

We hope you are enjoying Elgin's beautiful and unique architectural gems with their fascinating histories and eye-opening elements!

Did you know Elgin is also rich in its creative foundation? As you take your self-guided tour, experience the history of innovation and creativity that enriches and enlivens Elgin today.



STEWART HALL BUILDING

513 SPRING STREET (current location of ReDiscover Records and Side Street Studios Arts Supply)

About the site:

Built in 1888 as a theater and music hall, Stewart Hall was a popular place for dances, public meetings, and revivals.

Creativity/Innovative Literature Gem:

The first floor was first occupied by a penny newspaper that became The Press and closed in 1910.

Learn More and Be Inspired:

Learn about other spaces of creativity and entertainment in Elgin, past and present, including:

The Henrietta Building (current home of the ArtSpace Lofts) <https://historichelgin.com/51-s-spring-street>

The DuBois Opera House <http://www.elginhistory.com/dgb/>

NENA BUTTERFLY GARDEN

357 Douglas Avenue

About the site:

In 2008, volunteers and local residents with the support of the City of Elgin, local businesses, grants, and donations created a natural, tranquil, butterfly-friendly garden bringing together people, pollinators (bees and butterflies) and native perennials.

Creative/Innovative Science Gem:

“Wonder winged luminous in my eyes,

Elegance sheer I perceive and prize” by Obinna Kenechukwu Eruchie

Bringing together nature and landscape art, this garden is a beautiful place for area families to enjoy. It supports a variety of bees and butterflies, houses numerous native perennials, and serves as an environmental classroom as evidenced by the children-created markers.

Learn More and Be Inspired:

<https://www.facebook.com/AnnStreetDouglasAvenueButterflyGarden>

LOW NORTHWESTERN TRAIN STATION/KIMBALL HOUSE/NEWSOME PARK

About these sites:

On October 15th, 1862, two carloads of “contrabands of war” or former slaves accompanied by the 52nd’s Chaplain Thomas arrived in Elgin at the Low Northwestern Train Station, with the goal of, as Rev. Joslyn stated “tearing down the odious temple and oppression and taking from this accursed rebellion its elements of power.” They were put up in the basement of the Kimball House and later placed among sympathetic families.

Creative/Innovative Social Justice Gem:

Elgin has a rich history of social justice and has engaged in creative measures to attend to these issues. Case in point: Although transport of slaves from the South to the North was prohibited by the 1850 Fugitive Slave Act and the state’s Negro exclusion law, local leaders threatened military arrest for anyone interfering with “military orders” to transfer “contrabands” who could not be used for the war effort to welcoming Northern cities – making it just under the wire of the retraction of this order by U.S. Secretary of War Stanton.

Learn More and Be Inspired:

<http://elginhistory.com/>; <http://elginhistory.org/community/newsome-park/>

LISA BOEHM SCHOOL OF BALLET

77 Villa Street

About the site:

Lisa Spalinger Boehm was a prima ballerina during pre-World War II Europe. After settling in Elgin IL, she went on to teach thousands of students during her 50 years as a teacher and to direct the Chicago area’s longest running series of “The Nutcracker” ballet performances for 33 years.

Creative/Innovative Arts Gem:

Many of Lisa Boehm’s students went on to become professional dancers, own their own dance and theater studios and companies, and become arts educators and artist entrepreneurs – grounded in the love and technical background of the arts that Lisa provided.

Learn More and Be Inspired:

<http://www.foxvalleyarts.org/boehm.htm>

These buildings are not open on the Open Elgin tour. Get to know the creative spirit that “inhabited” these spaces.



<http://www.createinnovateignite.com/>



Special Thanks to the

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