



# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE NEWSLETTER

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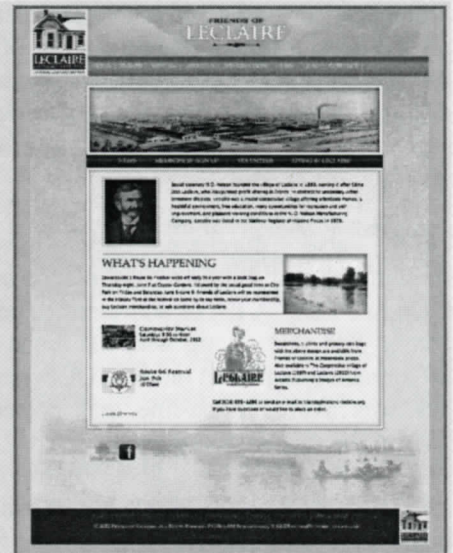
## NEW WEBSITE AND A NEW LOOK!

We are hopeful that by the time you receive this newsletter, the new Friends of LeClaire web site will finally be launched! The new site will hold more educational material on LeClaire and its founder, N. O. Nelson, and hopefully be more user-friendly. With the website comes a new look for all our publications, including this newsletter.

Will Krause has coordinated this project with Adam Celuch of Inlandesign. The updated logo was designed by Friends of LeClaire member and professional designer, Sherrie Hickman of Creative Options Design.

Whether you're a resident curious about your neighborhood, a student needing a topic for a term paper or a history buff, we think you'll find something to like at the new site. The web address remains the same: [www.historic-leclaire.org](http://www.historic-leclaire.org)

As the old site goes away we have to give a big thanks to Steve Brockmeyer, who even though he moved from LeClaire a number of years ago, has continued to keep our web site up-to-date. Traffic on the site has increased significantly during the six years he has been taking care of the site. Thank you, Steve!



The election of officers for Friends of LeClaire was held at the annual meeting in March. Those listed below were elected to serve for the coming year. Their service to the organization is greatly appreciated:

President	Michael Reinhardt
Vice-President	William Krause
Treasurer	James Milgrim
Secretary	Kathleen Krishnan
Trustee	Syvella Gregory
Trustee	Cindy Reinhardt
Trustee	Jennifer Rutherford

Edna Grench retired from the Friends of LeClaire Board this spring but we're sure she'll continue to participate in Friends of LeClaire activities for many years to come. Edna has always assisted with LeClaire Parkfest and annually takes a turn at the Goshen Market. Her many years of service to the organization are greatly appreciated.

To reach Friends of LeClaire, call President Mike Reinhardt at 618-656-1294 or send an e-mail to [friends@historic-leclaire.org](mailto:friends@historic-leclaire.org).  
[www.historic-leclaire.org](http://www.historic-leclaire.org)



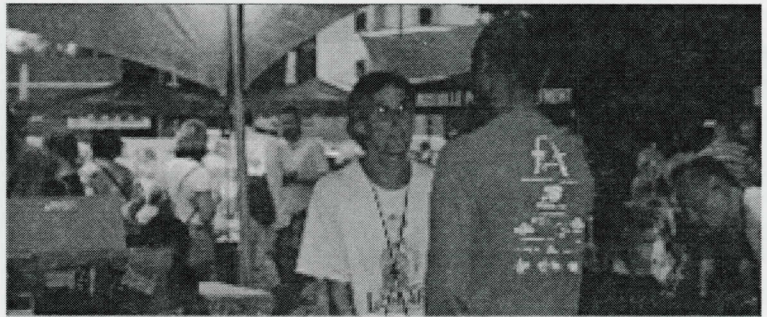
## LECLAIRE YARD SALE

The First Annual Leclaire Neighborhood Yard Sale was a resounding success. There are a few wrinkles to work out, but the Saturday before Memorial Day has been set as the date each year. There were a number of homes that held sales the same day that did not know to contact us, so we'd like to correct that next year. The group as a whole has better advertising if we have a larger number of people hosting sales on our web site!

All advertising expenses for the sale were covered by Friends of Leclaire who purchased 50 directional yard signs that can be re-used each year pointing down streets that advertised sales. The bright signs say simply "Annual Leclaire Yard Sales, Saturday, 8 AM – 2 PM" with a large arrow and the web address where details of the sales could be found. (Thanks again to designer Sherrie Hickman for designing the signs and finding an affordable manufacturer.)

FOL also purchased ads in the Intelligencer and the Edge and placed an ad on Craig's List. A list of addresses of homes hosting yard sales along with the items they had for sale was posted on the FOL web site. This was available on-line and posted at many of the sale locations.

The neighborhood yard sale is something people have been requesting for a long time, and although FOL is primarily interested in preserving the story of the Leclaire National Historic District, they were happy to coordinate this event for the neighborhood.



## EVENT SPOTLIGHT

### Route 66 Festival Coming Soon!

Edwardsville's Route 66 Festival kicks off early this year with a Sock Hop on Thursday night, June 7 at Crystal Gardens, followed by the usual good time at City Park on Friday and Saturday, June 8-June 9. Friends of Leclaire will be represented in the History Tent at the festival so come by to say hello, renew your membership, buy Leclaire merchandise, or ask questions about Leclaire. For a complete Route 66 schedule, go to [www.cityofedwardsville.com](http://www.cityofedwardsville.com).

### June 24th Band Concert

FOL will have the concession stand at the annual Leclaire Park Band Concert by the Edwardsville Municipal Band at 4 PM on Sunday, June 24th. Please stop by to see us and enjoy the music.

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

If you are able to donate an hour or two of your time to Friends of Leclaire we will welcome you with open arms and thank you profusely! We LOVE our volunteers!

Gardeners, writers, people to represent Friends of Leclaire at Goshen Market, Route 66 or other venues, who can give an hour or a small block of time, would be very much appreciated.

To volunteer, call 656-1294 or send an e-mail to: [friends@historic-leclaire.org](mailto:friends@historic-leclaire.org).

## 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 PM on the second Tuesday of each month except in December and January when it's just too cold!

All members are welcome to attend business 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

- |         |                                    |
|---------|------------------------------------|
| June 8  | New Web Site is Launched           |
| June 8  | 5 pm – Dusk FOL at Route 66        |
| June 9  | 10 am – Dusk FOL at Route 66       |
| June 16 | 8 am – Noon FOL at Goshen Market   |
| June 23 | 9 am Leclaire Park Gardeners       |
| June 24 | 4 pm Band Concert at Leclaire Park |
| July 21 | 8 am – Noon FOL at Goshen Market   |
| Aug 18  | 8 am – Noon FOL at Goshen Market   |



## ARTICLES FROM THE PAST

Edwardsville Democrat  
March-June 1890

The editor of the Edwardsville Democrat although very supportive of the Leclair enterprise, became more than upset that the village was not called "South Edwardsville" as Editor Ansel L. Brown had proposed. His editorial comments in news articles during the early months leading up to Leclair's official Founder's Day are both humorous and informative. Articles usually contained only one paragraph so with one exception an indented paragraph represents a separate article. Notes are provided in parenthesis where explanations are needed

March 1

It was well said by Senator Hadley, in his speech before the citizens meeting, held at the court house Monday night, the location of Mr. Nelson's Co. and Mr. Dunstedter's Car Wheel Works in our midst, will in five years time, make Edwardsville the most populous town in the county. Alton not excepted. And the beauty of it is that the increase will be made up of a very desirable class of people – "skilled mechanics," if you please.

March 15

It is a mistaken idea that Edwardsville has been on the point of starvation, and that the Nelson Co. is the Moses that has lifted it out of the wilderness, as some local newspapers would lead those residing elsewhere to infer. The truth is that there is no place in the state that has been or is in a healthier condition morally, socially, physically and financially than this same Edwardsville.

The papers have been signed, sealed and delivered in the matter of the location of the Nelson Co-operative Manufacturing Co. in this city. The substance of the agreement is that it is under bond to erect a plant to cost not less than \$50,000, work on which will begin at once, and the enterprise will be maintained until at least \$250,000 have been expended for wages. When those things are accomplished we opine that our people will be pretty well satisfied that they have received their investment and a good, big rate of interest on \$20,000. South Edwardsville is the name by which

the Nelson Co's addition will be known.

March 22

A party of the employees of the Nelson Manufacturing Co. visited this city last Sunday to take a look at their prospective houses. The party consisted of gentlemen, all well dressed. If the other employees of the concern show up equal to them then Edwardsville loses nothing by such accessions to its population.

Mail matter is already arriving and addressed to "N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Co., Edwardsville, Ill." How does it sound at Collinsville and Alton?

March 29

N. O. Nelson and his architect, E. A. Cameron, and civil engineer Julius Pitzman, of St. Louis, were here Wednesday, arranging the preliminaries for immediate work on the big plant. We understand that the architect will reside here permanently.

June 7

No one sincerely interested in this city will permit themselves to refer to the Manufacturing Co's project as "Nelsonville." If it must be otherwise designated, let it be South Edwardsville. The former name don't go here. This is official. The newspapers published in the "Limestone Village" (Alton) will please make a note of it before they begin to harp on that string.

June 21

The Nelson Manufacturing Co. will give its employes an excursion to Edwardsville today. A committee of citizens and the National band will meet the train at the depot. (The excursion was postponed until June 28.)

June 28

LECLAIRE. In our reference to the Nelson excursion it will be seen that our St. Louis friends have decided to christen their addition to our city "Leclair." The (Edwardsville) Republican desires to enter an emphatic negative to this action. While all honor is due the distinguished Frenchman who inaugurated the co-operative plan of work between employer and employees, still the citizens of Edwardsville who put up their good money to secure the location of the Nelson Works here, are entitled to some consideration.

The new addition should be named "South Edwardsville" so that the city would derive all the benefit possible in the way of advertising. We want to say right here that, had the fact been known that Mr. Nelson did not intend to incorporate with us before the list was circulated, the committee would have experienced considerable difficulty in raising the \$20,000 bonus. The Republican believes in being outspoken and honest in all matters of public interest, and we desire to offer an earnest protest in this matter, hoping that the same has not gone so far that it cannot be remedied. Give us the benefit of the name, Mr. Nelson, South Edwardsville, by all means – Edwardsville Republican.

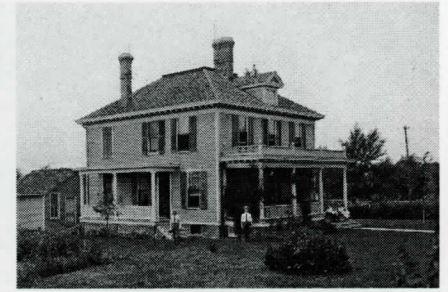
We heartily accord with the views expressed by our worthy contemporary and desire to add that when the announcement, "Leclair," was made, had Mr. Nelson noticed the cold shudder that went over all of the Edwardsville people, gathered to pay him honor, and which was repeated by everyone throughout the city, so soon as the news passed along, he would probably have made an effort to discover the cause, which he would have had no difficulty in ascertaining is that it was advocated and desired by everyone here without exception, that the premises should be known as South Edwardsville. Truly, Mr. Nelson did a wise and commendable thing in considering in connection with his enterprise some means of paying high tribute to the originator of the grand idea upon which his company is pushing an alarming business, and, doubtless he could have and yet can find some place connected with the grand scheme that will serve equally as well to accomplish that end and give to our people all they ask in recompense – directly for their outlay of \$20,000. We sincerely trust that Mr. Nelson may take the trouble to look into this matter and if he does he will certainly comply with the request of our people in the premises, otherwise we are positive a breach between the two places will be created that will work irreparable injury to both. This is important, Mr. Nelson.



## THE N.O. NELSON HOUSE

402 Jefferson Road

*A history of the house built for Leclaire's founder, N. O. Nelson, was recently published in the Edwardsville Intelligencer as part of the Edwardsville Historic Preservation Commission's series of Edwardsville building histories. The eight-part series runs every May in conjunction with National Historic Preservation Month. Below is a reprint of the article:*



Although many local residents are under the impression that N. O. Nelson moved to his cooperative Village of Leclaire immediately after it was founded in 1890, that is not the case. Nelson and his family had an active social and political life in St. Louis. He was a city councilman and involved in many philanthropic programs to assist the poor. His wife, Almeria, and daughters, Julia and Charlotte, were volunteers in a number of causes assisting the less fortunate, but also spent much of their time hosting and attending parties with St. Louis's social elite. Their home on Washington Avenue was large enough to comfortably accommodate well over 100 guests. They often travelled to Europe, California or other destinations, especially during hot St. Louis summers.

So for over seven years, Nelson continued to work at the St. Louis office of N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company, visiting Leclaire several times each month via train. When he needed to spend the night, he stayed at the Leclaire Club House or with Manager Neustadt at his home on Hale Avenue. The decision to move his own family to Leclaire wasn't made until 1897. By this time Nelson's daughters had both had their "coming out" in St. Louis, and his daughter, Julia, was married to Louis D. Lawnin. Mrs. Nelson and Julia Lawnin, who moved to Leclaire at the same time, were welcomed into Edwardsville society at a reception on November 2, 1897 hosted by Mrs. W. F. L. Hadley at her St. Louis Street home.

The Federal style home at 402 Jefferson Road was built for the Nelson family on a large lot between Hale Avenue and Holyoake Road by contractor Charles D. Hill. The spacious grounds provided space for an orchard at the rear of the house and for many well-tended flower beds that Nelson took care of himself when at home. The house was often pictured in magazines and newspapers published in this country and in Europe.

The Nelson house was larger than many of the surrounding workmen's cottages and elegantly furnished in order to accommodate the large number of visitors to Leclaire. Academics, leaders in the cooperative movement, and others interested in the internationally known Village of Leclaire were welcomed to his home. In one year, 1899, Nelson's guests included Jane Addams of Hull House, poet and activist Charlotte Perkins Gilman and famed socialist Samuel "Golden Rule" Jones of Ohio, to name a few. All gave free lectures at the Leclaire school house and stayed as guests of the Nelson family. As a director of the World's Fair in St. Louis, Nelson's family also hosted visitors from all over the world in their Leclaire home.

Although Mr. Nelson built his house in Leclaire in 1897, he lived there full-time for only a dozen years. Soon after moving to Leclaire he began taking regular trips to California and New Orleans where he was involved in several philanthropic projects including a large grocery cooperative to feed the poor of New Orleans at cost. By 1910 was living in New Orleans, with only occasional visits to Leclaire where his family, including his wife, still resided.

During his Leclaire years though, Nelson was fully engaged in all the activities of village life. He could often be seen serving as umpire at a ball game at Leclaire field, at village concerts and lectures or tending his garden. He especially enjoyed the children and sponsored the children's gardening club. He even took his turn sitting at the bedside of workers who were ill.

Mrs. Nelson, who was a philanthropist in her own right, died in December, 1918. The Nelson home was then passed to Nelson's daughter Charlotte and her husband Dr. Edward Burroughs, a local dentist. After Dr. Burrough's death, his widow shared the home with her daughter Winifred (Winnie) and son-in-law, William Southwick who were married in 1952.

Bill Southwick was an interior designer and anxious to get started on remodeling the Nelson house, but his mother-in-law, Charlotte, at first wouldn't hear of it. Eventually she relented, but he was not allowed to touch her rooms at the front of the house overlooking Jefferson Road where she entertained her friends.

Southwick replaced the simple fence with a tall wrought iron enclosure containing elaborate gates on either end of a circular drive that led to the new façade of the house. The single-story porch was removed and four massive pillars installed that held up a two-story veranda. As a result the front of the house after these renovations in the mid-1950s presented a very different appearance than in Nelson's time.

At the rear of the house there were additional changes. The most notable was an in-ground swimming pool and privacy enclosure where the Southwicks entertained. In the 1960s the back portion of the yard, what would have been Nelson's orchard, was sold off as two lots, one on Hale Avenue and the other on Holyoake Road. Houses from Vandalia and Fillmore Streets that were in the way of expansion for the National Food Store were moved onto these lots.

The last of Nelson's family moved from his old home in the early 1960s, but the names of Nelson and Leclaire are still well known today in the Edwardsville area. N. O. Nelson named his village "Leclaire," after the father of profit sharing in France, Edmund Jean Leclaire. Leclaire's name is not only included in the Leclaire National Historic District, it is also associated with a school as well as a church. The Nelson Memorial fountain, installed near the school house in 1924 two years after Nelson's death, was the first local landmark to bear Nelson's name. Today there is also the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of Lewis and Clark Community College, the N. O. Nelson elementary school and Nelson Avenue in Leclaire, named for Nelson posthumously.