



ELGIN MUSEUM & HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

Fall/Winter 2026/27

Elgin, Oregon

What's New?

DINNER & LIVE THEATER

Last year's Dinner and Live Theater about Charles Dickens life was so successful we decided to do it again. Tickets are now on sale for our Dinner and Live Theater event about the author of Frankenstein, Mary Shelley. We are doing a three day event, opening on Friday, October 30, the day before Halloween. The next week there will be two days on Friday, November 6 and Saturday, November 7. We will, again, have a Victorian setting. Costumes are encouraged. Flyer attached. Website ticket purchase is preferred.



Website:

<https://elginmuseum.org/ticket-form/>

We accept purchases by mail, as well, but please be specific about which night.

Our mailing address:

Elgin Museum & Historical Society
PO Box 358
Elgin, OR 97827

Recent Events

HISTORY OF BANKING PANEL

In honor of our new home, the historic US Bank, the museum put together a panel of former employees of the US Bank; a member of the family that owned the bank for 45 years, the teller that was robbed at the bank, the sheriff who helped catch the robber, followed by a presentation of the original 1898 safe, by the family that owned it. It was entertaining, informative and a lot of fun. To see pictures and more information about the panel go to our website: <https://elginmuseum.org/> under Events and Presentations on the menu.

VICTORIAN TEA PARTY

What a hoot! The museum had a sold-out crowd for a traditional tea with a Victorian place setting. A tea presentation, speeches by 1912 suffragettes, a saloon with bartender serving "beer" and causing trouble, and a surprise visit by the Elgin Women's Christian Temperance Association, singing temperance songs, shaking their signs and one even had an axe ready to do some damage to the saloon. Pictures at website: <https://elginmuseum.org/> under Events and Presentations.



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FUTURE DISPLAYS

OUTDOOR MUSEUM

The museum has been working hard to raise money to move our historic Elgin jail, and items of farm and industrial equipment from the old city hall site to the lot adjacent to the museum. The expansion of the museum, and particularly the draw of our historic Elgin jail will provide a bigger footprint for the museum. In the last year we have been a site for community fund raising events, both our own (Dinner theater, talks, educational workshops) and the City of Elgin's Sasquatch festival. The museum provided a respite in July and August of this year, when the community was under hazardous air quality restrictions for 8 weeks due to wildfire, by providing filtered air, ADA bathrooms with baby changing tables, hot dogs, homemade desserts, snacks and museum related activities for both adults and children. The outdoor museum will allow us to create spaces for picnic tables, raised beds, hands-on displays and activities, and stories around the jail and farm and industrial equipment. We are an all-volunteer organization and only survive with generous donations. Help us continue to make this museum one the community of Elgin is proud to call their own.

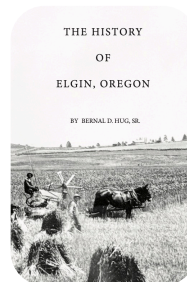
Volunteer Corner

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

The Research Committee needs documents, pictures, family histories and stories, to better document our displays on local families, businesses and ranches. We will make copies of your information.

We always need volunteers. Come help us grow! Meet new people and serve the community. And we have a lot of fun!

History of Elgin Book



For sale at Museum
or online at
www.elginmuseum.org

Contact Us

Email: info@elginmuseum.org

Phone: 541-605-8059

Website: www.elginmuseum.org

Open 10:00am-4:00pm:
Thu, Fri, Sat





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HISTORIC ELGIN JAIL

From the Elgin Museum Archives: The original Elgin jail, built about 1901, was originally located between Alder and Division on the east side of 7th Ave. It had the company of its next-door neighbor, the local whorehouse. Next to the whorehouse was the City Hall and Fire Station, which later became J. Barnes & Son Garage. On November 11, 1915, the city council discussed a new city jail to be placed in the basement of the city hall. No action was taken, but 3 months later, on February 3, 1916, in the Elgin Recorder, an announcement was made that the new city jail is completed.

"The new jail is located in the basement of the City Hall, the foundation of which is stone and reaches almost to the jail ceiling. The walls and floors are of concrete and the ceiling of solid sheet steel, so that the entire construction is not only permanent but as near fire proof as can be obtained."

"The new jail is a municipal improvement that has been needed in Elgin for several years and its completion is met with general satisfaction on the part of all citizens. The old structure, which has been in use for the last 15 years is of wood and has caught fire on several occasions. Not only was it extremely dangerous from that standpoint but was unsanitary and insecure. The old jail has been occupied by numbers that will reach into the hundreds, and including men charged from the simple crime of intoxication to that of murder, but only once was an escape made and then assistance was rendered from the outside. But that only one break was ever recorded was due to the inmates and not the walls of the structure. The old jail will be sold to the highest bidder."

It took two years, but on February 7, 1918, the city council approved the sale of the old city jail for \$25 to W.C. Gettings, who had a familiarity to the old jail, being a deputy sheriff in 1914. Mr Gettings moved it to his farm (the old McNab place) as a granary. Years later, Charlie Horn, used it as chicken house, cutting one bar from the window to allow the chickens to move in and out. When the Elgin Museum and Historical Society was incorporated in 2015 and moved to the old City Hall offices at 180 N 8th, a grant in 2018 was obtained to fix and move the old city jail from the McNab place to the museum's City Hall location, where it still sits. In 2025, the Elgin Museum and Historical Society bought and moved into the historic US Bank building. The museum is requesting donations to move the old city jail to its new home. It will be the cornerstone to building the new Outdoor section of the museum.



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ORIGINAL ELGIN JAIL STORIES FROM THE PAST

ARRESTED AND ESCAPED, THE ELGIN RECORDER, JUNE 3RD, 1909

Fred Wisdom was arrested at the home of his parents on Indian Creek by Elgin Sheriff Childers, on a warrant issued by the Baker County Sheriff for horse stealing. Placed in the Elgin jail overnight, Sheriff Childers expected to take him to the county jail the next day. But with the help of his friends, young Wisdom had escaped during the night. Securing an iron bar, they pried the heavy lock from the jail door and liberated the prisoner. Even though the Night Marshal was aware of the friend's presence, and keeping a close watch, the escape happened while he was doing his downtown rounds. The escape was known in a few minutes and a call by Elgin Sheriff Childers to the Baker Sheriff, saying the prisoner could probably be easily located, if the Baker Sheriff wanted to pay Elgin for the capture. A decision was made to locate him later, but Wisdom's arrest was the start of breaking up the gang of horse thieves that had been active in the valley for many years.

CITY JAIL IS SCENE OF AN EXCITING BLAZE, THE ELGIN RECORDER, APRIL 22, 1915

The city jail caught fire immediately after the performance in the City Opera House. A former Palmer laborer of the Palmer logging camp had been incarcerated during the evening performance, but had been released a short time before the fire alarm rang. Several people rushed to the jail, expecting the inmate to be in danger, not realizing he had been released. The marshal carried the only key and was not available. The lock was finally battered and due to smoke, the fire boys were compelled to crawl into the inner chambers. Finding only burning beds, the inmate was arrested again, for creating a disturbance in the Opera House. The fire was blamed on a cigarette and too much liquor by the near-victim. Little damage was done to the jail.

INTERESTING TIDBIT BY STEVE GRAHAM OCTOBER 7, 2026

Look on the wall between the two cells about waist high and you can find the signature W. Graham. Jackson Graham, my GG Grandfather was Elgin Town Marshall early 1900s. The name could have been his brother, William Andrew Graham, or Andrew's son with same name, but possibly Wayne Wilmer Graham, son of John and Anna (Fine), during 1919-21, when he was Deputy Sheriff of Union County and bored on a visit to the Elgin jail, whittled his name. He is my most likely choice, but not provable.



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Ways to Donate

The Elgin Museum and Historical Society, housed in the historic U.S. Bank Building, showcases our local history through rotating displays, events, and workshops. Our volunteers give time and energy to promote local history through research, education and preservation activities. We want to become an asset to the community, by appealing to all age groups, offering unique and interesting historical perspectives using artifacts and documents in our collections, digitizing our library for genealogical research, and offering presentations, events and workshops. Your generous donations support our operating and development expenses.

Here are four ways to donate.

1. Write a check to:

Elgin Museum and Historical Society
PO Box 358
Elgin, OR. 97827

2. Credit/Debit Card

Online on our website
www.elginmuseum.org



3. Qualified Charitable Distribution (QCD) and/or Required Minimum Distribution (RMD) from an IRA. At age 70 ½ years old, a contribution from an IRA to the Elgin Museum and Historical Society is a dollar-for-dollar non-taxable event. As a charitable organization, we have set up an account with Edward Jones.

4. Stock or Mutual Funds. Donations are an allowed deduction when itemizing taxes. We have set up an account at Edward Jones for these deductions, also.

The contact person at Edward Jones:

Reva Hartenstein - 541-605-0727 Email: reva.harenstein@edwardjones.com
1117 Adams Ave
La Grande, OR 97850

Your contributions are greatly appreciated. Thank you for supporting us!

Elgin Museum and Historical Society, Elgin, Oregon
501 (C) (3) Non-Profit Corporation – EIN 38-4014430

Dinner & Live Theater

Mary Shelley *Frankenstein Author*

Friday, October 30, 2026/ 6 to 8 pm

Friday, November 6, 2026/ 6 to 8 pm

Saturday, November 7, 2026/ 6 to 8 pm

Tickets \$45

Pre-Order



www.elginmuseum.org



Elgin Museum & Historical Society

800 Alder St, Elgin, OR

All proceeds benefit the museum

501 c 3 Non Profit Corporation