discrimination law in the country. Bradwell refused to reapply. By then she had become editor of an influential law review.

Anita Spence Connor (1911-1966), long active in the League of Women Voters, played a major role in bringing the council-manager form of municipal government to Elgin in 1954.

Mildred A. Engelbrecht (1899-1973), a graduate of Elgin High School, was professor and head of the Department of Bacteriology and Medical Technology at the University of Alabama.

Edna Geister (1892-1959), author of seven books on recreation and one volume of juvenile fiction, was a national director of recreation for the YWCA during the First World War.

Janet Geister (1885-1964), a graduate of the Sherman Hospital Training School for Nurses in 1910, was director of the American Nursing Association, 1927-1933. At the time, it was the nation's largest professional women's organization.

Libbie Goll (1876-1951) owned and managed Resthaven Sanitarium for more than 40 years beginning in 1909.

Adellia Green (1901-1982) was active in the work of the Fremont Center and the NAACP. Her fried chicken business was heavily patronized by both blacks and whites.

Lois E. Hillis (1835-1919) opened Elgin's first music school in 1867 for lessons on the piano, organ and guitar. She assumed the responsibility and financial risk of bringing to Elgin some notable concert performers. Thanks to her, residents were able to hear the Theodore Thomas Orchestra, Ole Bull, Mm. Camilla Urso and others. Her annual musicals, when pupils gave an exhibition of their progress, were community events.

Lillian Rapp McDonald (1899-1957) made a hole in one in 1923, was Elgin's first licensed pilot in 1931, and took up motorcycling in 1950.

Ila Newsome (1881-1950) was president of Elgin's chapter of the NAACP who fought the Ku Klux Klan in the 1920's.

C. lrene Oberg (1869-1962) served as Sherman Hospital's superintendent, 1905-1929. With Mary Wheeler she organized the hospital's training school for nurses.

Grace Root (1900-1989) was the executive secretary of the Community Chest for 40 years, 1931-1971.

Jessie Sauceda (1910-2001) was one of the Mexican "pioneers" of Elgin. Married at the age of fifteen, she was the mother of a daughter and six sons, one of whom became chairman of the foreign language department at Marquette University. A lifelong member of St. Joseph Catholic Church, she was one of the founders of Club Guadalupano.

Green's Fried Chicken was a thriving family run-business managed by Adellia Green.

Louise Logan, A Helping Hand

Hard times arrived in Elgin before the stock market crashed in October 1929. Housing starts declined, the watch factory reduced hours, and unemployment increased with the closing of the shoe factory. As the Depression deepened, the number of impoverished families multiplied and drained the private resources and the township's general assistance fund.

In 1931 the Associated Charities took over the efforts of a city relief committee. Its allotment from the Community Chest that fall was raised from $2,400 to $30,000, an increase made possible by a $20,000 contribution from the Elgin National Watch Company. Reorganized as the Family Welfare Association and directed by Louise Logan, it became the main coordinator for relief efforts. Because state funds could not be allocated to a private agency, its office was "loaned" to the county branch of the Illinois Emergency Relief Commission.

Louise Logan served without remuneration, investigating cases of need and distributing funds for rent and coal and donations of food and clothing. By the spring of 1933, there were 1400 families on her assistance lists. In 1934, after federal aid began arriving on a large scale, she resigned from actively directing the activities of Family Welfare and became the organization's president, a position she was to occupy for 12 years.

For more than 30 years, Louis Logan was an active worker for the Community Chest. During the Second World War, she was in charge of the Elgin Red Cross Blood Donor's Center. She served for several years as treasurer of the Kane County Tuberculosis Association and was also an active worker in the YWCA and Sherman Hospital fund drives. She was the first woman to receive the Cosmopolitan Club's Distinguished Service Award.

When there was a need in Elgin for a helping hand, Louise Logan was there to offer hers.

The Modern Marriage of Heluiz Chandler

Meeting for the first time only a week before the event, Carleton W. Washburne and Heluiz Chandler were married in Los Angeles in 1912. Their sensational prenuptial agreement, which freed the couple from fidelity, made the nation's front pages.

The bride's mother in Philadelphia was said to be completely prostrated from shock. In Elgin, where the bridegroom had graduated from the local high school four years earlier, his reputation had prepared this otherwise staid community for the unusual.

Although noting that it "ignores conventions in a ruthless manner," the Elgin Daily News said the wedding caused no undue comment or excitement here "as young Washburne was widely known for his eccentricities."

Branded a "free love contract," the agreement included provisions that the marriage did not give one spouse control or possession of the other and would terminate immediately as soon as one ceased to love the other. In case of separation, financial responsibility was to be equally divided.

Bert Leston Taylor, columnist for the *Chicago Tribune,* satirized the marriage in rhyme:

"This mutual pact shall not coerce
Our own sweet wills a single jot.
We'll chop 'for better or for worse'
and all that rot:
Since you love me as I love you,
Herewith a sacred troth we plight.
Each to the other will be true:
If not—good night!"

Interviewed six months after the wedding, Heluiz explained: "I want to make it clear that our marriage is not different in one

sense from most marriages—that is, we are legally married….I am recognized as a perfectly legal partner in everything, have my separate bank account, and an equal half of all earnings, and am in no way subject to my husband's will."

The pact stipulated that each would be self-supporting and contribute one-half the household expenses. She eventually gained widespread recognition as the author of children's literature. Washburne became a leader in education and developed an innovative system in Winnetka, Illinois, where he served as school superintendent from 1919 to 1943. He spent several months practicing passive resistance with Ghandi in India, authored more than a score of books, and worked to eliminate fascist influence in the schools of northern Italy after the Second World War. He subsequently became a professor of education at Brooklyn College and Michigan State University.

Oh, about that loosely tied marriage that dispensed with "till death do us part."

Carleton and Heluiz were the parents of three children and remained happily married and united for more than 56 years until his death parted them in 1968.

Miss Elgin, Lucille Burns

Elgin's first entry in the Miss America contest at Atlantic City was selected at a Pageant of Progress held in 1925. Sponsored by the Boosters' Committee of the Elgin Motor Club, this was a six-day event aimed at advertising the Watch City. It featured a merchants' and manufacturers' exhibition, a display of new cars, a carnival and nightly musical review, and a competition to choose the city's "100 Percent Perfect Baby." But it was the bathing beauty contest that aroused the most interest and controversy.

Considering Elgin's reticence in approaching something new, this was a daring venture. Only the year before the City Council had ruled that both men and women bathers in the new Wing Park pool must have suits with skirts. The Boosters took a forthright stand about the display of feminine pulchritude, announcing that

"only real men can sponsor a National Beauty Pageant." They nevertheless assured parents "they could see nothing but beauty when these young ladies appear in their bathing attire, for… when the environment is cheerful, no smallness of thought can exist."

Attracted by local prizes and the dream of becoming Miss America, 36 contestants between the ages of 16 and 30 entered, among them a Girl in the Golden Mask. Each was given an Annette Kellerman two-in-one bathing suit. To insure impartiality, the judges were all from Chicago, and number rather than name introduced the participants.

A preliminary elimination reduced the number of contestants to 24 for the final judging. This took more than three hours. It was a lengthy process considering that present day frosting on the cheesecake, such as demonstrating talent or answering questions, wasn't then part of the format. The girls were rated only on grace of carriage, form and facial beauty. Because the judges were deadlocked over the final four, however, another criterion—one followed in horse shows—was applied when a dentist was called to the stage to inspect their teeth.

Lucille Burns, a graduate of Elgin High and a clerk at Swan's department store, was declared the winner. Miss Elgin of 1925 was presented with a sash, scepter and robe at a coronation ball. Many of the losers refused to attend. Apparently believers in quantitative standards, they held a protest meeting because measurements had not been taken.

The contest was denounced as "demoralizing" and "debasing" by the Elgin Ministerial Association. The clergymen's statement quoted one businessman's opinion that "it was disgusting to go up there and see a lot of half-naked girls parading about."

The Boosters replied by asking the question, "Is the objective of Elgin's citizenry to have a live or dead city? Let us not be prudes but rather broad-minded and progressive."

Miss Elgin was accompanied to Atlantic City by her mother. None of the contestants were permitted to leave their hotel rooms without their chaperones. Miss Burns was pleased to report to the folks back home that only at the official judging did she

have to appear in a bathing suit, and the judges remained at least five feet away from any of the participants.

Although eliminated in the first round, Miss Elgin displayed a resourceful loyalty to her city's major industry. In one parade she repeatedly pointed to the watch on her wrist, and afterward wherever she went among the crowds, there were calls for the correct time. The Boosters were pleased.

LUCILLE BURNS

A competition to choose Miss Elgin, Lucille Burns, in 1925. Two of her competitors are pictured above.

Virtue is its Own Reward: Ina Ellis and Mary Bryant

A lonely widowhood was not for Ina Ellis. Beginning about 1951, she gave free piano lessons to boys ages 6-12. Her home on River Bluff Road was equipped with five pianos and an organ. The boys were welcome to use them for practice and her front yard for baseball. Every Saturday night, the boys and their parents were invited over for movies, a recital and refreshments. There were so many people attending that cars were parked for a block around her home.

When Ina Ellis died, a close neighbor was one of only a handful attending her funeral. "Surely," he commented, "you would think some of these children, many of whom have grown up, or their parents would have remembered."

Long before the area animal shelters opened, there was the home of Mary Bryant on Highland Avenue. She took in stray dogs and cats, paying for food and veterinary care out of her own pocket. Can't give away all your kittens? Take them to the Cat Lady over on Highland. You're moving, and the new landlord won't allow dogs? Mrs. Bryant will try to find a new home for your pet. Is a sickly looking stray coming to your back door? Why don't you contact Mary Bryant?

For more than 30 years, Mary Bryant performed a service that neither other private parties nor the city seemed willing to do. Then in 1965, after repeated—and justifiable—complaints from neighboring residents about the noise and odors, she was charged with maintaining a public nuisance and given two weeks to close her shelter.

There were tears. "I want to leave Elgin," she said. "I don't ever want to hear this town's name again."

The Naughty One: Nettie Dunlap

Long, long ago newspaper readers throughout the country were intrigued by a scandal that began in Elgin, Illinois. Yes, Elgin! Even in a little midwestern city with 15 churches and a YMCA, the Tempter was present. The people caught in a tangle of wealth, illicit passion and betrayal have departed this earth. The sordid tale can be told now as a moral lesson without the trappings that so often glamorize or excuse carnal sin when portrayed in contemporary TV soap operas, movies and tabloids for inquiring minds.

During the Civil War, a young daughter of a family living near Elgin ran away from home, returned with a baby and told her parents she had married a soldier killed in service. Turned away, she went to Chicago and became a performer on the wicked stage but was unable to support her little girl. In 1868 she gave up the child for adoption to George Dunlap, an Elgin shoemaker, and his wife, Marie. They named her Marie Antoinette, called her Nettie, and spoiled her.

Nettie disliked school. *(Didn't like school? Beware, young people, that attitude is often the first step on the road to ruin.)* She preferred to flirt with boys and went to work at the watch factory at an early age. Assigned to polishing dials, her work was slipshod, and she was discharged for laziness. Nettie, an auburn-haired beauty, did a have a talent other than attracting men. Her charming voice brought her invitations to sing in churches (*Oh, if only she had listened to the sermons!)* and in the parlors of the city's elite.

Henry Lee Borden was a son of Gail Borden, who had invented a way of preserving milk in cans. Gail died in 1874, and Lee arrived in Elgin the following year. He became superintendent of the condensed milk plant, the city's second largest industry, and organized a lumber company. He was also president of the Home National Bank. The weekly *Advocate* described him in 1880 as

"one of Elgin's foremost men who enjoys the utmost confidence and respect of the people." One of the chief heirs of his father's huge fortune, Lee Borden was as generous as he was wealthy. He donated the lot for the Episcopalians' new building and presented the city with a larger and more ornate fountain for the square.

And when the adoptive parents of a beautiful young mezzo-soprano couldn't afford an advanced musical education for their daughter, he sponsored her training in Chicago. *(Careful! Seemingly innocent gestures may have tragic consequences.)*

In January 1883, Borden and his wife, Laura, who lived in a house still standing at 258 Douglas Avenue, presided over one of the most talked about galas of the season. This was a costume party where guests came dressed as characters in the novels of Charles Dickens. A few days later, Lee Borden disappeared, and as his absence lengthened, questions rippled over the city. The Elgin Daily News attributed them to "maliciously inclined persons" who were "circulating scandalous rumors about a man whose standing and wealth have placed him where he is the object of envy and jealousy." But where had he gone?

Henry Lee Borden left this home on Douglas Avenue in 1883.

Lee Borden, 50 years old, had left for New York with Nettie Dunlap, 30 years his junior. Few would have known if Nettie hadn't encountered on the streets of the metropolis an acquaintance, Ed Doney, Elgin High Class of '75, who happened to be a reporter for the *New York Herald*. *(Have you observed,*

dear reader, that no matter how far you travel, you often meet someone from back home? Behave yourself, wherever you are!) Nettie volunteered the information that Borden was paying for her music lessons, visiting her daily at the studio, and then escorting her to theaters and other places of amusement in the evening. *(Oh, Nettie, he was a married man!)* The *Herald's* account was picked up by other papers, including those in Chicago, and readers drew certain conclusions.

After a few weeks Borden sailed for Europe, leaving funds in a bank to defray Nettie's expenses. Had he tired of this dalliance? *(Lust is transient; only true love endures.)* Back in Elgin, Laura filed for divorce on grounds of desertion. The decree in 1885 awarded her the house on Douglas Avenue and a total settlement of other property and alimony amounting to more than $50,000, an immense sum in a day when a dollar was worth far more than it is today.

Nettie entered New York society through her connection with Borden and is said to have formed a liaison with another married man. He took her into his home *(Is there no depth to the evil around us?)*, and while there she met the daughter of a Washington, D.C. physician. Through this channel she captivated Alfred Scott Witherbee of that city, whom she married. Not long after the wedding, Nettie persuaded her husband to let her pay a visit to friends and family in Illinois. A few weeks later, Witherbee received a dispatch from his brother in Chicago who had seen Nettie in a theater with another man.

Her husband took the next train west and discovered that Nettie had registered at the Grand Pacific Hotel as the "wife" of a married New Yorker. *(Thou shalt not commit adultery.)* A confrontation led to a separation and his filing for a divorce.

"The suit will be a revelation to the Washington society people who admired the woman for her musical culture," reported the *Chicago Tribune* in an article reprinted in Elgin. "It may also be unpleasant for the Western millionaire whose peccadilloes can barely be concealed when the testimony is given."

Nettie subsequently took up with Thomas J. Mackey, a Reconstruction era "judge" of questionable background. They

lived together as "uncle" and "niece" in Bismarck, Dakota Territory, where his title and her voice gave them access to the homes of reputable citizens. Their stay ended when they quarreled with a servant, who then revealed they had been living as man and wife.

Preceded by reports of their scandalous conduct, Nettie and Mackey turned up in Elgin, ostensibly to assert her claim to property she had purchased with a gift from Borden. The *Daily Courier* commented that their prolonged visit at the Dunlap house on North Spring Street "has of course given rise to a good deal of gossip. To say the least, it has not been discreet."

There were quarrels, aired in the press, for Nettie had become a celebrity. George Dunlap reproached his daughter with her behavior and asked her to leave. When she refused, her mother left. *(Honor thy father and mother.)* Her father fought with Mackey, whom the *Chicago Tribune* described as having "dyed hair and mustache, glittering snake-like eyes, and an offensive suavity in his address." The notorious couple finally departed for New York and later broke up.

The *Daily Courier* reported in 1889 that "Nettie, when last heard from was in Paris." *(Paris? How far had our soiled dove fallen!)* If only Nettie had not disliked school and had followed the paths of virtue, she might never have left exotic, exciting, enchanting Elgin, Illinois.

Two Artists: Anna Lynch and Jane Peterson

Anna Lynch was the granddaughter of Irish immigrants who arrived in Elgin in the 1840s. She attended the local public schools, was an early graduate of St. Mary's Academy, and began painting in 1893 as a student at Chicago's Art Institute. Her special interest was portraiture.

One day she attempted a miniature of a friend and brought the little picture to a jeweler to be framed. He was more enthusiastic

over her work than her teachers and urged her to continue. Lynch studied in Paris in 1902-1904, where she frequented the Louvre. "Such times in the class rooms!" she recalled of her stay abroad. "Elated if the criticism of the professor is favorable, cast down if he mutilated one's best efforts."

Women artists in Anna Lynch's day were considered to be wandering out of their proper pasture. She recalled that "one man of international fame, and who was most polite and charming to them, asked an American man one day after he got outside. 'What are all these girls doing here? Why don't they go home and get married?'"

Lynch returned to the family home at 54 South Crystal Street and to a studio in Chicago. An exhibit at the Art Institute in 1906 featured 42 miniatures. During her lifetime she painted more than 400 portraits. Her reputation is based on the miniatures, which averaged about 3 by 2-1/2 inches in size and were painted on ivory.

An art critic for the *Chicago Tribune,* reviewing her work at an exhibition at the Art Institute in 1925, was ecstatic: "For so long a time has Miss Lynch allowed herself to be thought of primarily as miniaturist and secondly as a painter of flowers and still lifes, that it comes as a shock to realize her ability as a painter of landscape and sea. She arouses from canvas to canvas active admiration, quick respect for her control of her medium, wonder at the insight that has given her the key to these beauty spots she has transplanted, and eager interest in every detail of her work.

The paintings of Jane Peterson, born and raised in Elgin, are in the collections of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and the Pennsylvania Academy of Fine Arts in Philadelphia. They are sought in auctions and several years ago three of her works—*Zinnias, Contemplation,* and *Lady with a Parasol*—brought a total of $51,000.

Peterson was the daughter of a watch worker, and the family home is still standing at 34 North Gifford Street. Not long after graduating from Elgin High School in 1894, she borrowed money to go to New York to study art. Enrolled at the Pratt Institute, she subsisted on bread and milk in a $6 per month rented room. By 1907 the money she earned as an art instructor financed an

extended period of study and work in London, Madrid and Paris. She returned to this country to a career of exhibitions, prizes, awards and foreign travel.

She had her first one-woman show in Boston in 1909, followed by another soon after in New York. A prolific artist, she also taught watercolor at the Art Students League from 1912 to 1919, and later at the Maryland Institute in Baltimore. Her talent was versatile. She painted still lifes, landscapes, urban scenes, and portraits in both oils and watercolor, but she is best known for her flower paintings. She authored a book on this genre in 1947.

A *New York Times* art critic was impressed by Jane Peterson's *Toilette* at a 1922 exhibition. A portrait of a red-haired young woman preparing for Mardi Gras, he called it "the outstanding picture of the show."

In 1925 she married Moritz Bernard Phillipp, a wealthy attorney and a major stockholder in the Eastman Kodak Corp. The Elgin woman who had scrimped to finance her education now had a sky-lighted studio at the top of a house on Fifth Avenue across from the Metropolitan and another studio at a country home in Ipswich, Massachusetts.

Flowers grown in her garden at Ipswich were the subjects of many of her paintings. She concentrated on zinnias. A perfectionist, she often spent hours changing the vases and backgrounds and experimenting with lighting before beginning a work. During the Second World War her portraits of four servicewomen raised money for War Bonds. In just one year, 1988-1989, 36 of her paintings brought $137,300 at an art auction, and in 1996 three of them sold for more than $40,000.

The Pier at Rocky Neck, Gloucester attracted wide attention when it was reproduced in color on the cover of the *Journal of the American Medical Association* in 1980. The "starving artist" from Elgin, who once subsisted on bread and milk, left an estate valued at more than $l million.

Byrd Potter, Woman Driver

Byrd Potter, Woman Driver
Photo courtesy of the White-Rock Collection.

Elwood Haynes built one of the first American automobiles in 1894 and established the Haynes Automobile Co. in Kokomo, Indiana. The first production models were introduced in 1904, and by 1907 he had produced 350. Haynes understood the value of the unusual in publicizing his cars, and women drivers were rare in the early days of the industry.

Mrs. Alice Byrd (Potter) Tetzner of Elgin, a member of the Country Club, was frequently seen driving her machine around the city. In 1907 she drove a Haynes special racing car at Harlem, competing for the title, "Champion Lady Driver of the West." Several Elgin motorists driving four Fords, two Packards, a Buick, a Maxwell, and a Rambler attended the event to cheer her on. She won by default in a three-mile exhibition because the two other women who had entered the event were unwilling to compete on the rough track.

The next year Byrd Potter (she had resumed her maiden name after a divorce and was usually called by her middle name) embarked on another Haynes venture. She had about

15,000 miles of driving experience when she pulled away from the Auditorium in Chicago on July 16, 1908, bound for New York. Accompanying her as passengers were Ida N. Dangerfield of Elgin, Elizabeth Forest of Geneva, and Elizabeth Hunt of St. Charles. None of the three knew how to drive. Prior to departure there was a luncheon at the Haynes Automobile office. A delegation from the Chicago Automobile Club, which took an interest in the tour, drove along with them as far as South Bend, Indiana.

"Although the feat is a remarkable one," commented the Daily News, "the driver, Alice Potter, is well known for her ability in handling a machine, and it is not anticipated that she will meet with difficulty. She is depending entirely upon her knowledge of the mechanism of the automobile to repair such breakdowns as occur, and to care for the car until it reaches the eastern destination."

The roads were graveled and macadamized at the best and often simply dirt paths that were mired after a rain, but there was no intention of setting a record time. Stopping whenever or wherever their fancy took them, the party reached Cleveland by way of Sandusky. At one place on the road to Toledo they were obliged to ford a river because of a broken bridge. When they arrived, the *Toledo Times* described them as "covered with dust and hungry as bears."

They were banqueted by automobile clubs along the route and were welcomed into a number of homes when they halted and asked for a drink of water. The *Express* of Buffalo, New York, sent a reporter to interview them upon their arrival in that city:

> Four girls with sunburned noses and clothes covered with mud arrived at the Iroquois at 8 o'clock last night after motoring from Ashtabula yesterday. The party, scorning the assistance of any man, is making the run from Chicago to New York.
>
> Mrs. Alice Potter, driver of the car, is master mechanic, tire re-pairer, oiler, and general expert… Mrs. Potter is a slight girl, who doesn't weigh more

than 100 pounds, but she is definitely game.

"Nothing has gone wrong yet,' she chirped gleefully. "I think this is a good stunt. I didn't realize it was anything remarkable until news-papermen began to interview me."

Aren't you afraid to travel alone?

"Nothing to be afraid of," she replied scornfully. "The only thing that has phased me yet was the mud between Cleveland and Ashtabula.

But then, I've seen so much mud in Illinois that I didn't mind that very much."

Do you carry any weapons of defense?

"Only these," she said, exhibiting a pair of small white arms.

Riding through the Mohawk valley from Syracuse to Amsterdam, they traveled in tandem with a Mercedes. "I was proud of my Haynes," Byrd reported, "and in fact could make bad muddy places better than the Mercedes." At Albany it was "slow, second speed most of the time" because of the hills, but her Diamond tires were still holding Chicago air. "I have not been obliged to pump them up since leaving Chicago."

The four women were met at Tarrytown by the manager of a Haynes dealership in New York and arrived at the Martha Washington Hotel on East Twenty-ninth Street on July 28. While touring the city, Byrd was arrested for allowing her car to smoke in Central Park and fined $10.

The only trouble on the return trip was a puncture near South Bend. Arriving back in Chicago on August 22, the speedometer showing l,745 miles, Byrd was elated: "I think it was the greatest trip that one could ever experience. I have been abroad but the trip across the ocean isn't to be compared with an auto trip to New York and return without an escort."

An impressed *Elgin Daily Courier* reporter predicted: "(T)he record she has just made may never be equaled by any woman driver."


Two views of Byrd Potter: The Fashionable Lady and the Garage Mechanic
Photo courtesy of the White-Rock Collection.

Grace Topping: Club Woman

Grace Marsh received an Elgin High School diploma in 1886, and like most girl graduates in those days, she became a teacher. Starting in rural schools she eventually received an Elgin contract. In 1891 she married William P. Topping, and they became parents of two daughters.

A member of the First Baptist Church, she soon became a leader in women's societies, not only in Elgin but also in state and national organizations. In 1902, with a Methodist friend, she conceived the idea that the Christian women of the city should join together for better service and mutual understanding. The outcome was the Elgin Woman's Mission Union. Grace Topping was elected its president in 1912.

In addition to her work with church groups, Mrs. Topping was a busy club woman. In 1902, with Carrie Gifford Holden, she formed the Searchers, a woman's study group.

She held various offices in the Elgin Woman's Club, and was president during the Depression years, 1929-1931.

In 1908 she campaigned successfully for the free collection of garbage in Elgin and sponsored an extensive tree and shrubbery planting for a "city beautiful" project. During the First World War, she originated the idea of the Victory Bell. Beginning May 8, 1918, and continuing to the end of the conflict, bells rang and whistles blew at 11:00 a.m. each workday while the city united in prayer.

While chairing the civic department of the Woman's Club in 1922, she developed a plan for a statue to honor all those who served in the First World War. The idea was to solicit small donations from a large number of participants. All but $70 of the $2,140.78 collected came in contributions of less than $5 from more than 7,500 residents. The cost of the Doughboy statue in Davidson Park was $l,930, and the remaining funds were used to place historical boulders in Lords, Wing and Gifford parks.

The range of Grace Topping's efforts seem inexhaustible. She served on the governing board of the Community Chest (now the United Way) and organized its women's division. She was president of the YWCA, 1933-1935; regent of the Elgin chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, 1942-1944; and in 1949, at the age of eighty, was elected president of the Sherman Hospital Auxiliary.

Anything else? In 1939, when Illinois first allowed women jurors, Mrs. Topping was one of the initial panelists, making a daily trip to the federal court building in Chicago for six weeks. Her civic record was accompanied by a happy marriage that lasted more than 59 years.

Professional Baseball Player: Charlene Barnett

Alta Kee was among the local women who pioneered in activities once restricted to men. She was the first to take up motorcycling. Charlene Barnett was Elgin's first professional baseball player.

The summer after her graduation from Elgin High School in 1946, she played with the McGraw Toastmasterettes, who won the Northern Illinois Girls Softball title. Invited to a spring training trial in 1947 by the All-American Girls Baseball League, she was signed by the Grand Rapids Chicks. The next year she played with the Chicago Colleens.

The All-American Girls Baseball League was formed in 1943 when organized baseball felt the manpower shortage, but its popularity in Midwest cities continued in peacetime. Designed to fit the speed difference between men and women, the League games were played with 72-foot base paths and a 55-foot pitching distance. All other baseball rules applied. The players wore skirts, which invited skin abrasions when sliding into a base. Most of the players, like Charlene, were in their late teens or early twenties. Closely chaperoned, they couldn't smoke or drink in public or appear in slacks or shorts. Salaries ranged from $55 up to a maximum of $100 a week for a season of more than 100 games that were played mainly in the evening under the lights. They had to endure long bus rides and irregular hours.

Team members were skilled and highly competitive athletes, but they were often paraded as starlets. An *Elgin Courier-News* caption under an action picture of one player referred to her as a "shapely first place darling" and her team as the "sparkling belles of the diamond."

Charlene Barnett played second base for the Rockford Peaches in 1949 and 1950. She was the pivot in the League's best infield that enabled the Peaches to win both pennants and playoffs in

those years. All told she played in 355 games during her four-year career in the AAGBL. She retired after the 1950 season to become a flight attendant.

Another Elgin High graduate, Beth Goldsmith of the Class of 1944, pitched for the Kenosha Comets from 1948 through 1950 and was inducted into the All American Girls Professional Baseball League Hall of Fame.

The AAGBL folded in 1954. The Baseball Hall of Fame at Cooperstown unveiled a permanent exhibit of the League in 1988, and it was the subject of *A League of Their Own*, a feature film released in the summer of 1992.

The Heiress: Hattie Pease Hemmens

The donor of funds for the Hemmens Cultural Center was probably, in the nineteenth century expression, a "love child." Although the date of birth on her death certificate was 1873, Hattie Pease is listed on the U. S. Census enumeration sheets as two years old in 1870, and she graduated from Elgin High School in 1885. It is unlikely that she was twelve years old at that time. An older sister, who was 19 at the time of her birth, ended up in California.

Hattie was raised by her grandparents, Walter and Sarah Pease. A former mayor and a prosperous banker, Walter Pease was one of the Four Immortals who raised the funds to encourage the watch factory to locate in Elgin. The Pease wealth was derived from the profits of a local distillery. Some time elapsed between the imposition of a Civil War tax on alcoholic spirits and its effective date. The distillery was worked day and night, and cellars and barns around town were filled with the output. The large stock was then sold at the price advanced by the tax. Pease and his partner, Benjamin Lawrence, ploughed their profits into their newly organized First National Bank.

Hattie married David Collins, a Los Angeles jeweler, in 1891.

He went to the Klondike gold fields and didn't return. She was granted a divorce on the grounds of desertion in 1902. Later that year she married Walter P. Hemmens, an Elgin coal dealer who graduated from Elgin High in 1879. It was said that after the wedding his name was removed from the coal wagons.

For several years, until moving to Chicago in 1912, the childless couple resided at 467 East Chicago Street. They traveled widely, and their world tour in 1919-1920 was described by her husband in the "Dear Dick" letters published in the *Elgin Daily News*.

After Walter died in 1941, Hattie Hemmens lived in a suite in the Hotel Baker in St. Charles and later at the Edgewater Beach Hotel in Chicago, where her death occurred in 1957. Hattie wore a hat and gloves everywhere, even at picnics. Aristocratic in bearing, her manner toward employees was often brusque. She is remembered as being fond of jewelry, owning a diamond tiara and rings of impressive size.

Although she was aware of her contemporaries' knowledge of the circumstances of her birth, Hattie Pease Hemmens remembered Elgin in her will, bequeathing more than one million dollars for a community building. Her grandfather's bank, the First National, the estate's trustee, designated the city government to develop the project. The search for a site, which would require parking space, sparked the idea of a Civic Center to revitalize the aging downtown. Federal urban renewal funds paid for three-fourths of the cost of site clearance, and voters approved a bond issue. Demolition began in 1964, and by 1969, when the Hemmens was completed, four additional buildings—a City Hall, a U. S. Post Office, the Gail Borden Public Library, and an Illinois Appellate Court occupied the site.

Note on Sources

Although this booklet is a popular history, all the stories have documentation. Because the obituary of Hattie Hemmens contained little information, her biography required extensive research. The following is a list of the sources used and will illustrate those used for the other lives.

- Death certificates for Hattie Hemmens and Walter P. Hemmens.
- U. S. Census for 1870. Elgin Township enumeration sheets.
- E. C. Alft interview with Fred Bauman (1889-1967), who knew Hattie and was adamant in maintaining that "the whole town knew she was a 'love child.'"
- The Pease family history can be found in R. Waite Joslyn and Frank W. Joslyn, *History of Kane County*, Vol. II. Chicago: Pioneer Publishing Co., 1908, pages 101-104.
- Harry F. Hawkins, comp., Alumni of the Elgin High School, Elgin, Illinois, to June 30, 1894. Elgin, 1895.
- Excise tax: Elgin *Advocate*, Jan. 23, 1877.
- Marriage to David Collins, Elgin Every Saturday, May 6, 1891.
- Collins divorce, Elgin *Advocate*, Mar. 15, 1902.
- Marriage to W. P. Hemmens, *Elgin Daily Courier*, Oct. 18, 1902.
- Left for Chicago, Elgin *Daily News,* May 18, 1913.
- Travels: "Gun" Clifford column, *Elgin Daily Courier-News,* Oct. 30, 1941.
- Jewelry: Letter to E. C. Alft from Harriet Wilkins, Oct. 9, 1971. This contains a reminiscence by O. Ballinger, a musician who played at a dance where HPH was present.
- An appeal for more information about HPH issued by the Elgin Symphony Women's League in the *Elgin Daily Courier-News,* Sep. 21, 1972, brought some reminiscences. These were summarized by Mick Zawislak, "Hattie Hemmens was a benevolent local aristocrat" in the *Daily Courier-News,* Apr. 18, 1993.
- The Hemmens bequest and the Civic Center are described in E. C. Alft, *Elgin: An American History*. Carpentersville, IL: Crossroads Communications, 1984, pages 288-291.

Hattie Pease Hemmens remembered Elgin in her will, bequeathing more than one million dollars for a community building. The Hemmens Theater was completed in 1969. Photo courtesy of the City of Elgin.

Harriet Gifford and Hattie Griffin: Two Teachers

Harriet Gifford, sister of Elgin's founder, in 1837 taught a few children of the early settlers in the Gifford cabin. Later she held classes intermittently in the Union Chapel, erected as a joint place of worship by the Congregationalists and Baptists. Hers was a "subscription" school supported by the pupils' parents. Because she was the community's first teacher, she is remembered in the name of a west side school.

In 188l the parents of Hattie Griffin came from Chicago to Elgin, where her father found employment as a baker. Hattie had attended Rockford High School and the Cook County Normal School and in September 1882 began teaching in Elgin's Old Brick School on the northeast corner of DuPage and Chapel Streets. She had more than fifty students, a typical class load at that time. Beginning in 1892, following her return from teaching in Chicago for three years,

she taught eighth grade history in the high school building, and in 1897 was appointed principal of Lincoln School. Over the years she continued her studies, taking courses at the University of Chicago, the University of Illinois, Columbia University and Harvard University. Hattie retired in 1933, 51 years after her first class in Old Brick

While at Lincoln she started the first art and music classes, organized the school's first Boy Scout troop, and established a program of physical education. When automobile traffic became dangerous, she enlisted the aid of boys in the 6th, 7th, and 8th grades to assist the younger children in crossing busy intersections. Her invitation to parents of pupils to visit the school was a forerunner of the local Parent Teachers Association.

Hattie became the chief support of her aging parents and a niece who was a homebound invalid. In 1902 she asked the board of education for an increase in her salary from $87.50 per month. She intimated that she wanted to be paid the same as male principals who were making $95.00 monthly. The board's president declared that the schools were not run on a charitable basis, and a board member explained that it was a matter of supply and demand. It was easier to find women principals than men. She may have been the first woman in Elgin to publicly ask for equal pay for equal work.

In addition to her long career as an educator, Hattie was active in the community. Among the oldest members of the First Baptist Church at the time of her death in 1943, she was in charge of the first Sunday school teachers' training class in Elgin. In 1887 she presided at the organizational meeting of the Young Ladies Christian Temperance Union. She was an active member of the American Association of University Women and served on the board of directors of the Woman's Club and the Old People's Home.

Concerned about the lack of recreational opportunities for young women working at the watch factory, Hattie contacted YWCA officials in Chicago about forming an Association in this city. They visited Elgin, addressed meetings, and appointed her the local representative. She was the moving spirit behind the founding of the local Y in 1901 and served on its board for 23 years. At various times she was a vice president and chaired the education, physical fitness, finance, and cafeteria committees. In 1924, at the Y's 2lst annual

meeting, Hattie was honored as the member "whose vision really started the organization."

When Hattie Griffin retired in June 1933 (the month she observed her 71st birthday) former students, teachers from Lincoln and elsewhere in the school district, and prominent members of the community paid tribute to her achievements in a packed high school auditorium. She was presented with telegrams and letters of appreciation from all over the country. The superintendent of schools referred to her as a "builder of character, as well as an educator of unusual merit" and "a remarkable woman of astounding intellectual interests."

In 1935 Elgin celebrated the l00th anniversary of its founding with a historical pageant. Who do you suppose was chosen to portray the role of Harriet Gifford? Why, Hattie Griffin, of course!

APPENDIX

Elgin's "First Ladies"

This is a selection, not a complete list, of women who are believed to be the first to perform roles in the community once considered the prerogative of men. There are dozens of others who were also pioneers, especially during the Second World War, when women took over "men's jobs." A few who are not listed are recognized elsewhere in the booklet.

1870 Susan Whitford, medical school graduate

1881 Cecil Harvey, librarian

1913 Celia Howard, admitted to the bar

1933 Hazel Linkfield, Gail Borden Library trustee

1934 Louise Logan, Cosmopolitan community service award

1939 Grace Topping, juror

1955 Myrtle Spiegler, city clerk

1969 Frieda Simon, board chair, Elgin Community College

1971 Pat Pearsaul, elected member of the city council

1976 Iris McGinnis, president of the United Fund

1983 Audrey Schick, president, Elgin Area Chamber of Commerce

1985 Marcene Linstrom, executive director, Elgin Symphony

1987 Pamela Jensen, circuit court judge

1988 Renate Mattaeus, high school principal, modern era

1988 Linda Gough, inductee, Elgin Sports Hall of Fame

1992 Joyce Parker, city manager

2003 Diane Tindall, postmaster

2003 Ruth Munson, member of the Illinois General Assembly

2005 Lisa Womack, chief of police

Altrusa Club's Woman of the Year

The Altrusa Club for business and professional women was organized on October 24, 1946 and received its charter from the International on May 15, 1947.

1950	Harriet Armstrong
1951	Helen Hewitt
1952	Grace Topping
1953	Helen Heindel
1954	Myrtle Huff
1955	Rose Jacobs
1956	LeMar Vollman
1957	Louise Logan
1958	Marjorie Leonard
1959	Maurine Withers
1960	Gladys Massey
1961	Marion Peck
1962	Katherine Leighton
1963	Helen Emmert
1964	Barbara Belding
1965	Rose Affeld
1966	Sarah Reed
1967	Nina Reber
1968	Barbara Brady
1969	Margaret Ollayos
1970	Frieda Simon
1971	Shirley Rauschenberger
1972	Harriet Dolby
1973	Marilyn Wilson
1974	Myrtle Spiegler
1975	Betty Brown
1976	Carolyn Oehler
1977	Gladys Larson
1978	Carol Harwood
1979	Mildred Hubrig
1980	Shirley Minks
1981	Margaret Kenyon
1982	Lee Mary Miller
1983	Jacquelyn Pierce
1984	Mary Camacho
1985	Candi Bone
1986	Phyllis Blizzard
1987	Audrey Schick
1988	Cheri Lee Lewis
1989	Pat Laird
1990	Alice McIntyre
1991	Sarah Hudgens
1992	Edna Sculley
1993	Celia Schreibman
1994	Taffy Hoffer
1995	Beatrice Albright
1996	Murna Hansemann
1997	Sue Rakow
1998	Phyllis Ziegler
1999	Pearle Brody
2000	Robin Narum
2001	Robin Seigle
2002	Nancy Schueneman
2003	Lisa West
2004	Margaret Haeflinger
2005	Karen Fox
2006	Ronell Hilton DeLoncker
2007	Julie Lichtenberg

Miss Elgin

1925	Lucille Burns
1927	Mary Creason
1928	Pearl Westphal
1961	Toni Tifft
1962	Sara Hart
1963	Janice Jordan
1964	Susan Phillips
1965	Kathy True
1966	Mary Lu Schroeder
1967	Kathleen True
1968	Linda DeMoe
1969	Dulcie Scripture (Miss Illinois)
1970	Diane Brammel
1971	Deborah Mueller
1972	Lynne Williams
1973	Karen Hamling
1974	Vanessa Herbener
1975	Karen Mollitor
1976	Sherry Keir
1977	Donna Williams
1978	Paula Kinney
1979	Catherine Sachaj
1980	Loretta Patton
1981	Susan Mills
1982	Pamela Munch
1983	Katherine Garippo
1984	Pamela Munch
1985	Renee Stark
1986	Elizabeth Roberts

The Miss Elgin pageant was changed to the Miss Fox Valley Pageant in 1987.

Outstanding Women of Elgin

Each year the Elgin Junior Women's Club honors one woman who has shown special commitment to service. An impartial group of volunteer judges interview candidates for the award after they are nominated by the city's service organizations.

1977 Jean Bowen
1978 Jean Muntz
1979 Jean Cramer
1980 Frances Channon
1981 Candi Bone
1982 Cheryl Popple
1983 Susan Cincinelli
1984 Pat Steffan
1985 Janet Schneider
1986 Clare Ollayos
1987 Sharon Boysen
1988 Darcy Dougherty
1989 Karen Fox
1990 Margo White
1991 Pat Egloff
1992 Jane Craddock
1993 Deborah Hudgens
1994 Catherine Hurlbut
1995 Susanne Jacques
1996 Lena Scheflow
1997 Diane Strede
1998 Dr. Risé Dawn Jones
1999 Rhonda Pokoj
2000 Catherine Olson
2001 No award
2002 No award
2003 Donna Anderson
2004 Dena Vierck
2005 Mary Rees Freeman
2006 Murna Hanseman
2007 Deirdre White

Acknowledgments

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Publication was made possible by grants from *A Tapestry of Freedom* project and the Elgin Heritage Commission. The helpful staff of the Gail Borden Public Library, former and current, has been tolerant of a semi-permanent resident for more than 50 years. All errors are the author's, except those of omission. Dozens of women deserve recognition, but this is a booklet, not an encyclopedia.

About the Author

E.C. (Mike) Alft is the author of more than a dozen books and booklets about Elgin. One of them, *Elgin: An American History*, received a superior achievement award from the Illinois State Historical Society. His "Days Gone By" column has appeared in the *Elgin Courier-News* since 1981.

Mike was a teacher for 42 years. He was a city councilman, 1963-1967, and mayor of Elgin, 1967-1971. A constant reader, he served as a trustee of the Gail Borden Public Library District, 1995-2007.

Long before the days of Rosie the Riveter, women in Elgin, Illinois were working long hours in factories, managing the city's hospitals, forming study clubs, running charities and exercising their power at the polls. Local biographical collections have previously ignored some fascinating women whose achievements are brought to life in these inspiring pages.

E.C. (Mike) Alft is a local historian and the author of more than a dozen books about Elgin, Illinois.

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