

Henry Ford, Thomas Edison star at Nankin Mills benefit

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Two famous individuals will be stopping by Nankin Mills on Sept 5.

Henry Ford and Thomas Edison, played by Rob Chrenko and Russell Doré, will discuss what it was like to visit Nankin Mills in 1925 and help raise money to support Nankin Mills Interpretive Center.

The two men camped together and vacationed together. They were BFFs before the term was even invented (and they did a lot of inventing). They will be at Nankin Mills 6-8 p.m. Friday, Sept. 5, and people are invited to get to know them better.

"Last year we had Mr. Ford stop by and we were able to help him celebrate this 150th birthday. He apparently enjoyed himself so much he is bringing Mr. Edison with him this time," said Friends President Denise Braun-Johnson. "We're not surprised since both men have a connection with our mill."

Cost of the event is \$35 per person and \$60 per couple and includes hors d'oeuvres, finger foods, refreshments and desserts served near the mill porch. The event is a fundraiser for the Friends of Nankin Mills, a volunteer support group that works with Wayne County Parks to sponsor activities, helps fund exhibits and programming; hosts the annual mill lighting ceremony and sing-a-long; assist with events; serve as docents and much more.

Ford purchased the former grist mill in 1918 as the first of his many Village Industries, small manufacturing plants up and down the Rouge River. Ford, who was a big proponent of water power, contracted with Edison to install a direct current hydroelectric generator to help power the machinery.

The generator produced so much power that electric lines were strung to houses in the nearby village of Pikes Peak to provide free lighting, making Nankin Mills one of the first utility companies in the country and perhaps the last to offer free power.

The Edison generator is still in the mill and plans call for it to be repainted and chromed so it looks much as it did when the mill was operational, according to Braun-Johnson.

"Unfortunately, it's impractical to ever get it operational, but we do want to provide more information on Ford's interest in clean energy," Braun-Johnson said.

Tickets are available at Nankin Mills. More information can be obtained by calling 734-261-1850 or by going to the Friend of Nankin Mills Facebook page or website.

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