



FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE

NEWSLETTER

March 2014

Volume 24 No. 2

FOL ANNUAL MEETING MARCH 11 - 7 PM

The annual meeting of the Friends of LeClaire will be held Tuesday, March 11 at 7 pm in Room 201 Building N4 at the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of LCCC in LeClaire.

The meeting will include an election of officers for the coming year. The nomination committee has a slate of officers prepared but nominations are welcome from the floor. Call 656-1294 if you are interested in running for a board office or would like to become a Friends of LeClaire volunteer.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

FOL hosts a booth at the Goshen Market on the third Saturday of each month, May through October. With enough volunteers, no one has to work more than one Saturday per year. Novices are usually paired with a veteran to hand out information about LeClaire.

FOL also is present at the Route 66 Festival in June. Volunteers sign up for 2-3 hour shifts on Friday evening, June 13, or on Saturday, June 14. It's a lot of fun and you get to meet some wonderful Edwardsville volunteers involved with other area history and preservation organizations that share the history tent.

Have an unusual schedule and a green thumb? Gardeners are always needed and appreciated. FOL gardeners help with flower beds at LeClaire park. If you adopt a bed, you can work on it at your own pace and when your schedule allows. Please call 656-1294 to volunteer for any of the above.

2013 PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT

Time is a jet plane, it moves too fast Bob Dylan

Bob's right. It seems like I just wrote 2012's report. The Friends of LeClaire were once again very busy. We held our 22nd Parkfest in October. We were blessed with fantastic weather. I don't know how much longer we can be so fortunate. We had more vendors than ever and large crowds. I received many compliments at Parkfest on the event, the park, and

the small town, friendly atmosphere. One new vendor said "Everyone is so nice."

It takes a lot of help to put on such an event. Our volunteers do a great job every year. And thanks to Cindy Reinhardt for coordinating Parkfest again this year. Among her many tasks is raising funds. This year we

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We continue to be astonished by the generosity of area residents who share their vintage photos of LeClaire. The photo above was copied from an original loaned to us by Dorothy Spindler Solter several years ago. It is of her LeClaire Kindergarten class circa 1919-1920. Dorothy recently passed away at the age of 100.

ANNUAL LECLAIRE

YARD SALE

SATURDAY • 8-2

Saturday, May 17

www.historic-leclaire.org

3RD ANNUAL LECLAIRE YARD SALE

Although it seems that it will never arrive, spring is right around the corner which means the annual LeClaire Yard Sale is coming soon. The sale is from 8 am -2 pm on Saturday, May 17, the third Saturday in May. Participants hold sales at their home and collect all the proceeds from their sale. There is no charge to participate and you need not be a member of Friends of LeClaire.

FOL places advertisements in local newspapers and prints fliers but we need your help to make the advertising effective. If you plan to participate, please call or send a note to Friends of LeClaire at the number and/or address listed below to let us know your LeClaire address and the items you will have for sale. Larger items will be included in the newspaper ads, and all items will be included in a list on the FOL web site. Please contact FOL by May 6th for yard signs and to be included on the list.

Friends of LeClaire ♦ P. O. Box 644 ♦ Edwardsville, IL 62025

www.historic-leclaire.org ♦ friends@historic-leclaire.org ♦ 618-656-1294

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Call 618-656-1294 or send an e-mail to friends@historic-leclaire.org with story ideas or comments on the newsletter. Your opinion counts with us!

JOIN FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE!

Show your support for the work of FOL by joining the organization for just \$15 per year. Members need not live in Leclaire. Send a check payable to Friends of Leclaire to the address at the bottom of page 1 along with your name, address, phone and e-mail address.

Additional information is available on our web site.

President's Annual Report (Continued from Page 1)

received an unexpected and very welcome gift of \$500 from Alderman Keith Short. Thanks to the City of Edwardsville for its support. The Parks and Police Departments are also very helpful.

Our quarterly newsletter is delivered to all the households in Leclaire. Though this involves extra cost and effort, we feel it is very important to inform the residents of the historical significance of our neighborhood and to keep them informed of what is currently taking place here. Thanks to Cindy Reinhardt for a great newsletter. The house history articles have proved to be a very popular feature. We have received several new memberships from people whose homes have been researched. Thanks also to Jen Rutherford for coordinating the delivery of the newsletter to our volunteers, who deliver it to the approximately 430 houses.

Will Krause does a great job as membership chair (and as the tour conductor on the trolley rides at Parkfest). Also thanks to Will and Cindy for maintaining our website (www.historic-leclaire.org).

We had our usual events this year: the 2nd Leclaire neighborhood yard sale, booths on the third Saturday of the month at the Goshen Market, a table at the History Tent of the Route 66 Festival, and a water station at Leclaire Park for the Bonifest 5k. Thanks to all our volunteers who helped at these events and the Edwardsville High School Student Council Member who helped with the water station. Unfortunately, the Edwardsville Municipal Band concert in June was rained out.

I thank everyone who helped beautify Leclaire Park with donations and/or hard work. This year Scott Reed joined Jim Milgrim and me in watering and planting. hostas,

forsythias, mums, roses and lilies along with the annuals. The gazebo on Madison Avenue was painted and lilies planted around it. Mulch was added to the memorial garden. Thanks go to Bob and Mary Blain for tending the waterfall area. And the Garden Club maintains the bed around the bandstand and does plantings in the spring and the fall. And, of course, the Parks Department deserves credit for all the work they do at Leclaire Park, as well as at the other 16 parks in Edwardsville.

This year new Leclaire street banners were put up by the Public Works Department. The Edwardsville Beautification and Trees Commission added daffodils and other plants to the berm by the Leclaire ball field parking lot with the help of Friends of Leclaire volunteers. The Blains designated the Friends of Leclaire for memorials in honor of Ricky Kuhn, who often strolled through the park and neighborhood.

Thanks to Sherrie Hickman for hosting our holiday social. Everyone had a great time and enjoyed seeing her beautiful home, especially the guests who had previously lived or visited there.

I spend a lot of time in these annual reports giving thanks. I consider myself very fortunate to have so many people, named and unnamed, to thank. All of the above activities couldn't have been accomplished without our enthusiastic members and an exceptional board of directors: Will Krause - vice-president, Kathy Krishnan - secretary, Jim Milgrim - treasurer, and our three trustees: Syvella Gregory, Cindy Reinhardt, and Jen Rutherford.

And, finally, thank you to all our loyal members who renew year after year. And we welcome our new members. We consider your memberships to be votes of confidence in our efforts to promote the Leclaire National Historic District.

President Mike Reinhardt

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 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 ~

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|------------------|----------------------------------|
| Mar 11 | FOL Annual Meeting |
| Apr 8 | FOL Business Meeting |
| May 13 | FOL Business Meeting |
| May 17 | Annual Leclaire Yard Sale |
| May 17 | FOL at Goshen Market |
| Jun 13-14 | FOL at Route 66 Festival |

PERSONAL LECLAIRE HISTORY

Meeting people with personal knowledge of LeClaire history is always exciting, but one lucky encounter last summer resulted in the wonderful stories you will read below.

Carolyn Dawson, of East Alton, stopped by the LeClaire booth at the Goshen Market one Saturday last summer and spoke to Mike Reinhardt about the history of her mother, grandparents and great-grandparents in

LeClaire. Mike gave her a phone number for FOL and told her we would love to make copies of her photographs and hear her stories.

The second week of February she called, then stopped by with a treasure-trove of LeClaire history, not only photographs, but also memories written by her mother who was born in LeClaire in 1909. We were given

permission to copy all the materials.

The stories and family history are the subject of this newsletter. But if you want to read more, Virginia Pierson Scherer's memoirs, lightly edited for privacy, have been posted to our web site. Thank you Carolyn, for your willingness to share your fascinating family history!

THE PIERSON AND CARROLL FAMILIES OF LECLAIRE

The Pierson Family

George Henry Pierson was born in Alton, Illinois in 1877, the son of Norton and Josephine Landolt Pierson. In 1885, in the span of four months, both his parents died, leaving four young children.

George was taken to the orphanage in Alton. Little is known of his life after that until he married Anna "Gertrude" Carroll in September, 1905, at her home near Alhambra. Shortly after the marriage, they moved into their new house at 820 Troy Road in LeClaire. George was an employee of the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company, working as a bookkeeper. He would remain an employee of the company until his retirement in the early 1940s.



Wedding portrait of George Henry Pierson and Gertrude Anna Carroll.

families with wide-spread connections throughout the area.

In 1911, Thomas and Caroline retired from farming and built a house in LeClaire at 949 Hale Avenue. Six months after moving into the new home, Thomas died at the age of 66. After Thomas's death, George and Gertrude with their daughter, Virginia Ann, moved into the Hale Avenue house with her mother and rented out their little house on Troy Road. The following year, George and Gertrude's daughter, Laurine Marie, was born, at home as was the custom at that time, and their family was complete.

Life on Hale Avenue

Virginia Pierson was born in 1909 and moved to Hale Avenue when she was three and a half years old. Her earliest memory of the

house is her grandfather's funeral service. He was "laid out" in the parlor and a funeral spray with black ribbon hung on the door to let people know they were grieving a loved one.

The large seven-room house was fairly new, but still had the inconveniences of the time. Baths were taken in a kitchen bath tub filled with water heated on the stove. Window shades were drawn and doors fastened so the females of the household could bathe in privacy. Then George, the only man in the household, took his turn, usually in the same water. The kitchen stove made that room the warmest in the house for bathing.

The Pierson's kept a few chickens in the yard and had a large garden for fresh produce. They ordered groceries from the LeClaire Cooperative Store, located near the factory buildings. Groceries were delivered, sometimes daily, and the bill paid at the end of the week. Virginia wrote about her father purchasing treats when he paid the bill, so she made a point of meeting him after work to go to the store with him on those days. The grocery deliveryman would bring in the groceries and even unpack them into the ice box if no one was at home. Milk was delivered separately, perhaps from one of the dairies in the neighborhood. The Staaf Dairy was right behind them on Holyoake Road.

Another important delivery was ice for their ice box, sort of a refrigerator without electricity. The ice was placed in the upper part of the insulated box with a tray below to catch the water from the melting ice. The tray was emptied regularly until George devised a pipe passing from the ice box tray through the floor to the basement where the water was collected and later used for laundry.

Many houses in LeClaire didn't have furnaces, using coal stoves for heat in the main rooms and, if there was a second floor, floor vents to allow some of the heat to rise to the upper story rooms. The Carrolls could afford a furnace in their new home, but it was some time before a furnace was installed in the Pierson's Troy Road house. By this time every house had electricity, but not as we know it today. Having electricity generally meant there was a ceiling light in most room, likely a single bulb.

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Thomas Carroll House: 949 Hale Avenue

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in the yard under the clothes line. Their mother would put a blanket over the lines to form a little tea house and provide refreshments. Virginia writes about the day their tea party was interrupted when the mules from the mines somehow got loose and stampeded into their yard.



Gertrude Pierson with daughters Virginia and Laurine (baby) in LeClaire. Circa 1913.

The entrance to the Madison Mine was located near where Market Basket keeps their landscaping materials today. Mule power was used to operate some of the equipment down in the mine, and because it was too difficult to bring the animals up and down each day, the animals for the most part lived in the mine. When they occasionally were brought to the surface, they were nearly blind from living in the poorly lit mines. As they ran into the Pierson yard that day, Mrs. Pierson ran to snatch up her girls and bring them into the house for safety as the mules destroyed the family garden before they were caught.

Another pastime was fishing or catching crawdads at LeClaire Lake. Virginia wrote of capturing a pail full of crawdads and bringing them home. Her mother refused to cook them, so they fed them to the chickens, but then their eggs tasted like crawdads.

Virginia attended kindergarten and first grade at the LeClaire Schoolhouse, walking the half mile to the school by herself, or sometimes with her father if their schedules matched. But when she started second grade, she then had to walk one and a half miles to Columbus School on Kansas. To make it a faster trip, she wore her roller skates when she could.

Like almost everyone else in town, the family was accustomed to walking. They attended St. Mary's Catholic Church which was then located on Park Street, a two mile walk (each way) every Sunday, as well as for confirmation classes or ladies socials in the heat of summer and the cold of winter. Virginia's high school class was the first to graduate from Edwardsville's new high school on

West Street. That too would have been quite a walk. The family purchase a car when Virginia was 12, about 1920, but that would not have been used for trips to school.

Leaving LeClaire

Virginia met her future husband, John Scherer, a patternmaker at Commonwealth Steel in Granite City, in the late 1920s. They married in 1929 and celebrated their wedding reception at the house on Hale Avenue. They set up housekeeping in Granite City and their son, John, Jr., whom they called "Jack" was born 11 months after their wedding. But the following years would be difficult ones for them as John was laid off for two years during the Depression. The folks on Hale Avenue and John's parents in Granite City helped the young couple survive the Depression. George Pierson's wages at the N. O. Nelson Company and their large garden kept the family at 949 Hale Avenue financially safe.

Because they couldn't afford childcare nor a suitable apartment for a child, Jack spent most of his first two years of life with his grandparents on Hale Avenue. His parents visited as often as possible and were greatly relieved when John was rehired at Commonwealth and they could resume a normal life.

Gertrude's mother, Caroline Dzensolewski Carroll, died at her home on September 29, 1935. Funeral services were held at the house, followed by a second service at St. Mary's Church. George, Gertrude and their younger daughter continued to live at 949 Hale Avenue after her death. But after Laurine married in 1944, George and Gertrude decided to move back to their little house on Troy Road. George was retired by then, and with their family grown, they no longer needed the space.



Caroline Dzenowleski Carroll (1847-1935)

The Hale Avenue house was sold in 1946 to the John and Virginia McGee family who later sold it to the current owners; just three owners in over one hundred years.

Edwardsville Intelligencer
3 May 1946

For Sale—7 room frame dwelling, located 949 Hale ave., Edwardsville, Ill., full basement, garage, lot size 100x190; fully modern and in excellent repair. Owner occupied. Possession in 30days.

The house on Troy Road stayed in the family until shortly after Gertrude passed away in 1950. At that time George went to live with his daughters in Granite City, rotating between their homes until his death in 1954.

The above story highlights some of the LeClaire related history of

the Carroll and Pierson families. There is much more to their story. Thomas Jefferson Carroll was a prominent Madison County farmer. You can read his story in the Centennial History of Madison County on pages 1178-1179. Virginia Pierson Scherer's wonderful *Memories* has many more wonderful stories detailing Depression life, and follow her career as a teacher and later as a successful artist. It can be found on the FOL web site at www.historic-leclaire.org. If you do not have a computer, please call 656-1294 and we can make arrangements for you to borrow a copy. It's a story about a family of faith, with enormous reserves of strength and talent that pulled them through some dark times with a sense of humor fully intact.

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John Scherer and his bride, Virginia Pierson Scherer, with wedding party on the steps of her parents home at 949 Hale Avenue. The wedding reception was held at the house. September 10, 1929.