

Many of the homes listed in this booklet are private residences. Please respect the privacy of the home owners.

LeClaire Boat Yard 1898



LeClaire view from the Mississippi River 1930

This booklet was created and sponsored by the Buffalo Bill Museum LeClaire, IA Buffalobillmuseumleclaire.com



Visit the Past!

The Robert Schiffke 1920's Era One Room School House Exhibit. This addition to the Buffalo Bill Museum houses a replica 1920's interior of a one room school house.

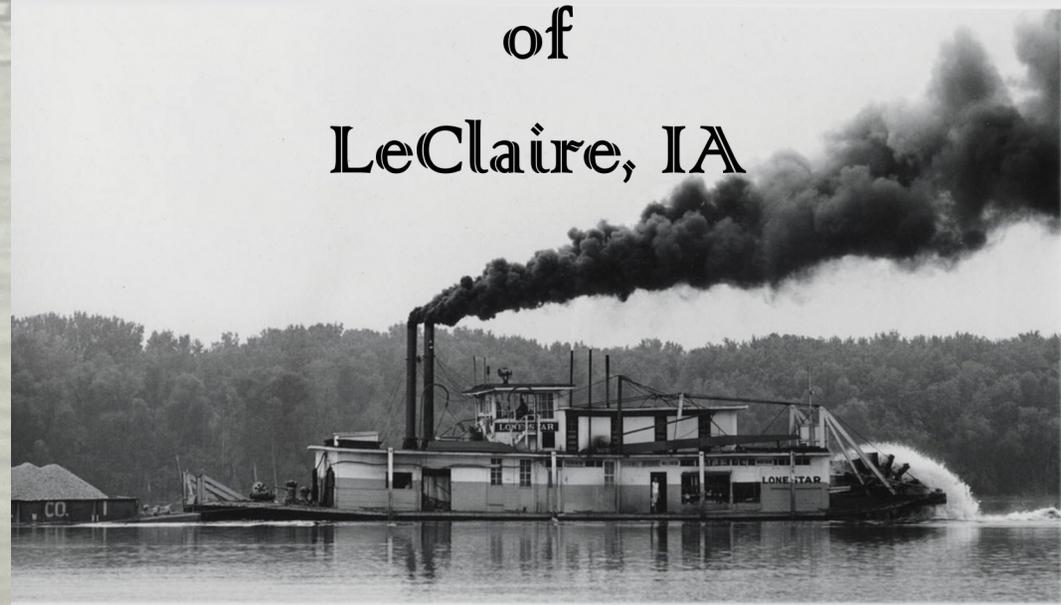
Explore History!

A Guide to the



Historic Sites & Homes of

LeClaire, IA



LeClaire, Iowa

LeClaire, IA was known mostly for location and river traffic. The town is situated on the point where the Mississippi River makes a sharp turn to the west and runs southwesterly for fifteen miles. In earlier days this was known as the Upper Rock Island Rapids. It was dangerous to navigate because of high rocks and a narrow twisting channel. During the 1840's to 1910, LeClaire was home to specialized riverboat captains and pilots who would navigate this 15 mile stretch of rapids for Mississippi riverboats.



Chief Blackhawk



Members of the Sauk and Fox tribes lived in the area of LeClaire. There was a fierce Native American battle in 1804 in the area between LeClaire and Princeton, Iowa, where the Olathea Golf Course is located today, the battle was fought between the Sauk and Fox fought tribes against the Sioux tribe. Around 1000 Native Americans were killed in the fight.

Antoine LeClaire

In 1829 three homesteading families moved into the LeClaire area and through the Peace Treaty of 1832 the

Natives gave a section of land at the head of the Upper Rapids to Antoine LeClaire. This tract is where the City of LeClaire is now located.

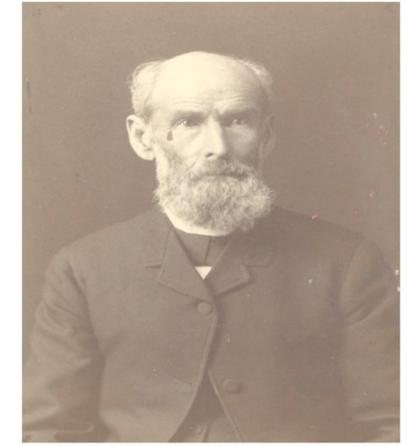


William F Cody

The City received its Charter in 1834. The state of Iowa became the 29th state in 1846 and in April of that same year "Buffalo Bill" William F. Cody was born in a log cabin two miles northwest of LeClaire. The years up through 1850 showed the town growing. There was one hotel, a town pump, boat supply store, and several river pilots built homes. By 1850 LeClaire development was so rapid that it had promise of becoming a large city. By 1856 there were eighteen new stores, and employment available for carpenters, caulkers, and mechanics on the boatyards. There were sawmills, flour mills, a plow factory, and brick making among the early industry. From LeClaire itself came much of the stone, brick, and wood used in the construction of the homes. Many which are now recognized as part of the nine block Cody Road Historic District listed on the National Register of Historic Places. By 1857 financial panic hit LeClaire after Davenport bridged the river. The Stone School was built in 1866. By the late 1890's the railroad came through town, and wing dams and revetments built on the upper Mississippi made nearly all channels navigable. Both these events caused decline in river pilots and river traffic reached a low point - logs and lumber were now railroaded. Farming became more popular with the decline in river employment.

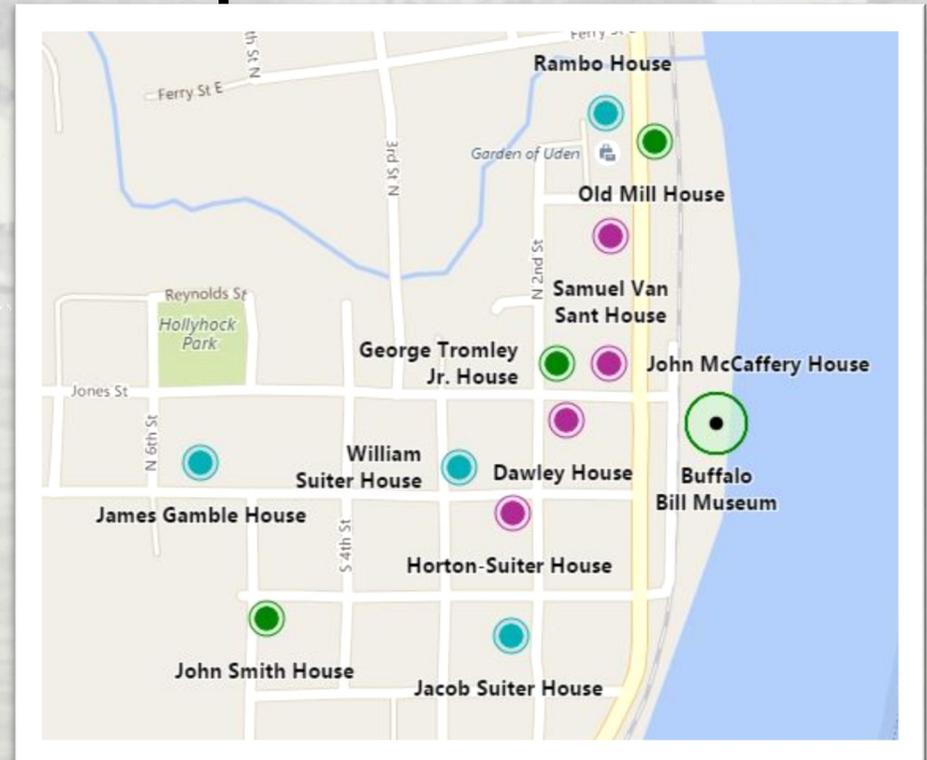


Joe Hawthorne



John Wesley Van Sant

Map of Sites & Homes



Riverboat Pilots of LeClaire



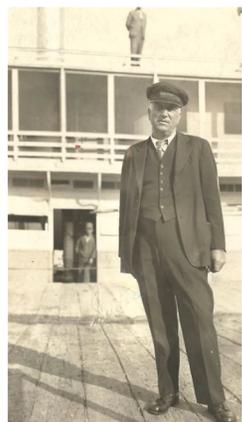
Arthur Dawely



Charles Tromley



Jacob Suiter



James Suiter



The Green Tree

The famous Green Tree elm was located along the banks of the Mississippi River in LeClaire. It was known as a landmark among people who lived in LeClaire, and to people who had visited LeClaire. In 1920 it was placed on the register of the American Forestry Association's famous trees. In 1964 it contracted Dutch Elm disease and had to be cut down. A section of the famous tree can be viewed in the Buffalo Bill Museum on the LeClaire levee.

The Lone Star Steam Wheeler (built 1869, retired in 1889. In 1890 a new Lone Star was built and decommissioned 1967) is the only surviving example in the United States of a wooden-hulled boat built in the traditional Western Rivers fashion. The Lone Star was designated a National Historic Landmark and is open to visitors at the Buffalo Bill Museum.



The Lone Star

Historic Sites & Homes of LeClaire



Horton - Suiter House

102 N 2nd Street

Built c. 1860

The house is believed to be built for Henry Horton, who worked as an engineer on the raft steamers. The house was later occupied by James Suiter, one of the last of the LeClaire rapids pilots who supported his river income by working as a mortician during the winter months. Style: The 1

1/2 cottage is five bays across the front with a low pitched gable roof. A one story addition with a slanted roof was built later. The house is now a private residence.



Jacob Suiter House

214 South 2nd Street

Built c. 1860

Jacob Suiter (1828-1904) was the second generation of Suiters to be a raft and rapids pilot. Style: A variation on the Italianate style, the home features a bracketed cornice and corner pilasters. At the rear of the house is a one-story brick kitchen addition. The house is now a private residence.



George Tromley Sr. House

806 North Cody Road
Built c. 1840

George Tromley Sr. began his career floating log rafts before the Civil War. Tromley was among the first to experiment with steamboats pushing log rafts.

Style: The house is a 2 story home with a low pitched roof and was built in 2

sections, the first in 1840 of brick and the second section is framed construction with narrow cornices above the windows. The house is now a private residence.



John McCaffery House

208 North Cody Road
Built 1870

John McCaffery a boat clerk, captain, and raft boat owner as well as having interests in lumber and mining ventures. McCaffery was born in Ireland 1842.

Style: This 2 story frame Italianate

house is built on a stone foundation and has curved wooden lintels. The roof is low hip with an unbracketed wooden cornice. There is a 2 story polygonal bay on the south with a bracketed cornice above the first story bay.

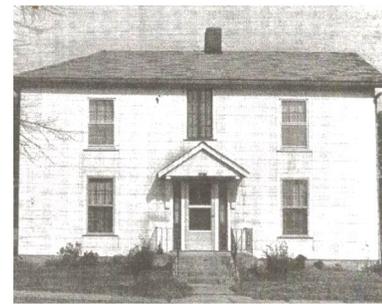
The house is currently a business.

William Suiter House

227 Wisconsin Street
Built c. 1855

William Suiter was one of the community's original settlers and rapids pilot. William began life on the Mississippi as a raft hand, but was piloting boats by the time he was 21 and continued for almost 40 years.

Style: 2 story house with shallow gable roof is 3 bays wide. It follows a simple center hall plan. The house is a private residence.



The Gault House Historic Commercial Building

207 N Cody Road
Built 1850

Early Hotel operated under the name "Gault House". Later became the "Bard House". This building is still used as a business.

On the Levee

Buffalo Bill Museum & River
Pilots' Pier
199 N Front Street

The Buffalo Bill Museum, is focused on life along the Mississippi River and local history. Local history exhibits include the story of famous people from LeClaire, including American West showman Buffalo Bill Cody, engineer James Buchanan Eads and inventor James Ryan.



The Lone Star Stern Wheeler (built 1869, retired in 1889. In 1890 a new

Lone Star was built and decommissioned 1967) is the only surviving example in the United States of a wooden-hulled boat built in the traditional Western Rivers fashion. That river system, comprised of the Mississippi, Ohio, and Missouri Rivers carried most of the immigrants and freight that settled the Midwest. The Lone Star was designated a National Historic Landmark and is open to visitors at the Buffalo Bill Museum.



The museum is open year round and 7 days a week.



Stone House

817 N 2nd Street
Built Circa 1840
The rock building was built for use as a girl's school but was never used as such. It once was a headquarters for a gang of counterfeiters.
Style: Vernacular early settlement-era structure composed of ashlar blocks of limestone. The house is a private residence.



Cody Road

Historic Commercial – Residential Building

114 N Cody Road
Built 1851
Note the stone foundation. This building is still used today as a commercial retail business.



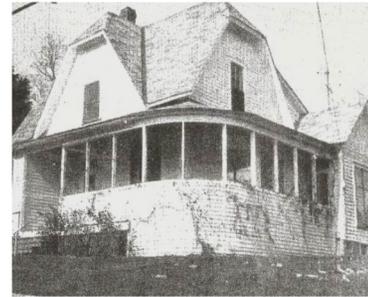
Historic Commercial Building

101 South Cody Road
Built ?
The photo was taken when this building was used as the Green Tree Grocery. The historic Green Tree was located a short distance behind the building. This building is still used today as a commercial retail business.



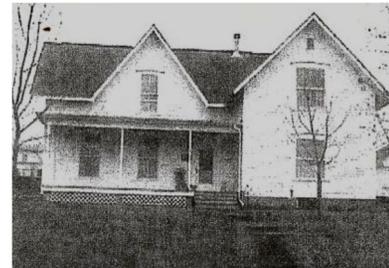
Historic Commercial Building

201 – 203 North Cody Road
This building at the corner of Cody road and Jones has had a variety of uses including a doctors office, LeClaire City Hall and the Buffalo Bill Museum. This building is still used as a business.



George Tromley Jr. House

127 Jones Street
Built c. 1865
George Tromley Jr. was the second generation of pilots to work on the upper rapids, and thus was among the distinctive family groups which maintained their connection with the river trade over many years.
Style: 1 ½ tory frame house. The main roof is a jerkinhead dormer centered in the front façade. The house is now a private residence.



Samuel Van Sant House

322 North Cody Road
Built c. 1860
In 1869 – 70 Samuel and his father J.W. Van Sant designed and built the J.W. Van Sant, a raft boat which revolutionized the movement of logs and lumber down the Mississippi River. In the 1880's he moved to Minnesota and became the Governor of the state.

Style: This 1 ½ story is sided with clapboards. The upper story has a triangular dormer. The house is currently a business



Kattenbracher House

1125 North 2nd Street
Built c. 1860
Charles Kattenbracher established a foundry along the river, which was principally engaged in working with the LeClaire Marine Railway boatyards run by J.W. Van Sant & Son.
Style: 2 story rectangular house has a low hip roof with very wide bracketed eaves and medallions. This house is now a private residence.



John Smith House

426 Dodge Street

Built c. 1850

John Smith was a riverboat pilot known for his involvement in the “Effie Afton” case after the railroad hired him in 1856 to prove that a steamer could pass under the bridge without danger.

Smith also devised a towboat used to steer large rafts of logs through the river.

Style: This house is a small brick, 1 story built on a low stone foundation. It has a gabled roof and front is 3 bays wide, the sides are 2 bays wide. There is a large wooded frieze, beaded at the bottom that runs across the front of the house. The house is now a private residence



John H Suiter House

1220 N. 2nd Street

Built 1855

John Suiter was second generation river pilot. 1843 until 1875 John Suiter worked as a rapid pilot. John also acquired extensive agriculture and real estate holdings.

Style: 2 story house of frame construction on a stone foundation. The front of the house is 3 bays wide with a sheltered porch running the full width of the façade.

The house is now a private residence.

James Gamble House

527 Wisconsin Street

Built c. 1855

James Gamble was born in Ireland in 1821, emigrated with his parents to the U.S. in 1823. He received his medical degree in 1847 and moved to LeClaire where he practiced medicine for nearly 50 years.

Style: The house reflects the Italianate Palazzo style, with bricks laid in a 6 course common bond. The main roof is very low hip

with 3 brick chimneys. The main entrance is sheltered by a flat-roofed porch with 2 wooded columns on high pedestals. The house is a private residence.



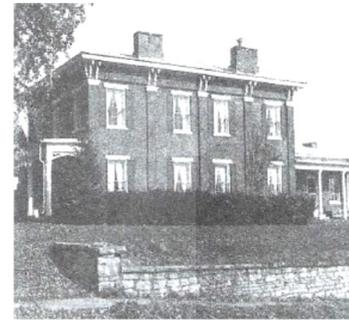
Old Mill House

419 n. Cody Road

Built c. 1851

Built by Alfred Jassen, Acquired by J.W. Van Sant along with adjoining boatyards in 1865.

Style The house features a symmetrical façade and sits on a stone foundation which on the river side forms a walkout basement. The house is now a multi – use building.



Dawley House

127 S Second Street

Built: 1851

Danial V Dawley obtained his first river job about 1836 as a clerk on the steamer “Hero.”

Style: 2 story brick Italianate style on a stone foundation, the shallow hipped roof has 4 short, wide chimneys. The 3 bays on the main façade are separated by flat brick pilasters. The home is now a business.



Rambo House

430 North Cody Road

Built 1855

William Rambo came to LeClaire in 1844 and established a saw mill. For almost 20 years he was a pilot on the upper Rapids.

Style: Transitional Greek Revival/ Italianate frame dwelling. The flipped roof features broad eaves and large brackets. This house is now a business.