

Lochow Lochow



Elgin Museum and Historical Society

Newsletter

Winter 2025

What's New at the Museum?

Even though the museum has been closed to the public over winter, it is a busy time for the acquisition committee. Inventory of the entire collection started in October 2024. All items are being re-evaluated for placement into the Permanent collection or the Use collection.

What is the difference between the Permanent Collection and the Use Collection?

The Permanent Collection are objects to be put on display and treated with care and handling.

The Use Collection are objects for education and research that can be demonstrated and examined.

The acquisition committee evaluates objects based on the museums mission statement.

Mission Statement

The Elgin Museum and Historical Society collects, preserves, researches, interprets, and makes available to the public the historical heritage of Elgin, Oregon and Union County, Oregon to foster in all people a deeper understanding and appreciation of our county's history, accomplishments, and natural environment.

NEW WEB PAGE!

<https://elginmuseum.org>

Staff have been working hard this winter to create a new web page for the museum. Donations can now be made on line through the web page. But we still accept checks if you prefer to mail your donation.

Staff have also created an Instagram account. If you are on Instagram, please join us. **Instagram:** elginmuseumor

We still maintain our Facebook page: **Facebook:** Elgin Musuem and Historical Society

Volunteer Corner!

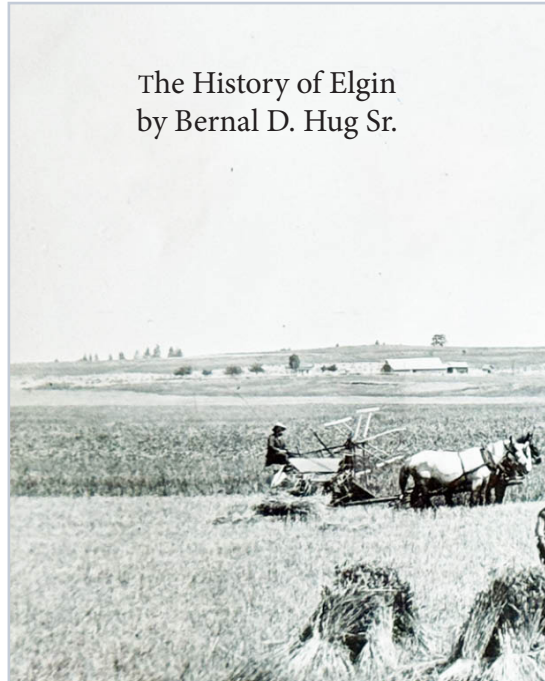
The Event committee is planning several events this year. One that is being planned is:

The Speaker's Series!

We are combining the Speaker's Series with food and drink. We have several speakers lined up. We could use help with planning, organizing and the event launch. We have something for everyone who would like to help. We don't mind if you volunteer for a little part or a large part, we are a collegial group that enjoys meeting and making new friends, while we plan for this exciting series.

AVAILABLE SOON!

Reprinted by
The Elgin Museum and Historical Society



The history of Elgin from the earliest inhabitants of Lochow Lochow through the migration of farmers and lumbermen in the late 1800s to the present day Elgin of 1958.

An extensive index is included, for searching family relatives, places and events.

Almost 300 pages of detailed history and original photographs.

\$35 + shipping
or
available at the museum.

Board Members/Officers

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Sue Horn, Treasurer

Risa Halgarth

Judy Payant

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Betty Knapp

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DONATIONS

We want to thank all who gave donations to the General Fund and the Building Fund in the months of December 2024 and January 2025.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!

1. Reviewing and developing a new strategic plan for the museum.
2. Digitizing the Elgin Recorders - requires grant writer.
3. Transcribing the oral histories - someone who likes to listen to stories, but willing to type them, as well.
4. Research online sources for our family albums and future displays.

If any of these sound like something you would enjoy doing then contact us through our email or contact form on the web page.

Contact us through email or the contact form on the webpage.

Email: info@elginmuseum.org or **Webpage:** <https://elginmuseum.org>

Elder Tales

A Time Capsule of Early Elgin Information by Steve Graham

While I have never been a resident of Elgin or any other community of Eastern Oregon myself, many of my ancestors were among some of the areas earliest pioneer settlers. However, about 40 years ago I began researching my Graham family ancestors and in doing so I began to learn of and appreciate the extent of their involvement as residents of Union and Wallowa Counties, and particularly details of their lives on Cricket Flat, at Minam, and in Elgin.

Years ago, I came across an item that had been published in The La Grande Observer, on May 25, 1926, that was written by Mildred Reed, entitled "Elgin's Yesterdays." Mildred was an Elgin High School senior who wrote an informative paper for a school essay contest. Although her essay did not win the competition, it did finish second in the 11th and 12th grade division, and is historically significant, as it highlights the names of many of Elgin's first citizens and businesses. In the opinion of the newspaper's editors, "Mildred, wrote in a lighter vein than most of her contemporaries in the local history contest."

For brevity, I have omitted the first six paragraphs of Mildred's essays, as each of those paragraphs primarily provided background information on the area and its inhabitants well before there ever was an Elgin. The remainder of Mildred's essay follows below:

1926 HIGH SCHOOL ESSAY ELGIN'S YESTERDAYS

"The City of Elgin was begun about the year 1884, the entire business being one block down next to the river where the Primitive Baptist Church now stands. At first it consisted of only a store and a couple of dwelling houses."

"At one time anyone who lived as far away as the fish trap bridge lived in the country, so there was a man by the name of Stevenson who lived in a log house situated where the Julius Hug residence now stands. Mr. Stevenson had a wheat ranch in that neighborhood. At present time there still remains three poplar trees in the Hug yard that were planted by the three daughters of Stevenson."

"The first fruit tree planted in Elgin was an apple tree that still remains in the Rev. Willis yard. The first baby girl born here was Mary Elgin McNaughton; first boy was a son of Dan Graham, who died in infancy. The first church was the Baptist, in which Mrs. James Elliott played the

organ and Arthur Hallgarth says they sang Sweet Beulah Land every Sunday. Second church was the Methodist built by Dr. Thompson and the money to buy the bell that rings every Sunday was secured by a benefit dance given by Arthur Hallgarth in which they raised about twenty-two dollars." "The first barber shop was run by William Snyder, first hardware store by H.B. Starr. The first hotel was run by J.R. Johnson, whose daughter is Mrs. William Hazelwood. Now about this time came a Weiss man



circa 1888 - Old cribbing from the first Fish Trap Bridge can be seen near the west bank of the river just below the super structure of the second Fish Trap Bridge.

from the east who taught a singing school, and all the young people became great singers. He is still a resident of Elgin and goes by the name of U.F. Weiss. About this time arrived a good bass singer by the name of William Hazelwood, and he was the star boarder at the Johnson Hotel, and Arthur Hallgarth also states they soon lost their head waitress.”



Elgin's First School was built just inside the gate leading to Al McIntyre's home.

“The first school built near Elgin was just inside the fence near the gate leading to Al McIntyre's house. The first teacher was J.D. Guild who boarded around with the scholars. J.B. Swinehart was one of the first teachers who taught in Elgin after the school was built in town where it now stands. He also was one of the first owners of the Elgin Recorder, being a partner with A.R. Tuttle.”

“The first cemetery laid by the city of Elgin was one half mile north of Elgin on the river bank. Four people were buried there, but afterward moved to the cemetery which the city now uses. The four bodies that were moved were those of Fill Beeman, George Ross, Mr. Laughary, and Mr. Harrison.

“The first sawmill near Elgin was a water

powered mill on Indian Creek on the Spiker place, built by George Wagner, the father of Fred Wagner. The mill was afterwards run by Lawn Galloway. There was a steam mill put up a little later, on George Creek, by John McKinnis near where the schoolhouse now stands. Later a steam mill was built by J.F. Galloway and Charley Moore's father just this side of the Maxwell place on Dry Creek, and was afterwards moved to Gordon Creek.”

“The first train was run into Elgin in the fall of 1890. The city charter was issued to Elgin in February 1891. Henry Proctor was the first city mayor; W.S. Beam was elected city recorder; J.E. Coffee city marshal. R.J. Johnson was the first justice of the peace. Afterward, J.F. White was elected city recorder and also served as justice of the peace and was all the law and order we had for some time and was looked to for authority on everything even to fiddling for all the dances.”

Written By Mildred Reed

Comments by Steve Graham:

Mildred concluded her essay stating: “I received all of my information from Arthur Hallgarth.” While Mildred likely never imagined that nearly a hundred years after she wrote her high school essay that it would become a time capsule of sorts for information, especially for those of us who endlessly search for additional information about Elgin's early days, and especially the “firsts,” that Mildred included in her essay pertaining to many of Elgin's early residents and businesses.

It would be interesting to know what happened to Mildred? What became of her? Did she grow old in Elgin or move away, etc.? Did she raise a family there? Are there any descendants still in the area? Do any of the newsletter's readers have other information regarding Mildred? If you do, email the museum at: info@elginmuseum.org

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Webpage: <https://elginmuseum.org>
Phone: (541) 605-8059

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