



Elkhart, Illinois Community Profile & Itinerary



Rich in history and natural beauty, Elkhart is famous for its unusual landscape - a tree covered hill that rises 777 feet above sea level, surrounded by a horizon of flat Illinois prairie land. Settled in 1855, Lincoln and Lincoln-era political figures populate Elkhart's history. The picturesque early 1900's style downtown, two historic cemeteries, and one of only two privately owned arched bridges in the state of Illinois make Elkhart one of a kind.

Only 17 miles north from Springfield, 11 miles south of Lincoln, and located just off I-55 and Historic Route 66, Elkhart balances a small village atmosphere (population 410) with convenient big city accessibility. Elkhart is also a short drive from Interstate 72 to the south, Interstate 74 to the northeast, Illinois Route 155 to the north, and County Routes 10 and 11.

ATTRACTIONS:



Lincoln Heritage Signs –Elkhart's “Heritage Corner”

Elkhart has two Lincoln Heritage signs and an informational sign about Elkhart at the corner of the parking lot across from the Village Hall in historic downtown Elkhart. The Lincoln Heritage signs are part of the Illinois Abraham Lincoln Bicentennial Commission program and were designed during the 2009 celebration of Lincoln's 200th birthday to celebrate and recapture the legacy of Abraham Lincoln's involvement in Logan County. One sign depicts the history of Lincoln and the Kentucky House in Elkhart, the other sign depicts the connection between

Lincoln, John Dean Gillett and Elkhart. The Elkhart sign recounts the history of Elkhart and its historical significance.

[Lincoln Heritage Signs Additional Information](#)



Looking For Lincoln Wayside Exhibit

Scattered throughout the central Illinois landscape are countless places where Lincoln traveled and lived. These places are the real thing and they make up the experience called "Looking for Lincoln." Elkhart's Looking for Lincoln wayside exhibit is located at the entrance of the Elkhart Cemetery. It details Lincoln's Elkhart Connection.

[Looking for Lincoln Official Website](#)



Veterans' Memorial Park

Located in historic downtown Elkhart on Governor Oglesby Street, the park displays a doughboy statue that was presented to the Village by the returning veterans of World War I in honor of the men who did not return from that war. Since then, plaques have been added to the statue with the names of Village veterans from WWII, the Korean War and all veterans killed in action from Elkhart during all past wars.

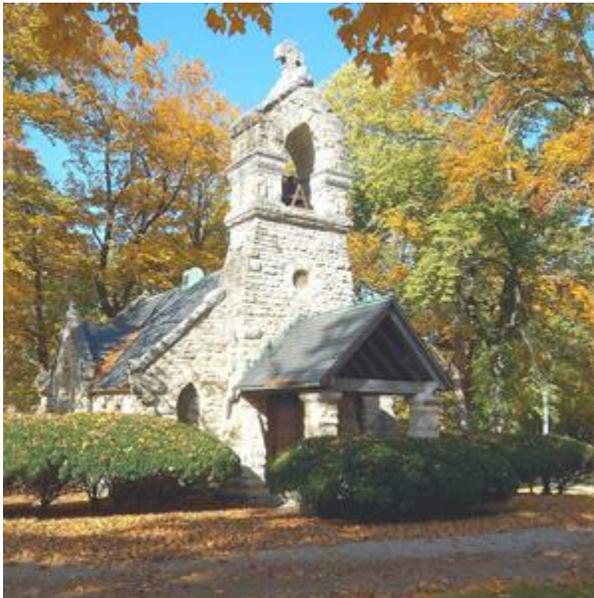
[Elkhart Park Remodel Brochure](#)



Elkhart Public Library

The Elkhart Public Library was started with funds from Lemira Gillett for the citizens of Elkhart – if they would vote the town dry for three years. This promise was made in an effort to keep alcohol away from her son, John P. Gillette. The library was built in 1904, and still stands today, as it did in then, including the original tables, bookshelves and interior woodwork.

[*Elkhart Public Library Official Website*](#)



St. John the Baptist Chapel

Lemira Gillett built this Episcopalian Chapel in 1890 for \$10,000 in memory of her husband John Dean Gillett. It is the only privately owned and operated church in Illinois. Constructed by the Culver Stone and Marble Company of Springfield, it is one of the few remaining Culver buildings in the area. Designed in Gothic Revival style with thick walls of Grafton Limestone, it houses one of the oldest working pipe organs in the state (built by Hook and Hasting Company out of Boston). Beautiful Tiffany style stained-glass windows grace the interior of this historic chapel. It is located in Elkhart Grove, within the cemetery on Elkhart Hill. On April 28, 1899, the chapel held the funeral of Governor Richard Oglesby. The inside walls of the chapel have most of the names of Elkhart's Civil War veterans.

[*St. John the Baptist Chapel Official Website*](#)



John P. Gillett Memorial Bridge

The John P. Gillett Memorial Bridge, built in 1915, is considered an Illinois Landmark. The arched bridge is one of only two privately owned bridges in the state of Illinois. Originally a wooden bridge built in 1899, it was part of the Oglesby estate. The funeral procession for Governor Oglesby, which included Lincoln's son Robert, walked across the original bridge. The bridge was replaced in 1915 with the current concrete, closed-spandrel arch bridge.

[John P. Gillett Memorial Bridge Additional Information](#)



Edwards Trace

Edwards Trace (or the “Old Indian Trail”) connected the Indian villages between Kaskaskia in the south, through Cahokia and the Edwardsville area, to Springfield, then Elkhart Hill, north to Fort Clark (now Peoria) and perhaps further north in Illinois and Wisconsin. This ancient route traveled the high ground, making travel much easier, and was used for thousands of years by the Indians. As early as 1711, French priests and trappers began traveling along its path.

The trace became the major route taken by pioneers in the early 1800s, a post road for regular mail service, and a stagecoach route. The trail was used less and less as roads were developed and railroads began to appear in the middle part of the 19th century. It was soon forgotten despite its historical significance and vanished where farmers plowed the prairie.

Current roads still follow Edwards Trace, including sections that lie beneath Route 66 and Route 121 (now I-155). Little is left of the at least 3,000 year old “rut,” tramped down and eroded over the centuries, except for a preserved and marked 200-foot remnant near Lake Springfield -- and two fragments on Elkhart Hill. The year 2012 marks the 200-year anniversary of the War of 1812 and the first time the trace was identified as “Edwards Trace.”

[Edwards Trace Additional Information](#)



Elkhart Grove Forest Preserve

In order to protect the unique ecosystem of Elkhart Hill, 136 acres of woods is the Elkhart Grove Forest Preserve. Studies by the University of Illinois and the Illinois Department of Conservation have identified the hill as an important stop for migratory birds and the forest as a special example of prairie woodland flora and fauna. Several endangered species of plants thrive in the unusual Blue Ash forest. Walking trails through this beautiful old growth timber, surrounding fields and wetland areas are accessed by specially arranged day passes.

[Elkhart Grove Forest Preserve Official Website](#)

Latham Cemetery

Latham Cemetery has the distinction of being the oldest cemetery in Logan County. The first grave was that of Emily Latham in 1826. James Latham is the first settler known to occupy the hill and filed his land claim in 1824. He also died in 1826 and is buried in Latham Cemetery. There are just a little over 100 marked graves that include many of the earliest pioneers in Elkhart and Logan County.

[Latham Cemetery Additional Information](#)

Elkhart Cemetery

Located on the hill and surrounded by woods, the cemetery dates back as far as 1860. In 1886, the Elkhart Village Board had the cemetery officially surveyed and lotted. Veterans of wars since the Mexican War and the Indian Wars are buried in the cemetery. Famous Elkhart figures John D. Gillett (1819-1899), farmer and cattle breeder; Captain A. H. Bogardus (1834-1913), sharp shooter champion, inventor of the Bogardus Trap, and famous as a partner with the Cody-Salisbury Wild West show and Annie Oakley; and Governor Richard J. Oglesby (1824-1899), Governor of Illinois and intimate personal friend of Abraham Lincoln, are buried in the Elkhart cemetery.

Elkhart Township Hall

This building remains much the same as it was when it was built in 1905. It is still used for Elkhart Township board meetings and periodically for events.

<http://www.elkhartillinois.us>



Historic Rt. 66 Gas Station and Rt. 66 Bypass

Elkhart's unique and historic gas station with its rounded design, stood abandoned for years until recently, when it was purchased by Elkhart Grain Company for office use. Elkhart also has an early Route 66 bypass nearby. The legend goes that the village was not willing to pave Route 66 through the community, and so it was paved around it. North of the grain elevator, next to the railroad tracks, is another early section of abandoned Route 66.



Illinois Route 66 Bike Trail

Elkhart is on the Bike Route 66 Trail Route. The route goes directly past historic downtown Elkhart or takes an alternate route through Elkhart along the back roads to the next stop south in Williamsville. Bike Route 66 signs are posted throughout Elkhart for bicyclers. An Illinois Route 66 Heritage Project special edition bicycle rack is located in the west corner of the Village parking lot by Elkhart's Heritage Corner exhibit. The custom bike rack was provided by the Illinois National Scenic Byway's FHWA grant as part of the Bike Rack Project for Illinois' seven National Scenic Byways.

[Illinois Route 66 Bike Trail Official Website](#)



Elkhart Illinois Route 66 Interpretive Statue & Wayside Exhibit

The Village of Elkhart Historic Rt. 66 Statue and Wayside Exhibit is located to the west of Elkhart's Village Hall and compliments the Village's ongoing initiative to make Elkhart a special stop for Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway tourists. As one of nine Illinois Route 66 communities receiving the new series of interpretive statues and corresponding wayside panels, the exhibit is part of a grant program through the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byway Program and the Illinois Office of Tourism. Elkhart's theme is 1930-1940s restaurants and gas stations in Elkhart on old Rt. 66. The exhibit focuses on Shirley Temple's stop at The House by the Side of the Road restaurant in 1938 and the Shell Station and roof top garden.

Listen to <http://peoriapublicradio.org/post/side-trips-along-mother-road-rt-66-signs-and-statues-spotlight-towns> for more about the Rt. 66 exhibits.

[Illinois Route 66 Scenic Byway Interpretive Exhibits Official Website](#)

MAJOR EVENTS:



Elkhart Historical Society Events

The Elkhart Historical Society sponsors annual Wildflower Nature Walks, Birding Walks, and historical hill tours. Everyone on the Wildflower Nature Walks receives a wildflower "bingo" card to learn the names of the flowers and to keep track of the beautiful wildflowers they see on Elkhart Hill. The Society has a tour wagon for visitors attending events. The Elkhart Historical Society (EHS) sponsors dinner/lectures in the fall and spring in historic downtown Elkhart. The Society also sponsors the annual Christmas Chapel Service and coordinates it with the Christmas activities of the village.

[Elkhart Historical Society Official Website](#)



Abraham Lincoln's Geocaching Trail in Logan County

One of Elkhart's geocaches is part of the "Abraham Lincoln's Geocaching Trail in Logan County." This Logan County trail has caches hidden at sites that relate to Abraham Lincoln and his relationship to communities throughout the county. The six caches on the trail contain cards that can be redeemed for souvenir postcards. In Elkhart, the souvenir postcards can be redeemed at the Talk of the Town restaurant, Elkhart Library and Horsefeathers shop.

For the coordinates for the Elkhart cache and more information, see http://www.geocaching.com/geocache/GC4MYJP_abraham-lincolns-geocaching-trail-elkhart.



[Route 66 Association of Illinois Motor Tour](#)

The Motor Tour has been traversing Illinois Route 66, alternating each year from North to South and South to North. The caravan makes passport stops at major attractions along the way (including in Elkhart), and also includes the annual Hall of Fame Banquet. Held the second weekend in June.

(708) 444-1312

[Route 66 Association of Illinois Official Website](#)

CHURCHES:

Elkhart Methodist Church, est. 1864, remodeled in 1894 and 1924.



Elkhart Christian Church, est. 1867, remodeled in 1915, 1960 and 1992.



St. Patrick's Catholic Church, est. 1870, built 1910.



AMMENITIES AND BUSINESSES:

The quaint Village of Elkhart offers unique businesses and quality services located in restored structures and marketed as “historic downtown Elkhart.” Settled in 1855, the picturesque early 1900’s style downtown makes Elkhart a visit to remember.



Birdsong Books and Vintage

111 Governor Oglesby Street

Birdsong Books and Vintage offers an eclectic mix of goods to browse through in a relaxed, nostalgic atmosphere. At the heart of the store is a wonderful collection of books, antiquarian to new - cookbooks, children's, biography, history, poetry, fiction and more. Birdsong also features a wide variety of old linens, vintage clothes, purses, jewelry, paper ephemera, kitchenware, framed art and newly crafted mission furniture. Birdsong is a rebirth of Nellie's Cafe built in 1914, for years an Elkhart institution. Birdsong has retained the marble soda fountain counter from Nellie's Cafe and the mirrored wall piece behind it that features lighted stained glass windows, as well as two cafe booths. Come view the old soda fountain and sit in the wooden booths with a stack of interesting books.

[Birdsong Books and Vintage Official Website](#)



Talk of the Town

115 Governor Oglesby Street

Feel right at home at Talk of the Town! Located in Elkhart's beautiful downtown, this family friendly bar welcomes locals and weary travelers all year long. Offering a wide variety of pub foods, join us for Fried Chicken Wednesday and Fish Fry Friday to name a few local favorites. Have you ever tried a Horseshoe? You can here! Video gaming available.

[Talk of the Town Facebook Page](#)

Blue Moon Pub

101 Governor Oglesby Street

The Blue Moon Pub offers a unique atmosphere and always enjoyable company in a building dating to the early 1900s. The pub provides live entertainment regularly. The building, at the corner of Gov. Oglesby and Latham Street, once housed the Blue Monday restaurant and was completely renovated in 2000.

[Blue Moon Pub Facebook Page](#)



The Brick House B&B (on the Old Gillett Farm)

The Brick House, now a bed and breakfast, is located on the original John Dean Gillett Farm. For many years in the late 1800's the town of Elkhart was one of the largest shipping points on the C&A (Chicago & Alton) Railroad, due to the large stock raising farms of John Dean Gillett. The Brick House was the farm's guesthouse and is now available to the public by reservation.

Beautiful gardens are flanked on one side by the southern view of Elkhart Hill and the natural, wooded preserve to the north. A large pavilion and pool encourage guests to enjoy the beautiful scenery and occasional family of deer. Historic preservation and environmental protection

continue to be part of the Gillett legacy.

[Brick House B&B Official Website](#)



The Country Bumpkin

103 Governor Oglesby Street

The Country Bumpkin is located in a beautifully restored early 1900s building. The building holds historical significance and has been totally renovated. The store features antiques, collectibles, hand-crafted figurines, framed prints, paintings, and many diverse items. Featured are primitives, reproductions, large and small garden shop.

[Country Bumpkin Official Website](#)

Elkhart Grain Company

120 N. Old Rt. 66

Elkhart Grain was founded in 1990 with the purchase of the Elkhart facility from Welch Agribusiness. In 1996, Elkhart Grain enlarged the trade area to the north with the purchase of the Broadwell elevator from Broadwell Grain Company. For end user customers, they can provide both rail and truck delivery ranging in size from a single truck to a 75-car unit-train. Total storage capacity at all the company's facilities is 8,267,000 bu. - making Elkhart Grain the largest grain company in Logan County.

[Elkhart Grain Company Official Website](#)



Horsefeathers Antiques and Gift Shop

104 Governor Oglesby Street

Located in the original 1892 bank building in Elkhart, this eclectic gift shop still has the original restored grand marble floor, foyer and vaults. Your shopping headquarters for wedding gifts, gift and welcome baskets, cards, and jewelry - the shop carries a mix of antique, contemporary, local and unusual items that guarantee a one-of-a-kind shopping opportunity.

[Horsefeathers Official Website](#)



J Parks Studio of Hair

125 North Bogardus Street

Jamie Parks' small salon offers large benefits to those wanting a professional hair cut in a friendly, family-friendly atmosphere. Jamie is talented with coloring and current with all the new styles.

[J Parks Studio of Hair Facebook Page](#)



Little Foxes

102 Governor Oglesby Street

The Little Foxes shop sells Amish noodles and jellies and other specialty foods. The shop is located in the original 1889 building that at one time housed the Brennan's Store and later Lanterman's Store. The original storefront of the building has been restored. The side of the building still shows some of the advertisement for shoes painted on the brick many years ago.

[Little Foxes Official Website](#)



Richardson Repair

112 Governor Oglesby Street

Bill and Kathy Cosby bought Richardson's about 30 years ago and sell lawn tractors and mowers and provide small tractor service. Photos of the building show it in its current location in the 1940s. It's a meeting place for people of the community and was home to the Richardson's rooster, "Little Jerry." This rooster (now deceased) found its way to the repair shop as a practical joke, and was a permanent fixture among the wheels, parts, mowers and tractors and a regular tourist attraction for visitors.

[Richardson Repair Official Website](#)



Rt. 66 Model Raceway

109 Governor Oglesby Street

You don't have to know anything about slot car racing, they will help you and you'll have fun! 1/24th 1/32nd scale slot car racing tri oval. Red bull short track oval 1/8 mile scale drag track rental time fully stocked parts cars for sale. If you want to spend some time with your children, and teach them about physics, hand-eye coordination and sportsmanship - this is a place. AND ... there is a good chunk of time when it's the adults turn to practice and race.

[Rt. 66 Model Raceway Facebook Page](#)

Wild Hare Cafe

104 Governor Oglesby Street

The Wild Hare Cafe is located within Horsefeathers antiques and gift shop, the cafe offers delicious dishes prepared from scratch on the premises - always using the best of ingredients and organically grown produce whenever possible. Old family recipes are used, so most menu items are seldom seen in restaurants today. The crockery, decorative pressed glass and general "clutter" are all vintage pieces from the owner's private collection. The unusual decor and hand-painted murals create a quaint environment for your special event dining experience. Eat in the restored small or large vault of the 1892 bank building!

[Wild Hare Cafe Official Website](#)



Contact the Village of Elkhart:

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Elkhart, IL 62634-0020

Facebook: [The Village of Elkhart, IL](#)

Website: <http://www.elkhartillinois.us>

[*CLICK HERE - Elkhart Google Map*](#)



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www.illinoisroute66.org