

FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE Newsletter



New bike racks at Leclaire Lake

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P.O. Box 644, Edwardsville, Illinois 62025

April 2010

TROY ROAD BIKE TUNNEL

According to Madison County Transit spokesman, SJ Morrison, the bike tunnel being built under Troy Road at the edge of Leclaire is on schedule and should be completed by late 2010. It includes space for busses to pull off the road for loading, park and ride lots and shelters.

On several occasions, MCT has received calls from Leclaire residents about problems on the bike trails like graffiti or trash dumped by inconsiderate trail users. They appreciate the information because it allows them to take immediate action to fix the problem. If you see something along the trails that needs attention, call MCT at 797-4600. For trail or bus information you can also visit their website at www.mct.org.

LECLAIRE SCHOOL HOUSE IMPROVEMENTS

The city has recently installed Hardie siding on the Leclaire schoolhouse. The building's original wood siding wasn't holding paint so Hardie siding was the solution. Hardie is a fiber cement siding that looks like wood but is fire, hail and termite resistant and is approved by the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The siding is supposed to last up to 50 years without the need for painting or replacement. This also solved many of the lead abatement problems which are of special concern for buildings where children are active.

WEB SITE UPDATES

Since the last newsletter the number of transcribed newspaper articles on-line at the FOL web site has nearly doubled. Many thanks are due to Cindy Reinhardt and Pat Hughes for their dedicated work on this project and to our web master, Steve Brockmeyer. Many of the articles recently added are from 1890-1891 providing some of Leclaire's earliest stories. Web address: www.historic-leclaire.org

ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 13TH

Friends of Leclaire will hold their annual meeting on Tuesday, April 13th at 7 PM in the second floor conference room 224 of building N3 at the Historic Nelson Campus of LCCC in Leclaire.

The primary item on the agenda will be the election of officers for 2010-2011. A full slate of officers will be presented but nominations from the floor are appropriate.

DAFFODILS IN LECLAIRE

Evidence of spring is all over Leclaire as daffodils planted by EBTC and FOL volunteers are coming up at the Water Tower, Children's Museum, Leclaire Park and around the parking lot at Leclaire Field. Thanks to the many volunteers who helped plant bulbs in Leclaire over the last several years.

MEMBERSHIP IN FOL

Leclaire was founded in 1890 as an experiment in cooperative living and designated a National Historic District in 1979. Friends of Leclaire is a group of residents, former residents and friends who support the preservation of Leclaire and its history. If you would like to join, mail your \$10 annual membership fee to: Friends of Leclaire, P.O. Box 644, Edwardsville, IL 62025. Please include your name, telephone number, e-mail and street addresses.

Walking tour brochures, books, DVDs and other materials on the history of the neighborhood are available. Send an e-mail to friends@historic-leclaire.org or call 656-1294 for additional information. Members receive quarterly issues of this Leclaire newsletter.

NEW LECLAIRE GARDEN

Plans are in the works for a new garden in memory of Leo and Wilma Carroll at the south end of Leclaire Lake. Near the Carroll Garden will be a number of new trees including one in memory of Robert MacDonald, Kathy Krishnan's father. Designed by Victorian landscape designer Peggy Lambdin, the garden will provide a splash of color that will be visible across the lake to motorists on Madison Avenue.

Thanks to Cindy Reinhardt, Jim Fralinger, SJ Morrison and Jennifer Rutherford for copy and pictures. Bob Blain, Editor

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Goshen Market

Friends of Leclaire will have an information and sales table at Edwardsville's Goshen Market on the third Saturday of each month. Two volunteers will be needed to work the table each month. If you are new to the organization we can pair you with an "old-timer" your first time. Please consider volunteering for one of the following dates: May 15, June 19, July 17, August 21, September 18 or October 16. Call Mike at 656-1294 or send an e-mail to friends@historic-leclaire.org to volunteer.

Spring Clean-Up

Bring your rakes, hoes, and gardening gloves to Leclaire Park on Saturday, April 17th at 9 AM to help prepare flower beds for the spring and summer season. Can't make it that day? Call Mike Reinhardt at 656-1294 to be assigned a bed that can be done in advance or later in the week. Many members signed up to help with gardening this year, so we hope to see you at the park on the 17th. Meet at the bandstand.

Route 66 Festival

Edwardsville's Route 66 Festival is back in June! On Friday night and Saturday, June 11-12, Friends of Leclaire will again have a place in the Route 66 history tent where we have the opportunity to tell area residents and visitors about our unique neighborhood. Volunteers are needed to staff the tent. Call 656-1294 if interested in working the Route 66 Festival.

Band Concert

We're on a roll! Last year there was no rain at the Leclaire Band Concert so let's look forward to two dry years in a row! This year's concert is tentatively scheduled for Sunday, June 27th at 4 PM. Volunteers are needed to organize and run a refreshment stand for the concert. Call 656-1294 to volunteer.

NEW RULES FOR LEAD ABATEMENT IN OLDER HOMES

The United States Environmental Protection Agency's Renovate, Repair and Paint rules (RRP) will take effect April 22nd. RRP rules provide guidelines for owners of buildings containing lead paint, which include most of the buildings in Leclaire. Representatives of Friends of Leclaire attended a recent seminar by the Illinois Department of Public Health to learn how RRP would impact property owners in Leclaire.

First, if you are a homeowner working on your own house, the rules do not apply to you, but you may want to look into the recommended guidelines for your own protection, especially if you have young children in your household. But, if you hire someone to work on your house, you need to make sure they are a certified renovator, otherwise you can be held legally responsible.

If you are a landlord who works on your rental properties, there will be instances where you will be required to hire a certified renovator or you can take the training to become a certified renovator yourself. Certified renovators learn the techniques that need to be followed in order to safely deal with interior or exterior deteriorating lead paint.

The leader of the seminar emphasized that lead paint in good condition is not a danger. It's only when it starts to peel and crack that it becomes a danger. Lead paint was used on the exterior of houses as well as on interior walls and window frames. Almost all paint products prior to 1978 contained lead which can cause irreversible harm to children who ingest even small quantities of lead dust or paint particles.

For more go to <http://www.epa.gov/lead/pubs/renovation.htm> or call 1-800-424-LEAD. Information about the dangers of lead paint can be found at <http://www.idph.state.il.us/env/health/lead.htm>.

FOL hopes to have the seminar repeated in Edwardsville. If you are interested, please send an e-mail to friends@historic-leclaire.org or call 656-1294 and you will be contacted after the event is scheduled.

NEW LECLAIRE BOOK FINDS ANSWERS

Research for the new pictorial history of Leclaire by Cindy Reinhardt to be published in October has uncovered many new and interesting facts about Leclaire in addition to hundreds of photographs of Leclaire buildings and families. A few examples:

The descendants of John Staaf have the contractor's bill from 1904 when Staff had two houses built as an investment. The bill from J. H. Theuer, Contractor and Builder to build "two cottages" was \$2,210.40. The two houses are located at 910 and 914 Holyoake Road. Three years later, Staaf, a coal miner in Glen Carbon, built a house for his family at 918 Holyoake. Staaf's grandson, Roger Buchta, was very generous in sharing family photographs and documents from Leclaire.

A small notice in the Edwardsville Intelligencer in 1895 gave new information about the Leclaire clubhouse, a large building with public rooms on the first floor and lodging on the second floor. The building once sat where the Leclaire School (Children's Museum) is now located. When the schoolhouse was built, they moved the clubhouse to a building lot south of the manager's house. This would be the second lot south of the schoolhouse on Hale Avenue, which is now occupied by a bungalow. We think the clubhouse was there until at least 1910, but was gone after 1920. What happened to the Leclaire clubhouse? Another mystery to be solved...

Early descriptions of the Leclaire schoolhouse spoke of moveable walls so that it could be one large venue for dances or divided into classrooms during the day. Given the layout of the building today, it was always a mystery how they could make one

large room out of a building with a stairwell to the basement in the center of the building. We now know that when the school district took possession of the building in 1934, they did a major renovation that included putting a basement under the building for the first time. So, in earlier times, stairs were not a hindrance because they didn't exist.

Dolores Howerton Rohrkaste still had copies of her Leclaire kindergarten workbooks from the 1920s. If you read a description of the Fröbel Method for kindergartens, these workbooks are a great reflection of those principles. The children studied geometric shapes by practicing origami. They made collages and stitched designs on sewing cards. They made sand art in bottles using marble dust from the marble shop and colored it with chalk. Thanks to Dolores, these samples of early 20th century kindergarten work in Leclaire are now available at the Madison County Historical Museum.

Cindy found a 1904 souvenir of the St. Louis World's Fair with illustrations of buildings where N. O. Nelson Manufacturing provided the plumbing. The buildings include the Palace of Art (now the St. Louis Art Museum), the Washington University Administration building and St. Louis Union Station among others.

Dozens of people came forward and allowed us to copy their family photographs and documents of Leclaire. All of these photos have been scanned and will be indexed and archived at the Madison County Historical Society for future use by genealogists and historians. Although no additional photographs can be included in the book, Cindy will continue to collect and archive photos from early residents of Leclaire. They provide a window to what life was like in another time. Call 656-1294 if you or someone you know has early Leclaire photographs.



RENOVATION DISCOVERY

The Rutherford family recently purchased the long time home of Jim and Jane Fralinger who moved to a retirement community. In renovating the bathroom, the Rutherfords uncovered a wall papered in sheet music and playbills. Many of them seemed to pre-date the Fralingers time in the house, so they wondered who put them there. The answer was

provided by Jim Fralinger:

“When we move into 935 Edward Everett Hale Avenue in 1965, both the kitchen and the bathroom walls were covered halfway up with ugly green imitation four-inch square tiles made of thin plastic. The rooms were more depressing than the room portrayed in Charlotte Perkins Gilman's Yellow Wallpaper.

“So one day in a moment of madness my wife, Jane, went into the bathroom with her prize collection of playbills, musical scores and concert programs and proceeded to paste them on the walls. Word spread and young folks from all over town came to visit just to see the bathroom decorations.

“For lovers of history, Charlotte Perkins, one of the many prominent early Leclaire visitors, was Edward Everett Hale's sister-in-law. The sisters were members of the famous Beecher family and Harriett Beecher Stowe was their aunt.”



ARTICLES FROM THE PAST

Edwardsville Intelligencer

April 12, 1924

STRUCTURE WILL BE BUILT NEAR LECLAIRE LAKE

Nelson Memorial Fountain to be Staked Off Saturday

Construction of a new band stand and rest room at the Leclaire Lake is under way this week and steps are to be taken Saturday afternoon for the location of the N. O. Nelson Memorial which will be erected this spring on the plot of ground near the Leclaire School. Both are structures to assist in the beautification of the grounds.

No elaborate plans have been made for the band stand but it will be a substantial structure, costing about \$1000. The floor will be an octagon in form and is to have a width of twenty-four feet, amply large for a band or small gathering of people.

The foundation will be of red brick and the upper part of the structure of frame. Two ideas are planned for the band stand. Naturally it is for the occasional concerts at the lake but the lower portion will be arranged as a rest room for women and men. It will be provided with toilet facilities and other accommodations.

The slope of the ground at the particular place permits the erection of the pavilion without making much of an excavation. There will be a division between the lower compartments. The plan is to have the stand ready for use in early May.

Victor S. Holm, sculptor of the memorial, and Mr. Ferraud, the architect, are to be here tomorrow. They will go over the triangular tract just north of the school building and place stakes for the foundation to provide the best possible appearance.

Completion of the memorial has been due to delays in getting necessary materials.

Edwardsville Intelligencer

Friday, April 13, 1934

Editorial by Gilbert S. Giese

SCHOOL ELECTION TOMORROW

The Intelligencer invites the attention of every qualified voter in

the Edwardsville school district to the school election tomorrow.

The president and two members of the Board of Education are to be elected. The retiring president, Jesse L. Simpson, and the retiring board members, Mrs. Geo. A. Handlon and Frank Godfrey, are candidates for re-election. They have no opposition.

A substantial turn-out of voters, in spite of the fact that there is no opposition ticket in the field, would constitute a vote of confidence certain to be appreciated. It would say to the school officials that the voters take an interest in school affairs. It would inform them that their own rather extensive efforts on behalf of the schools is appreciated and approved. It would be an encouragement to the future.

There is an added reason why voters should participate in the school election this year. On the ballot will appear the proposal of taking over as school district property the Leclaire School, the grounds surrounding it and the campus across the street.

In connection with the annexation project approved early this year, the N. O. Nelson Co. has generously offered to turn over the property for school purposes. The Nelson Company has agreed to turn over this property, conservatively valued at between \$12,000 to \$15,000 at present deflated prices, for the nominal sum of \$1,000, which will do little more than compensate the company for all the expense it has been put to incident to the transfer.

At the same time the Nelson Company has offered to turn over to the city, without expense, the Leclaire Lake and park surrounding it. That matter is now before city officials for study of the details, and is expected to be acted upon favorably by the city within the next few weeks.

Under existing school laws, it is necessary that the Board of Education obtain the approval of the voters before it can acquire the school property and campus. The question is to be submitted tomorrow.

There should be an unanimous vote in favor of the acquisition of the property. The Board of Education will never again, in all probability, be able to acquire such a valuable property at virtually no expense.

The suggestion has been made that the present Leclaire School building will be altered to form four rooms for the use of younger pupils living in that section of the city. They are now required to walk the long distance to the Columbus building, a real hardship in bad weather. The Columbus building is crowded. The time is not far distant when provisions for expansion must be made. Here is the opportunity to do it at nominal expense.

Two affirmative votes are necessary to approve the proposal. A detailed explanation of how to vote and a specimen ballot appears elsewhere in this edition. It should be carefully studied.

It is to be hoped that a representative number of voters will turn out for the school election tomorrow; that they will give the retiring school officials a vote of confidence, and that they will authorize this valuable addition to the school property.



Easter in Leclaire circa 1933 Pictured is Helen Coroniotis (Wiemers)