

Who was Joe Page?

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
August 3 2017 10:13 AM



HARDIN - Many people in the Riverbend area are familiar with the Joe Page Bridge.

It is the green metal "draw bridge" that spans the Illinois River, connecting East Hardin in Greene County to Hardin in Calhoun. It was completed on July 23, 1931, and has since been rebuilt in 2004. After its construction, it was named after Joe Page, who was the man responsible for the bridge's creation.

Joe Page (1845-1938) served in the Union Army during the American Civil War. After fighting the Confederacy, Page decided to settle in Jerseyville where he became the editor of the local newspaper, the Jersey County Democrat, for 58 years and also worked as an architect and an engineer - hence why he was able to facilitate the construction of the bridge named in his honor.

During his time as an architect and an engineer, he worked for renowned architect William Embley. Page designed several of the ornamental staircases and woodworking in some of the nicest homes in Jerseyville - including the Cheney Mansion.

Page entered politics and was elected to the position of Jerseyville mayor. During his time as mayor, Page assisted in the creation of Jerseyville's waste plants, brought water and electric light plants into the town and also brought Jerseyville its first phone lines.

He was also described by many sources as "instrumental" during the creation of Pere Marquette State Park.

According to the history of the Great River Road, Page was also "beloved by all the children in the area," who reportedly called him "Uncle Joe." He rented the Orpheum Theater in Jerseyville on his birthday and gave free passes to kids and their families to enjoy an afternoon of cartoons as well as a main feature.