

# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE

## **NEWSLETTER**

December 2012

Volume 22 No. 4



### **Holiday Social - December 11th**

The Friends of Leclaire Annual Holiday Social will be held at the home of William & Elizabeth Krause at 1203 Emerson Ave. on Tuesday, Dec 11, at 7:00 p.m. The appetizer/dessert potluck for members only will be a real holiday treat.

Christmas is a special time in the Krause household where guests will find more than two dozen decorated trees throughout their beautifully restored home. This dose of holiday cheer is sure to please all but the worst Scrooge...and fortunately we have none of those in Friends of Leclaire!

Members who wish to attend should bring a dish to pass. Please RSVP to wkrause86@gmail.com or call 618-540-5950.

#### Leclaire Parkfest

Teamwork does make a difference as was seen at the 21st annual Leclaire Parkfest. Dozens of volunteers, from Friends of Leclaire, the EHS Student Council, SIUE's Alpha Phi Omega and many other organizations made the day a wonderful success....plus we had phenomenal weather!

Edwardsville Parks & Recreation did a wonderful job preparing the park grounds for visitors, moving picnic tables and completing work on the rose garden in time for the festival. New Parks Department employee, Eric Hanson, was at the park all day providing invaluable assistance. The Edwardsville Police Department helped with traffic and were there for emergencies.

The only snag in the day's activities came when the pony vendor called to say their truck broke down so they couldn't make it. We know there were a number of disappointed children and for that we apologize.

### Make it a Leclaire Christmas!

Memberships: Friends of Leclaire Gift Membership \$15

Shirts: Long & short sleeved T-shirts, sweatshirts & hoodies 12-525

Books: Leclaire's history or Leclaire pictorial history \$15-\$22.50

Misc: Leclaire Magnets: (Perfect stocking stuffer at the right price!) 50¢ Leclaire Shopping Bags: (Why wrap when you can use one of these?) \$4.00

For questions or to place an order, call 618-656-1294 or send an e-mail to friends@historic-leclaire.org



## **House History Contest**

Congratulations to Tim and Valene Carter, winners of the Leclaire House History Contest! A history of their Madison Avenue home will appear in the March FOL Newsletter

This is an on-going contest for members of Friends of Leclaire. To ensimply send an e-mail to friends@historic-leclaire.org, or if you don't use computers, send a note to Friends of Leclaire, P. O. Box 644, Edwardsville, IL, 62025. Include your name, address and phone number with a note or subject line saying "House History Contest." A winner will be drawn at random in advance of each newsletter, and an article written about the history of the home.

Homeowners will be given research results, including a list of previous owners, and when possible, early photographs of the house.

Many Friends of Leclaire members are former residents or history buffs with an interest in Leclaire. As Friends of Leclaire members, you can also enter the contest and request a Leclaire house history for your parents grandparent's home. Or perhaps there is a Leclaire house that particularly interests you. Just include the address on your entry. Good luck!

### **Nelson's Historic Osage-Orange Trees to Receive Care**

need not be alarmed when they see the entrance drive to the Nelson campus workers with chainsaws among the need the most pruning. historic row of Osage-orange trees that separate Lewis and Clark Community College's Nelson Campus from Leclaire Field. Arborists will be working to preserve the trees planted by N. O. Nelson in the 1890s to separate the Leclaire factories from the campus and residential portions of Leclaire.



For the past several years dead limbs in the tree canopy has been a cause for LCCC President concern. Chapman was interested in preserving the longevity of the trees as well as addressing safety issues.

LCCC consulted with William Spradley, a certified arborist and degreed forester dedicated to preserving trees, to assess the condition of the Spradley found that Osage-oranges. most of the trees are in good condition, recommended pruning branches and thinning parts of the canopy to remove weight and stress on

Leclaire residents and historians the trees. Trees on the northwest side of

One tree on the southeast side of the drive will have to be removed because it poses a potential danger. The tree is smaller in diameter than most of the others and not directly in the row, so Spradley thinks it was probably a seedling that was not part of the original stand of trees. Much of its canopy is dead and the tree leans over, outside of the line of the other trees, so that if it fell, it would fall on cars in the parking lot, or more seriously, on the drivers or passengers of those cars.

Fortunately the tree that has to be taken down is in a dense part of the row so its loss will be less noticeable. LCCC plans to save the wood from the tree so it can be fashioned into bowls or other small articles that can be displayed at the Nelson campus.

Work on the trees will be done while the trees are dormant for winter.

In the 1800s, Osage-orange trees were regularly planted in rows to form fencing around pastures or in some of the plain states, they were grown as wind breaks. It was also planted as a crop for fence posts as the wood is disease resistant and is immune to termites. Indians, including the Osage tribe for whom it was named, valued the wood for making bows. An old wives' tale said that the large green fruit of the Osage-orange, commonly called a "hedge apple," could be placed under the bed or in basement windows to keep out bugs in the fall. Recent scientific evidence indicates there is some truth to the tale

### **About Friends of Leclaire**

Friends of Leclaire (FOL) is a nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting and enhancing the history and heritage of the Leclaire National Historic District. The organization promotes Leclaire's heritage through advocacy, education, and community involvement.

FOL conducts business meetings at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month except in December when the regular meeting is replaced with a holiday social and January when it's just too cold!

All members are welcome to attend meetings which are held in room 201 of Building N4 at the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of Lewis & Clark Community College in Edwardsville.

## **Coming Soon**

Dec 11 7 p.m. Holiday Party

Jan 8 No FOL Meeting

Feb 12 **FOL Meeting** 

FOL Meeting Mar 12

> Friends of Leclaire P. O. Box 644 Edwardsville, IL 62025 friends@historic-leclaire.org 618-656-1294

#### **December 30, 1904**

A Christmas party took place at Lehad theirs on Friday night, but Monday night the older pupils, the students at the Industrial College, had a tree and distribution of presents. The latter were unique.

Everyone was remembered, but it was stipulated that the presents must in cost be between a nickel and a dime. N. O. Nelson received a loaf of bread, W. H. Tanner, the superintendent, was handed a pair of fake spectacles and the rest of the gifts were in a similar vein.

#### June 23, 1908

Thirty young folks enjoyed a dancing claire hall Monday night. The little folks party given at Leclaire Assembly Hall on streets of Edwardsville for the next day or Saturday evening by Miss Bessie Burton. two will be under suspicion. If his face is It was in honor of her guest, Miss Ger- stained with jelly, he will probably be trude Michelet, who is here for a couple locked up. weeks. The idea of a dancing party in June is a bit daring with the temperature what it is, but the guests found Leclaire cool, and nobody missed any of the dances carded and all clamored for extras and voted the hop splendid. The chaperones were Mr. & Mrs. C. H. Burton, Mrs. W. E. Wheeler, Mrs. F. T. Weir & Mrs. W. R. Prickett.

#### **September 10, 1908**

Any boy who is seen whittling on the

Jelly, bread and pocket knives formed the booty of the robbers who entered five homes in Leclaire, a manufacturing suburb of Edwardsville, Wednesday.

At each place the pantry was the scene of chief loss. Glasses of currant and crab apple jelly were taken with bread and a half dozen pocket knives.

## Exploring the 1940 U. S. Census by Ashley Mattingly

Who walked the halls of your home in the past? What were the names of the families who laid their children to rest and celebrated holidays within your walls? These are undoubtedly questions that many current residents of Leclaire have had as most of us live in historic homes. One resource that can help you trace the residential history of your home is the United States Federal Census.

The National Archives and Records Administration holds the records of the United States Federal Census. A national census has been recorded every ten years since 1790, providing a snapshot per decade of our nation's population. As of April 2<sup>nd</sup> of this year, the 1940 census was made available to the public and is accessible for free through a variety of sources.

By 1940, Leclaire had been annexed by Edwardsville; therefore, the census taken for Leclaire was included under the Edwardsville Township. When the census was recorded, towns were divided into wards, or enumeration districts. One enumerations district was assigned to an enumerator, or census taker. Enumeration district numbers are represented by a county number and a district number separated by a dash. Leclaire primarily fell under ward five of Edwardsville, which was enumeration district 60-44.

Online resources listed with this article provide free information and original pages from census documents.

The National Archives' website is useful if the only information known about your home is the location. You can enter state, county, city and street and enumeration district information to refine your search. Additional information about census records can be found on this site, including code information to help decipher information recorded by enumerators. The FamilySearch website can be searched by resident name and/or by location.

Once you locate the census page that reveals the history of your house and its former inhabitants, you will notice that seemingly minute notations can expose interesting inter-relationships and details of daily life from the past. You will learn residents' names, ages, race, occupations, education levels, where they were born, and marital status. Household data also discloses whether the house was rented or owned and the value of the home. Two people per census page were asked supplemental questions including where their parents were born and veteran status. Interestingly, these questions were asked of everyone for censuses taken prior to 1940. Other supplemental questions include whether or not individuals were assigned a social security number, what their "usual occupations" were, and (for women) if they had been married before and number of children born.

Additionally, since the country was still suffering from the Great Depression in 1940, a section of the 1940 census was dedicated to questions surrounding employment with a focus on "emergency work," or employment through the Civilian Conservation Corps, Works Progress Administration, or National Youth Administration.

One of the families who lived in Leclaire in 1940 was the Somerlad family of 925 Troy Road. (See census page specific to Somerlads on page 4) This record reveals that Bertha Somerlad was the head of the household and she was the family member who relayed information to the enumerator, as indicated by the

encircled "X" next to her name. One can tell from the information recorded that in 1940 Bertha was "widowed" and 42 years old.\* She had two daughters: Dorothy, 21 and Betty Jean, 14. Both Bertha and Dorothy attended



The homes at 927 (left) and 925 Troy Road are shown here circa 1948. The Somerlads lived at 925 Troy Road. Photo courtesy of Dennis Brown.

four years of high school, as indicated by the code "H4," while Betty Jean had attended up to eighth grade.

The Somerlads rented their home, for which they paid \$12 per month. Although their family lived in Edwardsville in 1935, they did not live at 925 Troy Road at the time, else the census would have indicated "same house" for the requested information.

The five columns dedicated to employment status for those over fourteen years of age were specifically recorded for the week of March 24<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> of 1940. As indicated, both Bertha and Dorothy did work. The following four dashes signify that they were not employed by a "public emergency work" program, such as the CCC or WPA. They were also not "seeking work," nor did they own their own business, engage in housework for pay, attend school, prove unable to work, or "other." Betty Jean, on the other hand, was in school, as revealed by the "S."

From this record, it is revealed that Bertha worked 48 hours per week as a Sales Lady at "retail, five and ten" while Dorothy worked 44 hours per week as a typist for an



Bertha "Bert" Busick Somerlad and her daughter Betty June, circa 1938. Photo courtesy of Edward Winkle, Jr.

abstract company. They both worked 52 weeks out of the year and Bertha made an annual salary of \$768, Dorothy earned \$546.

The history of our homes transcends the boards, nails, and simple ornamentation of the structures. Families cherished one another, experienced heartache, and toiled away for each other just as we do today. If you would like to know more about the history of your house's past residents, please make use of the resources accompanying this article.

\*Note:

Additional research into the Somerlad family revealed that Bertha Somerlad was not a widow. Her husband was actually still alive at this time. There are a number of reasons why she may have told the enumerator that she was widowed instead of possibly divorced or had an estranged husband. In addition, her youngest daughter's name was Betty June instead of Betty Jean. One must keep such possible pretenses or errors in mind when performing any historical research.

#### **Sources for 1940 Census**

National Archives, Official 1940 Census Website:

1940census.archives.gov

FamilySearch, 1940 United States Federal Census:

familysearch.org/1940census

you register with the site:

National Archives, 1930 Records Search, where after entering a name and state, you can be directed to Archives.com where an image of the 1930 census will be displayed after

1940census.archives.gov/search-1930/

**National Archives Online Public Access** to view the 1940 Census Enumeration District Map of Edwardsville: research.archives.gov/description/5831623

FamilySearch, "United States Census, 1940," Bertha Somerlad, Ward 5, Edwardsville, Edwardsville Township, Madison, Illinois, United States, to view the census page containing information about the Somerlad family: https:// familysearch.org/pal:/MM9.3.1/TH-1942-27849-3160-29? cc=2000219&wc=MMY8-ZSY:n1886147754

National Archives, Research Our Records, 1940 Census Records, includes additional information about the 1940 census including questions asked on the census, enumerators' codes, and information about earlier census records: <a href="https://www.archives.gov/research/census/1940/">www.archives.gov/research/census/1940/</a>

National Archives, Prologue Magazine, Summer 2012, Vol. 44, No. 2, where you can read an article written by the author concerning the Civilian Conservation Corps and Works Progress Administration records held by the National Archives entitled "Question 22: 1940 Census Provides a Glimpse of the Demographics of the New Deal": <a href="www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/summer/question22.html">www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2012/summer/question22.html</a>