

FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE Newsletter



Vol. 21 No. 4

P.O. Box 644, Edwardsville, Illinois 62025

December 2011

2011 HOLIDAY PARTY

The FOL December potluck social will be held Tuesday December 13th beginning at 7 pm at the home of Jack and Janet Foehrkolb on Franklin Avenue. Guests are asked to bring a dessert or appetizer to share. Open to all current members of Friends of Leclaire, the event brings neighbors together with former residents and friends of the historic neighborhood. RSVP to Janet Foehrkolb at 656-0902.

THE LECLAIRE PARKFEST TEAM

The 20th annual Leclaire Parkfest was a great successful thanks to a great team that works so well together that little instruction is needed ...everyone just falls into their place. With Edwardsville's Parks and Recreation and Police Department, we have a wonderful festival. Here it is:

Cindy Reinhardt, Festival Coordinator
Al & Kim Pauli and Mike Reinhardt,
Site Supervisors

Elaine Shashack and Cindy Reinhardt,
Publicity

Janet Foehrkolb, Contracts

William Krause, FOL booth

Mike Leitner, Vintage vehicle exhibit

Mary Blain, Gazebo decorator

We thank our team, plus all the FOL volunteers who helped in the booth, set-up the festival, prepared exhibits and more. And we are grateful to neighborhood residents who lose their quiet neighborhood for one day a year for the benefit of our community.

RIZZOLI FAMILY HERITAGE TOUR

Sixteen members of the Rizzoli family were given a guided tour of Leclaire on Saturday, October 15 with special emphasis on the Rizzoli homes in Leclaire. Some family members on the two-hour tour came from as far away as Wisconsin and Northern Illinois. Even local family members said they learned things about their family and home town they hadn't known before.

The current owners of Emma Rizzoli Sehnert's Leclaire home invited them in for a tour of the house. Older members described where furnishings were placed in the past, and pointed out where deceased family members had been "laid out" for services which in the past were often held in the home. Many returned to Leclaire on Sunday for Leclaire Parkfest where they made a generous donation to Friends of Leclaire in appreciation. FOL offers group tours at no charge.

SHOP LECLAIRE FOR CHRISTMAS!

Leclaire history books (\$15 & \$22), hoodies (\$25), sweatshirts (\$20), long-sleeved t-shirts (\$17), shopping bags (\$4), FOL gift memberships (\$15) and other items are available for sale through Friends of Leclaire. Call 618-656-1294 if you are interested in Leclaire merchandise for Christmas gifts or as a treat for you!

LECLAIRE PARKFEST VENDORS GIVE BACK

Funds earned by non-profits at the festival provide many services for the Edwardsville-Glen Carbon community. For example, the Lion's Club contacted FOL after this year's festival to let us know they earned enough to pay for three and a half pair of eye glasses for local families in need. The festival is also the year's major fundraiser for the Glen Carbon VFW and other non-profits. Thanks to all who supported these worthwhile organizations!

LOST AND FOUND AT LECLAIRE PARKFEST

A black flash drive with MSOE on the side and a pair of Batman sunglasses were turned in at the Friends of Leclaire booth during Parkfest. Call 656-1294 to claim either item.



ABOUT FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE

Friends of Leclaire is a not-for-profit organization whose purpose is to promote and preserve the history of the Leclaire National Historic District. We tell the public about the Village of Leclaire through our web site, quarterly newsletter, participation in community events, and free lectures.

Membership is open to anyone interested in Leclaire, whether or not you are a current resident. Although we are not a neighborhood association we have a good relationship with the city and are happy to help homeowners when we can. FOL provides "Welcome Bags" to new homeowners in the historic district.

We hold monthly business meetings on the second Tuesday of the month except in December and January. Meetings are held in Building N4, Room 201 on the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of LCCC in Edwardsville. Building N4 is the two-story former Cabinet Mill located right next to the parking lot on Brown Street. We are grateful to LCCC for providing meeting space for the organization.

Besides our holiday social and Leclaire Parkfest, we also organize an annual Leclaire Park Band Concert in June and host a monthly table at the Goshen Market. We also have a loyal contingent of Leclaire gardeners who assist at Leclaire Park. With so many activities, we have many opportunities for volunteers.

To join and support Friends of Leclaire, send your \$15 annual membership fee to:

Friends of Leclaire, P. O. Box 644,
Edwardsville, IL, 62025

Include your name, address, phone number and e-mail address.

For further information about the organization or the historic district, go to the Friends of Leclaire web site: www.historic-leclaire.org, call 618-656-1294, or e-mail

friends@historic-leclaire.org.

Thanks to Cindy for copy and everything else she does. Bob Blain, Editor

HIDDEN TREASURES

Three Leclaire families discovered things long hidden when remodeling their homes.

Tom and Rhonda Schalk found a postcard dated 1915 addressed to Sam Howerton of Alhambra, IL. The Howerton family, although not the first owners of the house, lived at 1014 Ruskin Avenue for many years, beginning in 1919. So the postcard was not mailed to the address on Ruskin, but moved in with the Howerton family.

On Hale Avenue, the Rutherford family found a painted canvas, rolled up under the eaves and hidden by the chimney, when they were adding insulation. No one knows how long it had been there, but the previous owners, who moved into the house in 1965, had no knowledge of the canvas which is pictured here.



Shawn McCue of 716 Hale Avenue found money from a game, "Play Dough," on the second floor of her house and has discovered many small items in her yard.

THANK YOU! THANK YOU VERY MUCH!

We thank the following Edwardsville institutions who displayed outdoor advertising for Leclaire Parkfest. All allowed us to place signs on their lawn, but one also put the message on a prominent electronic billboard (To-Do's Party Store) and one (The Edge Bank) printed fliers to hand out to their customers. We appreciate their support, and hope you'll let them know you appreciate them too!

Annie's Frozen Custard (S. Buchanan and Schwarz)

BP Gas (S. Buchanan and Schwarz)

Dairy Queen (S. Buchanan)

Edwardsville Parks and Recreation

Eden Church (Second Street)

Grace Manor Restaurant (N. Main Street/Route 159)

Leclaire Christian Church (Esic and Governor's Parkway)

Madison County Historical Museum (N. Main Street)

Madison County Transit

Market Basket (S. Buchanan)

Northside Dairy Haven (N. Main Street/Route 159)

Once Upon a Toy (Troy Road)

Piedmont Development (Plum Creek)

The Edge Bank (Off South Plum Street)

The Bank of Edwardsville (multiple locations)

Tina's Pet Grooming (Troy Road)

To-Do's Party Store (Troy Road)

Underground Artwork (N. Main Street)

US Bank (Rte 157 & Lewis Road)

YMCA (Esic and Goshen Road locations)

Many thanks also to the individuals who were willing to place yard signs on their property and businesses that put fliers in their windows or added us to their on-line calendars. Special thanks to Sherrie Hickman at **Creative Options Graphic Design** who designed our fliers, signs and banner, and created a new shirt design this year!



Enjoying 2011
Parkfest

ARTICLES FROM THE PAST ANSWER QUESTIONS OF TODAY

The articles here answer some of the questions we are asked most often at Leclaire Parkfest and the Goshen Market. When did they stop swimming in Leclaire Lake? Who created the Nelson Memorial Fountain? Why did Leclaire become part of Edwardsville? When did Nelson Manufacturing leave Leclaire? Here are answers from the pages of the Edwardsville Intelligencer.

January 30, 1934

Leclaire Founded by N. O. Nelson Forty Years Ago as "Model City"

Community Had Rapid Growth, Citizens Enjoying Various Benefits But Sewer Questions Forced Annexation to City.

Leclaire, the principal addition of five annexed to Edwardsville last night, was established during 1890 by the late N. O. Nelson, plumbing manufacturer. For a number of years previously, he had operated a business in St. Louis. Leclaire was for many years referred to as "the model city."

Mr. Nelson was a native of Norway, born on September 11, 1844 and came to this country when a boy of two years old. About 70 persons were in the party and they first lived in St. Joseph, Mo. Mr. Nelson served in the Civil War, engaged in business in 1872 which went through the panic of the following year. In 1877 he founded a business of his own and in 1885 began his profit sharing plans.

Mr. Nelson had visited model villages of New England states but at Godin, France, obtained many ideas for his future plans. Leclaire is named for a Frenchman who was a leader in cooperative plans.

Just previous of 1890 Mr. Nelson began looking for a new location. Edwardsville

was one of the places considered. Citizens here contributed to a fund of approximately \$20,000 and purchased 125 acres south of the city for plant and homes. The tract of corn and wheat fields were then converted into a place of industry.

Construction of shops was begun and the first 20 homes were built at once for some of the early workmen. Mr. Nelson later built a home and lived in the midst of the employes. Later a campus, club house, school and lake were provided as recreational centers for families of Leclaire and others.

Mr. Nelson founded the city along cooperative ideas. There were no bosses or city officials. The citizens lead quiet, peaceful lives. There were no police or other law enforcing officers. Peace disturbances in over 40 years have been rare.

Leclaire grew rapidly. As the workmen increased in the shops they were encouraged to become home owners. Finally business and professional men of Edwardsville became interested in Leclaire. Some of them built homes. They were furnished light, water, gas, mail service and other conveniences. Streets were laid out and maintained by the company. Sewer lines were constructed. The place became one of homes without retail business.

On November 9, 1911, Leclaire observed the twenty-first anniversary of its foundation. At that time Mr. Nelson spoke and made special comment upon the few persons who had left Leclaire after founding a home. On that occasion he said in

part, "To our good neighbors of Edwardsville, who have from first to last been friendly and approving and treated us as a half brother, I am glad to return our brotherly love. You have shown pride in us and we are proud of you."

Leclaire eventually grew to such an extent that street maintenance and other free service became a drain on the company. The sewer system was the most serious problem. Establishment of a sewer reduction plant would be prohibitive. Some of the leading citizens realized that annexation with Edwardsville was about the only solution.

Last summer at a mass gathering the plan was discussed. It became evident that a majority favored the merged (sic). Citizens of Mahler Heights, East Leclaire, Gueltig Place and Metcalf Place joined in the plan.

January 14, 1936

Monday Club Art Section (excerpt)

The Art Section of the Monday Club held its first meeting of the new year Monday afternoon, January 13. Current events which included an obituary notice on the late Victor S. Holm were given by Mrs. W. M. Warnock. Mr. Holm was a Danish sculptor who had been an instructor at Washington University for the past few years as well as a leader in St. Louis art circles for 26 years. Included in his works is the Nelson Memorial Fountain at Leclaire in Edwardsville. The memorial consists of a decorative fountain in Missouri granite and bronze with the memorial tablet and a drinking fountain on the reverse side.

Note: the Nelson Memorial Fountain, affectionately known as "Turkey-boy" is located behind the Children's Museum on Hale Avenue.

March 8, 1944

Council Notes (excerpt)

Announcement was made that a move is under way to drain and fill Leclaire Lake. It was pointed out that lakes and fish ponds are not permitted

within city limits. Several citizens are considering circulation of petition.

Note: Fortunately they didn't follow through with this consideration!

May 5, 1948

Leclaire Lake Council Subject (excerpt)

Leclaire lake was one of the subjects discussed last night at the new year's meeting of the city council, officials expressing their disapproval of any swimming in the lake and discussing means of filling the southern end which generally is without water during summer months and becomes a breeding place for mosquitoes. The question was referred to the Park Board.

Chief of Police Fred Losch, city health officer, again told the council that he was advised by state health officials last year that the lake was unfit for swimming owing to surface water from streets which drains into the lake. Plans to post notices against swimming were discussed.

City ordinances prohibit maintenance of a lake within the city. Leclaire lake was established when N. O. Nelson company located here nearly 60 years ago and once provided water for the industry. When the company transferred the grounds to the city, arrangements were made to retain the lake to provide part of the water for the industry.

January 27, 1948

N. O. Nelson Plant Here Sold to St. Louis Firm

Wagner Electric Buys Property and Equipment

Will Take Over May 1, Employ 150 Or More By Summer

The Edwardsville plant of N. O. Nelson company, the last of the manufacturing department of the company, has been sold to Wagner Electric company of St. Louis, Nelson Lawnin, executive vice-president, announced today. Simultaneously, the formal announcement was posted in different departments of the plant. The business here was established in 1890.

For a number of years the company has taken steps to discontinue the manufacture of plumbing, heating, refrigeration and industrial supplies and at the same time has been expanding the wholesaling of the various articles offered to the trade.

Plants in Bessemer, Ala., Noblesville, Ind., and St. Louis were previously sold.

Recently there were persistent rumors here that the local plant had been sold. The rumors followed inspections made by representatives looking the buildings over to ascertain whether they would be suitable for other purposes.

Lawnin said, and the announcement states, that the transaction, involving a large sum but not revealed, provides that the Wagner company take over by May 1 or sooner if arrangements can be completed. The deal includes land, buildings, the power plant, machinery and equipment. The Wagner company plans to operate the local plant as a branch of the company's present large plant on Plymouth avenue in St. Louis. Just what will be produced here has not been revealed.

The Bignall and Keeler Machine Works, including all machinery inventory, orders, etc., has been sold to John Ramming Machine Co., of St. Louis. Representatives of the Ramming company took possession of the machine department yesterday.

The new owners of the machine shop department will continue operations of it for the present without any changes in the personnel or location, the bulletin announces. Eventually the business will be moved to the company's St. Louis factory at 4591 McRee avenue. The present B. and K. line of machinery and equipment will be manufactured in that city.

The brass department of the company, generally known as the Edwardsville Brass company, will be liquidated. The equipment will be sold as soon as present orders are completed.

One of the buildings is occupied as an armory by the Edwardsville unit of Illinois National Guard. The Wagner company will need that building under future plans. The building was once used as the cabinet department for production of various articles made of wood.

Another building is presently occupied by Funck Woodworks. It was formerly the marble department of Nelson company. That building must also be vacated by the present occupants.

The announcement placed on bulletin boards today states that the Wagner Electric Co. is making plans for employment of 150 or more persons by early summer. There are about 80 persons employed in the shops at present. It is possible that many of the present workers will be retained, others coming here from St. Louis who are experienced in the production of motors and other electrical equipment.

In conclusion the announcement says, "We extend our thanks to all those loyal employes and friends who have contributed to the past success of this plant, and will do all in our power to help them make satisfactory new connections."

Note: Although Wagner Electric would operate in Edwardsville for less than 10 years, the buildings of the former Nelson factory buildings kept the Wagner name for more than half a century, becoming known as "The Wagner Complex." The buildings were abandoned from 1957 until 1964 when the property was purchased by SIU, originally as a staging area for the new Edwardsville campus. One of the last departments to leave the complex was the art department whose students retained the Wagner name with SIUE's Wagner Pottery Association.

Edwardsville Intelligencer articles are transcribed *exactly* as originally printed. Some words that appear to be typos today were common practice in the past. Examples would be Hale avenue instead of Hale Avenue or employes instead of employees.