

Another Birthday Celebration Takes Place at Lucy Haskell House in Alton

by Leanne Guthrie, Reporter
July 30 2019 11:31 AM







ALTON - The Lucy Haskell House, located off of Twelfth and Henry Streets, in Haskell Park, is a treasured place for Middletown Neighbors and Alton residents alike. The stunning playhouse is a unique location with a history rooted deep into Alton's past. A birthday celebration for Lucy Haskell, held every year at the house, showcases the communities love for its unique playhouse.

The history of the Lucy Haskell Playhouse dates back to 1885 when Lucy's grandfather John E. Hayner hired local architect, Lucas Pfeiffenberger to create the playhouse. Lucy Jane Haskell was born July 29, 1880, to her parents Dr. William A. Haskell and Florence Hayner Haskell. On her fifth birthday in 1885, Lucy was gifted her playhouse. The one-room house features gorgeous woodworking throughout, even having a front and back porch, stained glass windows, and cabinets with glass doors to display dolls and toys. The Lucy Haskell Playhouse was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1974.

"Restoring the playhouse, we put the pieces together of the colors on the inside with the stained glass. Slowly, we matched everything up and it came together perfectly. The outside was repainted and a new roof was put on the house just a few years ago." spoke Doug Bader of the Haskell Playhouse Association, of the many restorative projects the house has endured.

The Haskell Playhouse Association was created as a way to raise money to restore the house. Over the years and many renovations later, the association brought the Haskell House back to its original beauty. Through reviving the house the Haskell Playhouse Association restored a unique piece of Alton history and honored Lucy Haskell along the way.

Lucy Haskell is remembered all year long, as her playhouse is now rented out for events such as tea parties. Events Lucy surely would be happy are taking place in her playhouse. With her house being restored and given purpose within the community, The Haskell Playhouse Association and Middletown Neighbors put on the yearly birthday party as yet another way to remember Lucy.

This years celebration, for Lucy's 139th Birthday, brought out a crowd of families who enjoyed all of the unique and historic offerings of the special event. Pony rides were one of the biggest hits of the event. Pony rides were one of the activities featured at Lucy's fifth birthday party when she has first gifted the playhouse. Other activities, many that Lucy likely enjoyed as a child, included jump rope, tug of war, hoop toss, bean bag toss, and more. Cake, lemonade, and ice cream were served to attendees, giving the event the true feel of a birthday party. And of course, the Lucy Haskell Playhouse was open for visitors to go inside. A special treat, as the house is only open for special occasions.

Lucy sadly passed away from 'black Diphtheria' in 1890, she was only nine years old. Florence Haskell donated the family property, along with Lucy's house, in hopes the city could use it as a park for children. And that is what the Haskell land is still used for today. It is a special thing, to honor Lucy, and follow her mother's wish of keeping her memory alive through the house, all these years later.

Many events are held at the Haskell Playhouse House and within the Haskell Park throughout the year. Coming up on September 14th is a Curious George themed event for local kids to enjoy. Each December, Santa meets kids inside the Haskell Playhouse for photos. For more information on the Lucy Haskell Playhouse, check out the website of the Haskell Playhouse Association <https://haskellplayhouse.org/> and the Middletown Neighbors Facebook page for information on upcoming events at Haskell Park <https://www.facebook.com/middletownneighbors/>



