

Explore Pere Marquette Park with local historian

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EDWARDSVILLE - Scholar, educator, and author Richard Keating will describe the history, natural beauty, and importance of Pere Marquette State Park at Farley's Music Hall, Elsah, Illinois, on Thursday, September 21, 2017 at 7:30 PM. The lecture is part of the Hosmer-Williams Lecture Series for 2017, sponsored by Historic Elsah Foundation and sponsored by Liberty Bank, Godfrey, Illinois. The author will autograph copies of his new book, "Pere Marquette State Park, Jersey County, Illinois: An Unofficial Guide to History, Natural History, Trails and Drives," available that evening.

Keating's book includes discussions of the park's origins and amenities, including cabins, campgrounds, and equestrian and boating facilities, along with vehicular drives and hiking trails that invite exploration. Color maps and photographs illustrate some of the park's features.

The area is often described as being first "discovered" in 1673 by a group led by map maker Louis Jolliet and French missionary Father Jacques Marquette. The group also wrote the first-known account of paintings of the Piasa Bird. When the park was established more than two centuries later, it was named in honor of one of the area's early explorers.

The original park was about 1,500 acres, but has grown with time through various land acquisitions. The architecturally-renowned lodge, built by the Civilian Conservation Corps, is made of limestone and massive timbers, and features a 50-foot vaulted ceiling, handmade chandeliers and a huge 700-ton stone fireplace. A small museum is open to the public.

Keating retired as a biology professor from Southern Illinois University, Edwardsville, Illinois. During his several decades in the river bend region, he and his family became fascinated by these natural landscapes. Having long realized the unusual value of Pere Marquette State Park, he felt inspired to help others to better appreciate the history, natural history, and importance of this rare Midwestern landscape.

The lecture is free and open to the public. Reservations are not required. Parking is available. Refreshments will be served following the lecture.

Attention media, print and otherwise, for additional information, contact Tim Tomlinson, Historic Elsah Foundation, 618-374-1518, or visit our website, historicelsah.org