

# History Happenings

## In Preparation of #9's 150th Anniversary

November 2025 - Issue 40

Charter Received December 8, 1878



In late 1990, the lodge received an offer on 9632 Lackland Rd. - the former Overland Lodge #2665 - for \$38,000 from Joseph M. Rose, contingent upon closing the sale on December 31, 1990.



*Frank Spencer built a Victorian Romanesque home at 9632 Lackland in 1901 as part of the Spencer subdivision. The home was sold in 1945 to the local Independent Order of the Odd Fellows chapter, who converted it into their meeting hall. After several attempts to save the home failed, it was torn down in March of 1996 and the land was sold.*

*Image: ChatGPT search of the address*

Both the Trustees and the lodge floor unanimously approved the sale. Proceeds from the sale were to be used to reduce the current \$70,000 mortgage on 12481 Ladue Rd. For an unknown reason, the buyer could not meet his own self-imposed sales date of December 31. It was reported to the lodge floor on January 15th, 1991, that the Lackland buyer asked for an extension on the sales date and paid \$1,500 for that privilege in addition to agreeing to a 10% annualized escalation in sales price from the original price and terms. It wasn't long before the buyer completely walked away from the deal, leaving Lodge #9 on Ladue Rd. with a vacated home in Overland that now seemingly was worth no more than \$25,000.

In 1993 a deal was negotiated between Lodge #9 and The Odd Fellows, the original owner and mortgage holder of 9632 Lakeland Rd., that suspended the 12% annual interest payments until #9 could sell the property. In October of 1995, after numerous attempts to sell the property failed, the property was deeded back to The Odd Fellows, releasing St Louis Elks #9 from the mortgage. Frank and Ruth Munich purchased the property that same October for \$5000, thus leaving The Odd Fellows with a \$20,000 loan loss.



*Historical marker at current 9632 Lackland, Overland, MO.  
Image: ChatGPT search*

### **Asking, who are the Odd Fellows?**

*A global fraternal organization founded in 1819 with a mission to promote friendship, love, and truth while improving communities and aiding those in need. The Odd Fellows are committed to making a positive difference in the world by embracing diversity, supporting local and global causes, and living by their timeless motto: "Friendship, Love, and Truth." Saint Louis Lodge #5 Independent Order of Odd Fellows meets in Fenton, MO every Saturday night - <https://ioof-stl.org>.*

## Eternally an Elk

### The #9 Notables at Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum

Many prominent St. Louisans interred at Bellefontaine were also Lodge #9 members.

Thanks to Sandy Schneider, Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum volunteer researcher, we are delighted to introduce our sixth 'BCA #9 Notable'.

#### **Henry Clay Sexton, 1828-1893**

#### **Builder; First Paid Fire Chief in St. Louis; Early Baseball Club President**

Note from Sandy: Each month I ponder the word "notable" when considering the subject for this bio. Sometimes name recognition moves someone to the top of the list. Other times, it is a title or position that someone has achieved in his profession that is noteworthy. Maybe a person rises to the occasion in an extreme situation. But when evaluating our notable candidates, we must always consider the times in which they lived.

Most of us will not recognize Henry Clay Sexton's name. Looking through old newspapers, I found very little until I entered "H. Clay Sexton." To the citizens of St. Louis during the late 19th century that name was almost a household word.

H. Clay Sexton was born in Virginia in 1828. His father taught Clay and his brothers carpentry and building skills as they worked in the family business. By about 1844 the family moved to St. Louis, and soon after that Clay and his brother John started their own construction company. They also joined the St. Louis Mound #9 volunteer fire department. Clay married Sarah Lavinia Lyon in St. Louis in 1850 and began to raise their family.

At the time, the city had only four wards. Each fire house had a strong sense of pride. Some newspaper accounts told of chaos and even competition among the volunteer firehouses rushing to be first on the scene of a fire. The motto of Mound #9 was "We fly to succor and to save." As the city grew this volunteer system proved to be a dangerous way to operate. After the Great Fire of 1849 many improvements were made—the use of fire escapes, much more brick being used instead of wood, better pumper and equipment. But it wasn't until 1857 that St. Louis hired paid firefighters, making it the second city in the country after Cincinnati to have a professional staff. Mayor John Wimer (also buried in Bellefontaine) appointed H. Clay Sexton as the first Chief Engineer.



Image: ancestry.com



**SAVE THE DATE January 17, 2026 - History Committee Trivia Night**

*This month's 1904 World's Fair trivia question: First introduced as a 'demonstration sport' at the 1904 games, this sport has become an Olympic staple. Name the sport.*



Image: Online search, findagrave.com

Clay took the job very seriously. His experience as a builder helped him to recognize safety hazards in many of the old buildings. He objected to giving occupancy permits for buildings that he considered firetraps, so he pushed for stricter building codes and enforcement. He often gave testimony in cases of loss by fire, and his knowledge, honesty, and dedication were valued.

Sexton's salary was \$2,000 a year, but an insurance company offered an additional \$5,000 a year to help him buy more modern equipment, and to sweeten his salary in hopes of keeping him in St. Louis. At one point, Chicago offered Chief Sexton a salary of \$15,000, but he refused, wishing to stay in St. Louis instead.

By 1861, St. Louis was seeing an increase of people moving in from the south to raise money, supplies, or troops to help the Confederacy. The city instituted martial, or Union military law. All city employees were required to sign an oath of allegiance to the Union, including its Chief Engineer. But in 1862 Clay's brother John had traveled to the south, referred to in the newspaper as "Secessia," meaning land of secession. He was suspected of being a Southern sympathizer. Upon his return he was fined \$5,000 and restricted within the city limits of St. Louis. His brother Thomas Jefferson Sexton, known as Jeff, was there to meet him, and Clay was at another location waiting as well. John Sexton got into a verbal and physical fight with none other than the chief of police, poor judgement for a man in his position! John was arrested, while brother Jeff walked away, but turned himself in the next morning. Clay Sexton was arrested also as a sympathizer.

General Schoefield removed Clay as fire chief on September 4, 1862, and said "the appointment of some more loyal in his stead" should be made. No investigation followed, and the brothers were sent to McDowell's College, also called the Gratiot Street Prison. John Sexton was later told to leave the city immediately. Despite people speaking to Clay Sexton's loyalty, he was kept for about 12 days, then released after paying the \$5,000 bond. He returned to managing his construction company. Later, Clay signed the oath of allegiance again.

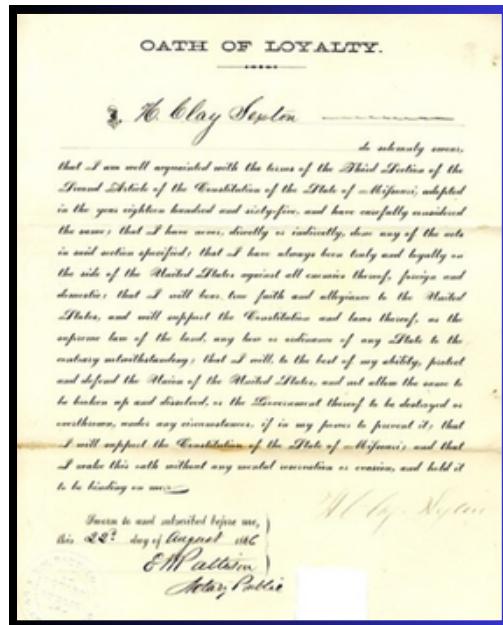




Image: baseball-reference.com

Surprisingly, during the Civil War St. Louis was forming club teams of baseball. Games among club teams were discussed in the local newspapers. After the war "Old Clay" was chosen as the captain of The Empire of St. Louis (*also known as the St. Louis Empire*). One special game was between the 'heavyweights' and the 'lightweights' of the team. Another was between the 'marrieds' and the 'singles' in which Clay Sexton hit 5 homeruns to put the marrieds over the singles 26-22 in nine innings. Another article from 1868 listed Clay as the president of the Empire Club.

On May 12, 1869, the *Globe Democrat* reported that Clay Sexton was reinstated as fire chief. He overhauled the department, replacing many men and reassigning a few. According to the newspaper accounts, all equipment was inspected and brought up to the highest standards. Some of these firings and reassignments brought appeals to the Board of Fire Engineers, but it was reported that they fell on deaf ears since the Chief Engineer was responsible for the efficiency of the department. Clay's changes were kept. He was again held in high esteem as the fire department's Chief Engineer until 1885, when he resigned and became City Collector for St. Louis.

In politics Clay Sexton began as a Whig but then became a Democrat. He was a member of the Southern Methodist Church, a supervisor of a Masonic order, a member of the Legion of Honor, a Knight of St. Patrick, and a member of Lodge #9. He became ill late in 1893 and died in his home at 3677 Cook Avenue in St. Louis. His death certificate gave the cause of death as "fatty degeneration of the heart, and cancer of the liver." Comments in the *Globe-Democrat* praised him as being a "rigid teetotaller" (completely abstaining from alcohol), and for "never uttering a curse word." His burial services in the church and at Bellefontaine in the family lot in the Marvin section were very simple. He was survived by his wife Lavinia, a married daughter and a son. Henry Clay Sexton was 65 years old.

A great image deserves a second look. An old leather helmet - held in the Missouri Historical Society's collection - becomes a treasured artifact to the firefighters of St. Louis, but also to Lodge #9. Be honest - what did you notice first - the captain's name, or the number 9?



H. Clay Sexton's personal red leather helmet. Image: Reddit

# Elks REST Elsewhere



On June 14, 1925, Syracuse, New York Elks Lodge # 31 dedicated a life size bronze Elk to overlook their 4 year old Elks REST in Section 52 of the Oakwood Cemetery. Hundreds of Elks and friends of the Elks from across the state of New York attended the dedication ceremonies. The Elk REST had been donated to Lodge #31 by lodge secretary Miles C. Hencle as a dedication to his mother, although oddly enough, neither Miles nor his mother are buried at Oakwood.

The Elks REST at Oakwood is along the northern edge of Section 52, boarding the campus of Syracuse University.

The Oakwood Cemetery Elk REST sculptor was Eli Harvey, whose animal sculptures can be found in art museums, historical societies and zoos across the country as well as in Elks REST. In addition to Syracuse, Eli Harvey has sculptured Elks REST elks for Colorado Springs and Puebla, Co., Providence, RI., Waterbury, Ct., Minneapolis, Mn., Kirkwood, Elmira, and Valhalla, NY, Bedford, Va., Terre Haute, In., Newport News, Va., and New Orleans, La.



Oakwood Cemetery opened in 1859 as a 92 acre facility. It has since grown to 160 acres.

Anna Short Harrington, a local house maid and cook for various fraternity houses at Syracuse University, was preparing her famous pancakes at the 1935 New York State Fair when she was discovered by Quaker Oats. Her delicious pancakes and southern charm made her the perfect hire to become the \*new\* face of Aunt Jemima. Anna died a wealthy woman in 1955 at the age of 58 in Syracuse and is buried in Oakwood Cemetery.

*Image: Online search;  
[aaregistry.org/story/anna-short-harrington-born](http://aaregistry.org/story/anna-short-harrington-born)*



# "Restoring the St. Louis ELKS REST" Brick Campaign

The ELKS REST at Bellefontaine Cemetery and Arboretum is the final resting place for 33 of our brethren. Since the 1890's, the Elks Rest monument has watched over this sacred spot. Now, worn and weathered by time and the elements, it seems appropriate to restore the Elks' Rest to its original stately appearance.

By replacing the damaged Elk, improving the individual markers, and tending to the landscaping, we can move forward with certainty that we are doing all we can to honor our fellow Elks.



To achieve that goal, the History Committee has launched a fundraising campaign. All bricks sold will be laid at the base of the Elk guarding the entrance of Lodge #9. Bricks are 4" x 8" and are available two colors Nutmeg (\$125) or premium option Regimental Red (\$150).

Each brick will be engraved with the name(s) or phrase(s) of your choice; 3 lines of text, 20 characters per line.\*

For questions, please contact Beth Schnettler - [beth12523@gmail.com](mailto:beth12523@gmail.com).

To place an order, complete this form and send with payment to Elks Lodge #9, 12481 Ladue Road, Creve Coeur, MO 63141, attention Beth Schnettler.

Make checks payable to "Elks Lodge #9" with the note "Elks Rest Brick Campaign" on the memo line. Payment can also be made through the Club Room Bar register.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 1: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 2: \_\_\_\_\_

Line 3: \_\_\_\_\_

*\*The History committee reserves the right to assess all orders to ensure all words and phrases used are appropriate for placement on the Lodge grounds.*

