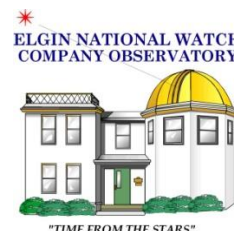


The Elgin National Watch Company Observatory and Elgin School District U-46 Planetarium



Parent information

The Elgin National Watch Company (ENWC) was founded in Elgin in 1864 and went on to make over 60 million watches in its almost 100 years in business. Part of that success was due to the precise time measurements made by the observatory that the company built on Watch St. in Elgin in 1910 a few blocks from the factory. Astronomers hired by ENWC tracked the movement of stars at night and calculated the exact time for almost 40 years using those measurements and the regulator clocks inside the building.

Unfortunately, the ENWC went out of business, but in 1960 they gave the building to Elgin School District U-46 to use as a resource for astronomy education. The observatory and telescope were already outdated by that time, but today it is a place of historical significance to Elgin and the history of time-telling.

In 1963 the district built a planetarium addition to the building. A planetarium is a classroom specially equipped to teach astronomy. Over 1 million students have passed through the doors since it opened 60 years ago to learn about Earth, sky and space. Nearly all of them have been U-46 students. In addition to being a full time classroom during the school year, the planetarium has been a venue for evening shows, after school clubs (Jr. Astro Society, Ham and Antique Radio Clubs, summer camps, scout groups, etc...) and other special events. It is utilized full time for science lessons.

Your son or daughter's class has been scheduled to come to the Planetarium for a lesson. The programs offered at the U-46 Planetarium align with current IL science standards. The session always includes some time under the stars looking at constellations and the nighttime movement of the sky using the original star projector! There is also a focus topic (seasons, solar system objects, moon phases, etc...) for each visit. This topic is presented through a power point lecture, full dome video projection and/or activity. Your child's teacher can tell you the focus for this visit.

This visit is considered a science lesson in a U-46 classroom. The session under the dome is 50-60 minutes. There is no lobby or gift shop. This is more like a visit to a special classroom than an entertainment venue.

Occasionally the planetarium is open for special public shows in the evening. The dates, times and details for these are posted on the [Observatory/Planetarium department of the U-46 website](#). The evening shows are \$2.00 per person (any age) or \$10.00 max per family. The evening shows offer a self-guided tour through the building to see the old equipment either before each show. There are no reservations, but seating is limited.

Please wear comfortable clothing and the thinnest coat appropriate for the weather that day. Please **do not wear light up shoes or glow in the dark** items on that day!

Feel free to contact me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Peggy Hernandez and Joe Kellenberger, U-46 Planetarium Teachers

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