



# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE

## NEWSLETTER

April 2018

Volume 28 No. 1

### MANY THANKS!

We are fortunate that members of Friends of Leclaire are so generous with their time and talents. Since the last newsletter Bob and Ellen Nickrent again organized the Luminaria in Leclaire event in December that was very well received. Thank you too or all who helped set up and take down the lights! We are also grateful for the donation of hot chocolate by Sacred Grounds Café.

And a big “Thank You” to Mark and Beth Hartmann for hosting the FOL holiday social at their home on Madison Avenue. The party is always a great time to meet and greet old and new friends... and the food is good too!

### SOMETHING NEW! FOL SOCIAL HOUR

Members of Friends of Leclaire recently met at Recess Brewery to discuss their vision for Leclaire Park. What they discovered (besides the topic of the meeting) was that it was a very enjoyable experience! At the March FOL meeting, President Rob Nickrent said, “Why not meet more often in places that serve alcohol, even if we don’t have any Leclaire business to discuss?” The idea met with hearty approval. Plans are being made for a gathering at Recess Brewery. Watch the FOL Facebook page, Historic Leclaire, for dates to be announced. Recess Brewery does not serve food, but invites people to bring their own.

### LECLAIRE HOUSE RESEARCH

If you want to research your Leclaire house, local historian Cindy Reinhardt has resources that may save you time. Reinhardt, who has been studying Leclaire since 1994, provided information for the Leclaire housing survey a number of years ago. Call 618-656-1294 before starting your search. She can provide information from her indexes and a “how to” research worksheet that will help you get started.

### LECLAIRE HOUSE HISTORY

There was no room for a house history in this edition of the FOL Newsletter, but in May the George Mahler Home at 1103 Troy Road will be one of the buildings featured in HPC’s annual series in recognition of National Historic Preservation Month. A link to the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* article will be posted to the FOL Facebook page.

### CHANGE COMING FOR TROY ROAD



The City of Edwardsville has announced that most of Troy Road through Leclaire will be improved this fall. It will cause some inconvenience for a few months, but residence will enjoy the smooth surface and the improved drainage in the future.

These improvements brought to mind how much Troy Road has changed since the above photograph was taken in 1921. The view is looking north on Troy Road from the intersection with Hale Avenue. (The house seen on the right is the Lyman house at 930 Holyoake Road.)

In 1901 the first electric street car arrived in Leclaire and was celebrated with cheers as well as whistles blowing at the Madison Mine (near present day Market Basket) and at the N. O. Nelson factories in Leclaire. The East St. Louis and Suburban Railway line ran down the center of Troy Road until 1928 when the streetcar lost favor and the automobile became king. Not surprising is that this coincided with the beginnings of Route 66 in Edwardsville in 1926.

The streetcar system came to Edwardsville in 1899, but the connection through Leclaire to Collinsville was not completed for another two years. It connected Leclaire residents to St. Louis (via the Eads Bridge) and to many east side communities in Madison, St. Clair, and Monroe counties. The streetcar, also known as the Interurban, allowed riders to commute to work in St. Louis, inspired the trolley league (baseball teams that competed with neighboring towns) and connected families who otherwise had to make long trips via horse and buggy.

On October 15, 1928, the Interurban was replaced with bus service. The *Edwardsville Intelligencer* reported that “automobiles and hard road came along and ruined the business.”

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# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE - ANNUAL REPORT

As we approach our annual meeting I thought it would be worthwhile to provide a brief recap of this past year as well as look where the Friends of Leclaire is headed in the future.

Of course many of us consider Leclaire Park the heart of our community, and the Friends of Leclaire has always played a significant role as the unofficial guardian of "our" park. This year was no different, as the friends spent many hours pulling weeds, planting flowers and trees, and cleaning up. One of the least glamorous (and smelly) jobs we performed was the occasional Saturday morning clean-up of trash from the lake - a dirty job, but as they say "somebody's gotta do it". Special thanks are due to the Reed family, who once again adopted the daylily bed and the plantings around the restrooms, and Andi Smith, who decided the southeast side of the park needed a little love so created a new flower bed. Unfortunately some of our younger visitors take delight in chucking bricks from the retaining walls into the lake. Luckily we have Mark Hartman and Mike Reinhardt who probably don't get as big a kick out of fishing said bricks out of the water and gluing the wall back together, but spent a few Saturdays doing just that anyway. And of course our former president, Mike Reinhardt, spends so much time working in the park that I'm sure many people just assume he's an employee of the Parks Department.

All of our work and that of dedicated Edwardsville Parks and Recreation Department employees has obviously paid off as more and more people recognize that Leclaire Park is a special place. It seemed that every weekend this summer saw the park alive with yoga classes, weddings, birthday parties, picnics, etc.

This year we were grateful for some major improvements made by the Parks Department. We saw the Madison Avenue shoreline rebuilt, installation of a new sidewalk, and a sad moment when the "Leaning Sycamore" finally died and was taken down in September. I can't imagine how many kids had walked out on its trunk to fish or just for the fun of it over the years.

So, what else did the Friends of Leclaire do this past year? Well among other things we planted a tree at the Children's Museum, hosted a monthly table at the Goshen Market, operated a water station for the Bonifest 5K ("shout out" to the EHS student council which was a huge help as always), participated in the Route

66 Festival, and hosted four significant events! Although there has been a Leclaire summer band concert for many years, this was just the second year FOL has hosted a free ice cream social in conjunction with the concert and the third year for our Luminaria walk in December, both of which were great successes. We also enjoyed our usual fun holiday party - hosted this year by the Hartmans.



*President Rob Nickrent cheerfully pulling trash from Leclaire Lake last spring!*

Of course the big event each year is Leclaire Parkfest, and this year's was absolutely OUTSTANDING! Our chairperson Shawn McCue, along with Theresa Morrison, Andi Smith and others spent an enormous amount of time preparing for this event and it showed. We had great vendors, great food, great entertainment and a great crowd. It was a little scary when we began gathering by the bandstand at 7:00 a.m. in a cold misty rain, but the sky cleared over Leclaire just in time for the festivities to begin. I think Mr. Nelson may have had his eye on the weather for us.

Sadly I can't talk about Leclaire in 2017 without mentioning the passing of two of our founding members, Mary Blain and Jim Fralinger. Mary was a joyful presence in the neighborhood and an active member of FOL and is sorely missed. Jim had not been active in recent years, but made significant contributions to Leclaire over the years. (see article)

So what's next? That depends on our members. The Friends of Leclaire is always looking for ideas, suggestions and of course - volunteers! We have a few ideas and projects being discussed but are always open to new ideas - just drop me a message, call or better yet come to a meeting!

I'm amazed that almost all of the work detailed above is done mostly by a hearty band of a dozen or so passionate volunteers. Leclaire would not be what it is today without the efforts of Mike and Cindy Reinhardt, Sherri Hickman, Andi Smith, Al and Kim Pauli, Jim Milgrim, Theresa Morrison, Mark and Beth Hartman, Shawn McCue and Tim Snell, and of course, Will and Liz Krause. I'm sure I've missed others, but please don't doubt that we appreciate the efforts of all those involved with the Friends of Leclaire, including those whose financial support makes much of our work possible.

Thanks again to all, and here's to an even better 2018!

*FOL President, Rob Nickrent*

## 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!

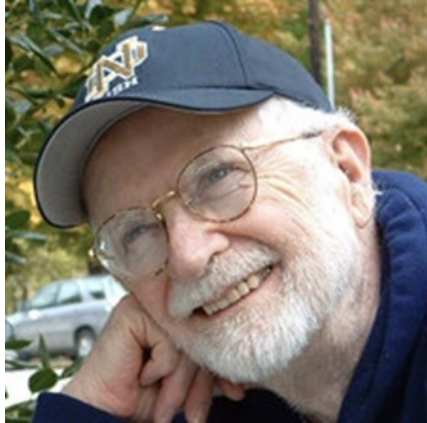
All members are welcome to attend meetings which are held in Room 201 of Building N4 at the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of Lewis & Clark Community College in Edwardsville.

## Coming Soon ~

- Apr 7 Leclaire Park Clean-Up, 9-11 a.m.
- Apr 10 FOL Annual Meeting, 7 p.m.
- Apr 21 Earth Day Tree Planting, 11:30 a.m.
- May 12 FOL at Goshen Market, 8 a.m.-noon
- May 14 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.
- May 19 Leclaire Yard Sales, 8 a.m.-2 p.m.
- May 26 Bonifest Run Water Station, 8 a.m.
- Jun 12 FOL Meeting, 7 p.m.



# JAMES FRALINGER: CHARTER MEMBER FOL



James "Jim" Fralinger

Friends of Leclaire was saddened to learn of the death of James "Jim" Fralinger, 88, on Saturday, February 24 at Anderson Hospital in Maryville, Illinois. Jim was a founding member of the FOL organization and suggested the name "Friends" of Leclaire so that it would be inclusive of all people who loved the historic Leclaire neighborhood. Today, roughly half of Friends of Leclaire members are not residents of Leclaire. Thank you, Jim, for your insight.

Jim and his wife Jane bought the house at 935 Hale Avenue in 1965. They raised their five daughters there and continued to enjoy their home in Leclaire until 2009. Jim was a Leclaire scholar who studied the social and philosophical foundations of the Village of Leclaire and its founder N. O. Nelson. He was on the committee that organized the Centennial celebration of Leclaire in 1990, and contributed to a history of Leclaire written that same year. In the 1990s he led the fight to save the Leclaire water tower. Although occasionally irascible (something he truly enjoyed), he was most often intelligent, thoughtful, funny and kind. Leclaire was lucky to have him.

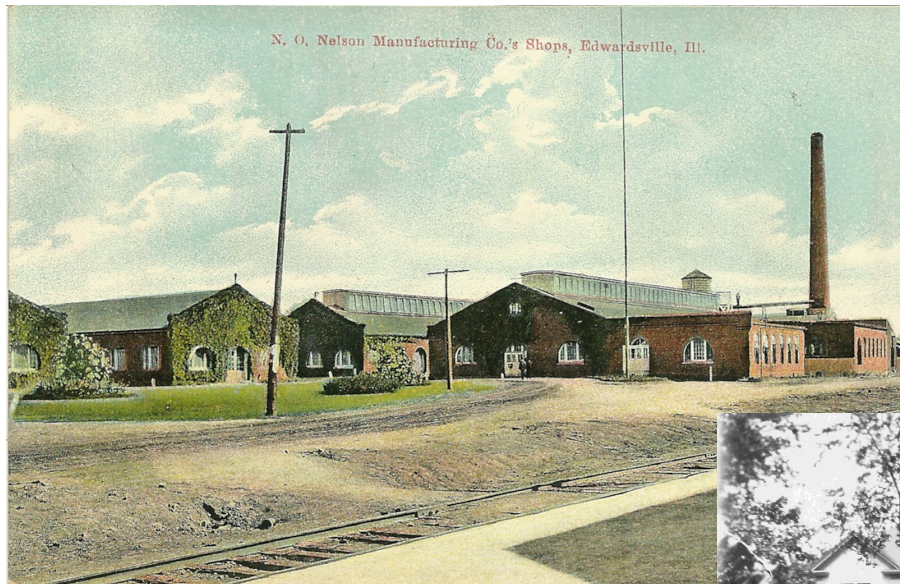
## LECLAIRE GARDENING IS NOTHING NEW

This time of year, the Leclaire gardeners begin preparing for the coming season, a tradition here in Leclaire. It's nothing new. The public spaces and private gardens in Leclaire have been carefully tended for more than a century.

When N. O. Nelson founded Leclaire, an important component of the village was a beautiful park-like setting. From the beginning, hundreds of trees were planted to line the wide curvilinear streets. One older resident said every home had at least one fruit tree in addition to hardwood trees. Trees were also used as a barricade between the factory complex and what was called "the campus." The Osage-orange trees that made up this divider, planted in the 1890s, are still there today.

Gardening was also strongly encouraged. The company grew flowers in greenhouses that were then given to residents. Mr. Nelson himself was an avid gardener and, when not traveling, took care of his own gardens. There was a Children's Gardening Club, organized by Mr. Nelson, and awards were given to those with the most beautiful gardens.

Some of the Leclaire gardens can be seen in the pictures shown here. Above are the Leclaire factories surrounded by



gardens and with ivy-covered walls. Ironically, in the 1890s some newspaper accounts said the factory complex resembled a campus. And of course, today it is the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of Lewis and Clark Community College.

The picture below is of a young Matt Fagan

and his mother, Matilda "Tillie" Fagan, in 1927 posing in front of a flower garden at Leclaire Park. In the background is the house at 935 Hale Avenue that would later become the home of James Fralinger, as mentioned in the article above.



Photos courtesy of the Madison County Historical Society.

April 8, 1902, *Edwardsville Intelligencer*: It has been a common impression that Leclaire lay to the east of the Troy road, all of the buildings so far being on that side, but the suburb is branching out and the first house in the west sub-division has been started.



# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE - GET INVOLVED!

## FOL ANNUAL MEETING APRIL 10

The annual meeting of the Friends of Leclaire will be held Tues., April 10 at 7 p. m. in Room 201 of Building N4 at the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of LCCC in Leclaire.

FOL members are encouraged to contact Andi Smith at 692-7343 if they are interested in serving on the FOL Board which consists of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer and three trustees. Nominations will also be accepted from the floor at the annual meeting.

Friends of Leclaire is a 501(c) charitable organization that focuses on the preservation of the history and public spaces of the former Village of Leclaire.

## SPRING CLEAN-UP

### LECLAIRE PARK APRIL 7

Leclaire Park will be the focus for volunteers on April 7, 9-11 a.m. as they perform the annual spring clean-up at Leclaire Park. In addition to "fishing" trash out of the lake, workers will clean-up the shore line, turn mulch to freshen gardens and plant some hardy annuals like snapdragons. Bring rakes, gloves or other tools with you and join our group of volunteers who demonstrate their commitment to Leclaire several times each year by making Leclaire beautiful!

## EARTH DAY!

The Edwardsville Children's Museum will celebrate Earth Day on April 21 from 10 a.m. – 2 p.m. and Friends of Leclaire will be there to help. FOL will donate and plant a new tree on the museum grounds at 11:30 a.m. and invite local children to participate. Other activities include a story time, making seed bombs and recycling activities. Earth Day activities are included with regular admission.

## LOOKING FOR A GOOD TIME?

Friends of Leclaire will again host a water station on Saturday, May 26 at the mid-way point of the Bonifest 5k Run as it passes through Leclaire. Volunteers serve water, but also are a cheering squad to encourage the runners. Whether you're 8 or 80, there is something for everyone and we always have a good time. Volunteers should meet at 8 a.m. at the south end of Leclaire Park in front of 1101 Lake where the Pauli family generously gives us access to water each year. Bring some bells or other noise makers to help entertain the runners as they whip past Leclaire Park.

## LECLAIRE YARD SALES MAY 19

The Annual Neighborhood Yard Sale will be held on May 19. Residents of Leclaire can participate in the annual neighborhood yard sale at no cost to them. FOL pays for all advertising expenses.

Primary advertising will be on Facebook where an event will be set up on the Historic Leclaire Facebook page. Participating residents are asked to post their own ads under the event which should include their address and what items they have for sale. If you are not on Facebook, call 618-656-1294 and an ad will be posted for you. Yard signs directing customers to the sales will be distributed based on these ads so FOL knows where to place yard signs. FOL will also place a general advertisement in the Edwardsville Intelligencer.

## LECLAIRE BAND CONCERT

The summer band concert by the Edwardsville Municipal Band doesn't have a date scheduled yet. Watch for an announcement in the next newsletter.

## Save the Dates! FOL 2018 Calendar

Apr 7	Leclaire Park Clean-Up
Apr 10	FOL Annual Meeting
Apr 21	Tree Planting for Earth Day
May 12	FOL at Goshen Market
May 14	FOL Meeting
May 19	Leclaire Yard Sales
May 26	Bonifest Run Water Station
Jun 12	FOL Meeting
Jun 16	FOL at Goshen Market
Jun	Band Concert/Ice Cream Social (Concert Date TBA)
Jul 10	FOL Meeting
Jul 21	FOL at Goshen Market
Aug 14	FOL Meeting
Aug 18	FOL at Goshen Market
Sep 11	FOL Meeting
Sep 15	FOL at Goshen Market
Oct 8	FOL Meeting
Oct 13	FOL at Goshen Market
Oct 21	Leclaire Parkfest
Nov 13	FOL Meeting
Dec 9	Luminaria at Leclaire Park (Rain date Dec 16)
Dec 11	FOL Holiday Social



**SATURDAY - APRIL 21st, 2018**  
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM

Recyclable materials maker space, seed bombs,  
and much more!  
FREE with admission!

- > Story Time @ 11:00 AM
- > Tree Planting with Friends of Leclaire @ 11:30 AM