

Timekeepers

dedicated to Elgin History Museum's volunteers
penned by Aron Ryan, Elgin Poet Laureate

Old Main,
designed in Greek Revival style,
revives our history
thanks to volunteers in our community.
Once a place of learning
for our youngest historians, now learners of all ages
are warmly welcomed by volunteers.
Watch how each room keeps history alive as time moves
with each new *tick, tock, tick, tock.*

Watches
are not assembled all at once;
they are a congregation
of many parts designed in many rooms,
each room serving its own purpose
in the process of making something beautiful,
something shimmering gold,
so someone can hold time in their beautifully
wrinkled hands.

Volunteers
are timekeepers, sculpting past into present,
so we can shape our city
into a future we're proud to hold
in our open hands. We open
our hearts, giving time to keep
time ticking, a congregation
as intricate and momentous as the momentum
guiding the pendulum of a clock.

Volunteers
are weavers, stitching this quilt
of places making Elgin
a place to call home. Not woven by one
but by many artisans,
it took time (1,500 hours, to be precise)
to weave these memories into
a sanctuary; we cannot, will not forget
our story.

Volunteers
are lightkeepers, illuminating forgotten histories,
the books some wish to shut,
lest we reckon with our intersections
of privilege and oppression.
Let's open these books for all to read,
so we can write our next chapter
into a story we're proud to tell each other
and ourselves.

Volunteers
are storytellers, weaving our stories
into our community
with every exhibit displayed,
every piece cataloged,
every visitor greeted walking through the door.

Walking through the door,
a bell rings, as sweetly and surely
as the ticking of a clock.