

ELMHURST

HISTORY

MUSEUM



PRACTICING AGILITY

2020: A YEAR DEFINED BY ADAPTING

As we look back at the tumultuous year that was 2020 and make an effort to decipher it, what words come to mind?

Coronavirus. Social distance. Face masks. Zoom meetings. An abundance of caution.

As we try to make sense of where we've been in 2020, we can see glimpses of light in the midst of a dark year. Communities coming together. Support for frontline workers. People connecting and learning in new ways. A vaccine finally on the way to stem the tide of an invisible enemy.

In 2020, we pivoted. We punted. We adapted. We found patience. We learned resilience.

As we take pause to share the ups and downs that occurred in our corner of the world at the Elmhurst History Museum in this Annual Report, it's clear that we were fortunate to persevere in a year that threw many roadblocks at us all.

If 2020 showed us anything, it reminds us that in tough times, we never go it alone. Thank you for supporting the Elmhurst History Museum and the Elmhurst Heritage Foundation during these tough times. Here's to better days ahead.

EHM Staff, June 2020



HIGHLIGHTS

The Elmhurst History Museum quickly adapted many initiatives in 2020 in light of mandated closures and capacity requirements dictated by COVID-19 mitigation efforts. Some of the highlights include:

Total **virtual program outreach** for the year surpassed **194,495**—an **unprecedented number of connections** with the community and beyond.

New education resources for teachers and parents were quickly created in response to school closures including weekly **LESSONS FROM THE SCHOOLMARM** and **storytimes for young children**.

A **new series of ELMHURST HISTORY IN FOCUS** videos debuted covering various local history topics ranging from the Elmhurst-Chicago Stone Quarry to the Elm Skating Rink.

Adult programs transitioned online and reached **EXPANDED AUDIENCES** through free lectures, Facebook Live gallery talks, concerts, exhibit tours, and Zoom book discussions.

A **new documentary** was produced in October to mark the **10-YEAR ANNIVERSARY** of the **Churchville One-Room Schoolhouse's reopening**.

AWARDS & GRANTS



June 2020:
Superior Achievement Award/Exhibits
Illinois State Historical Society

Worlds of Wonder: Remembering Chicagoland's Amusement Parks (2019 exhibit)



The **annual Ruth Strand Poster Contest** morphed into an online project to share experiences **LEARNING FROM HOME**.

A self-guided outdoor **WALKING AND BIKING TOUR OF ELMHURST** and a **BRONZE PLAQUE SCAVENGER HUNT** offered **safe, socially-distant** opportunities to learn more about local history.

A **significant 19th-century portrait** of prominent Elmhurst resident **JANE BYRD BRYAN** was **successfully acquired** for the collection with support from the Elmhurst Heritage Foundation.



September 2020:
Award of Excellence American Association for State and Local History

Worlds of Wonder: Remembering Chicagoland's Amusement Parks (2019 exhibit)

October 2020:
State of Illinois Capital Grant

The museum received a \$225,000 capital grant earmarked for future site improvements and exhibit enhancements.

EXHIBITS

Although hampered by COVID mitigation closures, the Elmhurst History Museum managed to present three major exhibitions in 2020, starting with the continuation of *On the Right Track: By Rail to Chicago and Beyond*. Designed by Curator Dan Bartlett, this exhibit traced the history of railroads in the region and shattered winter attendance records in early 2020. In summer, *The Great Midwestern Road Trip* checked in with a nostalgic journey through the history of classic Midwest vacations. October brought the national touring exhibit, *Frank Lloyd Wright: Architecture of the Interior*, in partnership with a tandem exhibit at the Elmhurst Art Museum. Both exhibits experienced abbreviated runs with a 25% capacity restriction. The museum was closed from mid-March to late June and again from mid-November through the end of the year, which makes year-over-year comparisons impossible. When the museum reopened, a new online reservation system was put in place among other safety protocols.

Two pop-up touring exhibits from the Smithsonian Institution's SITES program and the National Archives were added to the schedule to commemorate the centennial of the 19th amendment in August 2020. One of these was staged outside on the lawn in summer to allow safe and convenient viewing by the public.



**January 1–
March 13, 2020**
**On the Right Track:
By Rail to Chicago & Beyond**



**June 26–
October 11, 2020**
**The Great Midwestern
Road Trip**



**October 23–
November 20, 2020**
**Frank Lloyd Wright:
Architecture of the Interior**
Touring Exhibit from International
Art & Artists, Washington, DC

Note: A national touring exhibit slated for Spring 2020 was cancelled.



COLLECTION & RESEARCH



EHM's Curator of Collections, Daniel Lund, saw his skill set expand from curatorial to virtual historian and documentary filmmaker in 2020. After the museum closed in March, a series of short documentaries, dubbed *Elmhurst History in Focus*, was produced highlighting different topics (Elm Skating Rink was most popular with 2,700+ views). Another exciting film project was the Churchville Schoolhouse retrospective documentary, a 30-minute video sharing the history of the restoration of this National Register site.

Collections staff also contributed weekly *Throwback Thursday* photos to Facebook and Instagram, which have become EHM's most-viewed social media posts, and six History Highlights articles were added to the Museum's web site resources. Digitization of the museum's photograph and manuscript collection continued in 2020, and staff added to the eHive online database which now has more than 3,370 viewable items. A 50% increase in use of this system was seen in 2020, attributed to many patrons searching from home during the pandemic.

2020 Notable Donations to the Collection:

- ➔ Photographs and artifacts pertaining to the Yorkfield Fire Department;
- ➔ A polio vaccination card issued to a Field School student in 1954;
- ➔ A poster for the Mills Bros. Circus, which visited Elmhurst circa 1964;
- ➔ 19th-century paintings of Solomon and Lucy Sturges, painted by Theodore Pine.



Major Acquisition:

With support from the Elmhurst Heritage Foundation, an 1859 portrait of Jane Byrd Bryan (wife of Thomas Bryan), painted by famous artist G.P.A. Healy, was acquired. Though in need of extensive restoration, this significant piece is one of the most important items to be added to the EHM collection.

PROGRAMS

Public programming in 2020 was an exercise in flexibility that involved learning new technologies, adapting schedules, and numerous last-minute changes. EHM's Supervisor of Education Services, Jessie Wandersee, transformed all programs to virtual resources as it became apparent that COVID-19 was quickly impacting plans. Large-scale events were cancelled, and Facebook tours, online lectures and Zoom book discussions became the norm. A positive facet of this change was that participation in online programming was extraordinarily high, with some programs reaching thousands of views from patrons far and wide, including Facebook Live tours of the *On the Right Track* exhibit (3,197 views) and the Churchville Schoolhouse (2,222 views).

Some of the most popular general programs included: a living history performance featuring Leslie Goddard as Alice Paul to commemorate the women's suffrage movement (303 views), a virtual concert with folk singer Chris Vallillo (603 views) funded by a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council, and a lecture about Midwest waysides and rest stops (375 views). For families clamoring for safe and engaging activities, a mysterious Elmhurst Clue Game was created by the education staff in summer and had local sleuths searching around town for clues to find out who took the Schoolmarm's favorite pointer stick (it turns out Dastardly Dan was the appropriately-named culprit).

EDUCATION

School closures in spring caused the cancellation of field trips at the Churchville One-Room Schoolhouse, normally the busiest time of year for our educator. The schoolmarm pivoted and made her way into classrooms and homes with virtual programs to bring much-needed resources to teachers and families. *Storytime with the Schoolmarm* featured old-fashioned stories for young children, with *The Gingerbread Boy* proving to be most popular (1,695+ views). *Lessons from the Schoolmarm* for elementary age children included engaging activities such as how to make a thaumatrope, pack a bag like a pioneer, elocution lessons and more. In all, more than 12,400 people were reached by these educational programs underscoring the need for quality online educational materials during the COVID-19 crisis.

The KidStory program for schools was also adapted to a virtual format and found our educator interacting with schoolchildren and their teachers via Zoom or Google Classroom as they learned about artifacts from the past and how to make butter. More than 1,140 students were able to experience this virtual program in spring and fall.

With support from the Elmhurst Heritage Foundation, the annual Ruth Strand Poster Contest was revamped to *Lessons From Home* wherein school-age participants shared drawings and insights about their experiences with remote learning during the early days of COVID closures.

ELMHURST HISTORY MUSEUM

Mission

To engage people with history through thoughtful collection, enlightening exhibits, and diverse educational experiences.

Staff

As of December 2020	Amanda Paszek Special Education Assistant
Dan Bartlett Curator of Exhibits	Patrice Roche Marketing & Communications Specialist
Nancy Himmes Administrative Assistant	Katelyn Thurnall Weekend Museum Coordinator
Daniel Lund Curator of Collections	Jessie Wandersee Supervisor of Education Services
Dave Oberg Director	

ELMHURST HERITAGE FOUNDATION

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ELMHURST HERITAGE FOUNDATION

The Elmhurst Heritage Foundation continued its work to provide essential support from our local community for the Elmhurst History Museum and Churchville Schoolhouse through advocacy, education, and fundraising. This dedicated board of volunteer community members raised essential funds and awareness through their strategic efforts in 2020. Unfortunately, the Foundation's highly-anticipated annual Craft Beer Fest was canceled due to COVID; however, the Foundation found other ways to provide financial support and advocate on behalf of the Museum.

2020 EHF Notable Accomplishments



Hosted special, after-hours tours in keeping with COVID-19 protocols, for members, donors and exhibit sponsors.



Supported the Museum and Churchville Schoolhouse through an annual grant which provides essential funding for exhibits and educational programs.

Launched a year-end fundraising campaign to provide ongoing support for the Museum and Churchville Schoolhouse.

Managed the EHF Membership program and issued three member newsletters throughout the year.

Supported the Museum's successful effort to procure a 19th-century portrait of Jane Byrd Bryan, a significant addition to the EHM collection.



Developed an annual exhibit sponsorship campaign that garnered \$6,000 in support from local businesses including Classic Cinemas/York Theatre, Community Bank of Elmhurst, Feze Roofing, and Prairie Forge Group.



Received a \$14,000+ grant from the 100+ Women Who Care organization.

Presented the annual Ruth Strand Lessons From Home poster contest in a new online format in May to encourage local schoolchildren to share their experiences learning from home during COVID.



EHF Members

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In Memoriam
EHM Volunteer Pat Kreibich

Cover: Top winner, Summer 2020
Travel Photo Contest, by Kathryn
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