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AN EVER-WIDENING CIRCLE: ELMHURST UNIVERSITY AT 150

New exhibit at Elmhurst History Museum shares the story of Elmhurst University's 150-year journey

ELMHURST, IL — On December 6, 1871, Carl F. Kranz and 14 students stepped off a train in the small Illinois prairie town known as Elmhurst. They would be the first students and faculty at a newly formed “proseminary,” a high school for preparing young men to attend the Evangelical seminary or become teachers in the German Evangelical Church’s parochial schools.

Much has changed at the school’s leafy Elmhurst campus since that time. 150 years later it is evident that the progress of the school and the City of Elmhurst were intertwined from these early days and continued to grow up together to establish the institution now known as Elmhurst University.

The story of this symbiotic relationship and the school’s 150-year journey is traced in a new exhibit, “An Ever-Widening Circle: Elmhurst University at 150.” The exhibit opens at the Elmhurst History Museum, located at 120 E. Park Ave. in downtown Elmhurst, on September 24, 2021 through January 2, 2022 as part of a year-long celebration of Elmhurst University’s

sesquicentennial. The exhibit is sponsored by Community Bank of Elmhurst, Feze Roofing and Storino, Ramello and Durkin Attorneys at Law.

Dan Bartlett, Curator of Exhibits at the Elmhurst History Museum, led the development of the exhibit including research, writing, design and installation. "I think it can be said that the Elmhurst University we see today would not be what it is without this rich history and close relationship to its hometown," said Bartlett. "It's hard to imagine one without the other, and the two entities have evolved together in many ways. The school has always been strongly connected to the community, and City of Elmhurst has been positively impacted by the educational values, cultural opportunities, and resources that result from having a world class institution of higher learning in its midst. It's a wonderful asset for a town or suburb to have a university at its core for 150 years."

The Circle Expands

Through a detailed timeline, rare photographs, eclectic artifacts, video and more, "An Ever-Widening Circle" chronicles the many ways the school has grown and changed, from its early days as a theological proseminary to today's modern, vibrant university. The exhibit story arc considers campus life, academics, faculty, sports teams and more. Some of the exhibit themes include student daily life in the late 1800s; building of a strong faculty; development of sports programs; the transition from proseminary to college to university; and opening the doors to women, minorities, and non-traditional students.

Some of the interesting archive items on display in the Elmhurst History Museum exhibit include:

- Rare film footage from the Elmhurst campus in 1940.
- School spirit items including freshman "E Beanies," a college sweater and "E" blanket from the 1950s, and a costume headpiece worn by the team mascot known as Victor E. Bluejay circa 1990.
- Photographs and manuscripts from the Elmhurst History Museum and Elmhurst University archives.

- Sports team memorabilia and athletic apparel including a 1924 pennant, uniforms and gear, intramural champion patches from various eras, and a 1980's letter jacket.
- A 1956 class key pendant connected to an engagement and a 60+-year marriage.
- A collection of parts from the first commons building (1895-1964).
- A uniform bib worn by student nurses in the 1980s.

Exhibit-Related Programs

The Elmhurst History Museum will present a number of engaging programs in the coming months to connect to the exhibit and sesquicentennial. For more information, visit elmhursthistory.org in the Programs section.

September 26: Vintage Baseball Game, 1 p.m. at Elmhurst University: An old-fashioned baseball game played by the wildly different rules of 1858 will take place on the Elmhurst University campus pitting university players against the City of Elmhurst locals in a “town vs. gown” competition. Bring a picnic basket and lawn chair. Free admission and parking in campus parking lots.

October 16: Elmhurst University Arboretum Tour, 12 p.m.: Mark Wakely, an Elmhurst University alumnus and longtime campus services manager, will lead a walking tour showcasing top specimens in the arboretum collection. Tour lasts approximately two hours. Limit: 30 participants. Cost \$5. Registration required.

November 4-January 2: Elmhurst Greats and Grads Lecture: Learn about some of the significant people who led, developed and graduated from Elmhurst University during its 150-year history in this free online lecture. Led by Elmhurst University's Joan and Lester Brune Chair of History, Dr. Robert Butler.

“An Ever-Widening Circle: Elmhurst University at 150” will be on display from September 24, 2021 through January 2, 2022. The Elmhurst History Museum is located at 120 E. Park Avenue in downtown Elmhurst. Museum hours are Sunday and Tuesday through Friday from 1 to 5 p.m. and Saturday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Admission is free, and limited free parking is available. For the latest information, please visit www.elmhursthistory.org.

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The Elmhurst History Museum is a department of the City of Elmhurst supported by the Elmhurst Heritage Foundation, a 501c3 non-profit organization. The Museum is located at 120 E. Park Ave. in downtown Elmhurst. General admission is free. For more information, call 630-833-1457 or visit our web site at elmhursthistory.org.