



# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE NEWSLETTER

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## LUMINARIA IN LECLAIRE SUNDAY, DEC. 9, 6 P.M. - 8 P.M.



Visitors stroll past the band stand at LeClaire Park during the 2017 Luminaria event. Photo by Mike Flanary.

The annual Luminaria in LeClaire will be held on Dec. 9 from 6 - 8 p.m. at LeClaire Park. (Note: Times were incorrect in October newsletter.) A rain date has been set for Dec. 16. Luminaria at LeClaire is a much-anticipated event where friends and families come out to walk among the lights lining the sidewalks of LeClaire Park. Free hot chocolate and light refreshments are served, and carolers, groups of friends or organized choruses, are welcome!

Volunteers are needed from 4-6 p.m. for set-up and again from 8-8:30 p.m. for take-down. The work for volunteers is easy enough that children are welcome to participate with their parents. Thanks to Bob and Ellen Nickrent for organizing this event each year. Please call 618-659-2108 if you are able to assist. Bob really appreciates a call because if he knows lots of help is coming, he can sleep better at night! But if you forget to call, feel free to just show up!

## ANNUAL HOLIDAY SOCIAL AT HISTORIC “HALE HOUSE”

Members of Friends of LeClaire are invited to join us for the Annual Friends of LeClaire Holiday Social which will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 11. The potluck social begins at 7 p.m. at the home of Bob and Nancy Blain at 919 Hale Avenue. Guests are asked to bring a plate of appetizers or other “finger-foods,” and their best Christmas spirit for a wonderful evening with friends and neighbors as they gather to celebrate the coming holiday season. Please RSVP to 618-656-1294.

We are especially pleased that the Blains agreed to host the annual party. Their home is a beautiful Craftsman bungalow across the street from LeClaire Park that was damaged by fire last year. A bedroom and closet on the second floor were destroyed, and there was a great deal of smoke and water damage throughout the house. After a great deal of work, all has been restored.

The house was built in 1910 for William and Charlotta Glass. William Henry Glass was an Englishman, born in 1864, who came to America with his parents in 1879. In 1883 he became a naturalized citizen. His first wife, Mary

McFarland Glass of Pana, Illinois, died in April 1897 of consumption. She was only 32-years-old and left behind a ten-year-old son, Arnold. In late 1897, William married Miss Charlotta Koch of St. Louis who was 14 years younger than William.

By the time they built the house at 919 Hale Avenue,



The 2018 FOL Holiday Social will be held at this historic Hale Avenue home. shown above in an 1988 photograph from the Betty Maloney Collection.

Arnold had already left home, but William and Charlotta had a six-year-old son, Harvey, and two of William’s brothers, Reuben and Charles, were living with them. Both brothers would build their own homes in LeClaire, Reuben at 1014 Troy Road, and Charles at 900 Holyoake Road. William was a superintendent for the Madison Mine in Edwardsville and would later manage numerous other coal mines in southern Illinois.

Little is known about William’s wife. Charlotta Koch Glass, also known as Lotta or Lottie, was born June 16, 1877 in St. Louis. Her family had connections to Edwardsville and may have lived here at one time.

William’s job kept them moving so that at least twice in

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# LECLAIRE PARKFEST - THANKS FOR A JOB WELL DONE!

We couldn't have asked for a better Parkfest than this year and would like to say "Thank You!" to the thousands who attended and the many people who worked behind the scenes to make it all look effortless.

The following are just a few of the many people that made the festival run smoothly: Coordinator Shawn McCue, vendor coordinator Theresa Morrison and her assistants, Andi Smith and Casey Weeks, publicist Cindy Reinhardt, site supervisors Al & Kim Pauli and their family, treasurer Jim Milgrim, trolley tour narrator and sponsor Will Krause, and Mike Reinhardt, Bob Nickrent, Mark Hartman and others who are always there to help set-up and take-down. Laurie Frey put up and took down yard signs and Bob Blain did the same with easels that display historic photos of Leclaire. There was a whole crew that helped with park clean-up and gardening the day before the event and another group that took turns working the Friends of Leclaire booth during the festival.

Thank you also to the local businesses that sponsored the 2018 Leclaire Parkfest! If you are in need of their services, please think of them first and start by saying "Thank you for

supporting our community."

We are grateful to the Edwardsville Parks and Edwardsville Police departments for providing exceptional support. FOL volunteers always do a park clean-up on the day before the festival but the Parks Department had the grounds in such great order, there was little to do. We thank them also for assistance in moving picnic tables to the appropriate areas of the park to accommodate the festival. Darren Lee is the Parks Department representative that usually works at Leclaire Parkfest, and, as always, he did an outstanding job.

In addition to supporting the festival as a sponsor, Taqueria Z also named Friends of Leclaire as their charity to support through sales at their food booth. We thank them for their generous donation as well as the delicious food they served at the festival. The donation is in memory of former Leclaire resident Mimi Zanger whose son, Mike

Zanger, is one of the owners of Taqueria Z.

The danger in an article like this one is that someone is not mentioned that contributed greatly to the success of the day. If that is the case, please accept our apologies as well as our thanks for a job well done.



*The Lodge Brothers at Leclaire Parkfest. (Theresa Morrison)*

## 2018 LECLAIRE PARKFEST SPONSORS - THANK YOU!

**TheBank of Edwardsville ♦ Cassens – Dodge Chrysler Jeep Ram  
Creative Options Graphic Design ♦ Krause Properties ♦ Renewal by Andersen  
Attorney Keith Short ♦ Taqueria Z**

### *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 9	Luminaria Walk 6 - 8 p.m.
Dec 11	FOL Holiday Social 7 p.m.
Dec 16	<i>Rain Date</i> for Luminaria Walk
Feb 12	FOL Meeting 7 p.m.
Mar 12	FOL Meeting 7 p.m.

*Note: FOL does not meet in January*

# HE BUILT AN AIRPLANE IN HIS HOUSE

## 1113 Troy Road

### The Elisha Lee Witherell House

The home at 1113 Troy Road was built by Elisha Lee Witherell, who for roughly 20 years was an eccentric resident of Edwardsville and LeClaire. A native of Massachusetts, he was the son of Ransom and Lucinda Witherell. He married Mary Elizabeth Phillips in 1876 and they had two children, but in late 1900 he severed ties with his family and was estranged from his wife and children the rest of his life. He moved west and settled in Edwardsville where he worked as a carpenter. He would build houses on spec, but often had trouble selling them, so would turn them into rental properties.

One of many mysteries regarding Witherell is that the newspapers referred to him as "Captain Witherell." He was born in 1855, so was too young to have served in the Civil War and his home county in Massachusetts was not on the coast so it seems unlikely he was a sea captain.

Witherall's obsession with building airplanes and motor boats was one of the reasons the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* referred to him as eccentric. Witherell was building an airplane less than ten years after the Wright brothers famous flight. He was not successful, but he kept trying.

He built the house at 1113 Troy Road about 1910. It was described in the newspapers as a two-and-a-half story house where Witherell occupied the top floor and rented the other two floors to families.

Tenants had just moved out in March 1914 when the house was set afire when an oil lamp slipped from Witherell's hand and broke. The oil and flame spread quickly as Witherell worked to save his possessions, dropping many items to the ground in hammocks made of sheets. The headline in the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* read "Airplane is Burned in Fire Last Night on Troy Road in LeClaire."

Witherell was quoted as saying he felt badly about the fire and was sorry the house had been damaged, but the loss of his "flying machine" weighed more heavily on him. He had been building the engine and parts of the frame on the second floor of the house. The loss represented many years work for Witherell who just couldn't catch a break when it came to his aircraft. A few years earlier, in 1911, he was working on the airplane in a tent in the backyard when a strong storm scattered the tent and machine all over the yard and across the street. The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* said it was the only time the machine ever left the ground and it was "considerably broken up when it returned to earth."

The 1914 fire, which originated in the attic, burned all of the roof and part of the upper walls. It is assumed that is why the house is no longer two-and-a-half stories in height. Dam-

age was estimated at \$2,500, a significant amount for the time. There were complaints that the damage was so bad because low water pressure couldn't provide a good stream onto the fire.

Witherell rebuilt the house using insurance money and sold the house in 1918. He then moved to Oklahoma for a couple years before moving back to Edwardsville where he built numerous houses and continued working on his airplane, this time at a property on North Main Street. He moved to Kansas in 1926 at which time he still owned three properties in Edwardsville, one a house on Ruskin Avenue. In December

1927 he returned to Edwardsville for a visit and to take care of business affairs. He returned to Ottawa, Kansas where shortly after the first of the year, he committed suicide. Although he still held the deeds to properties in Edwardsville, he owed almost as much as they were worth.

The second owner of the house at 1113 Troy Road, Allister Knox Stewart, Jr., shared the house with his wife Lucille and two children, Ellen Lucille and Allister Knox Stewart, III. Allister Jr. was born in Washington, Missouri, in December 1887 but grew up in

St. Louis. He was the son of a prominent family that was often mentioned in the society pages of the *St. Louis Post Dispatch*. In 1913, he married the former Lucille Lela Smith of Sparta, Illinois. They moved to Edwardsville when he was hired as a safety engineer for Donk Coal Mine. The Stewart family in Edwardsville was also very active socially, hosting many card parties and other events at their home on Troy Road. Allister Jr. died in 1945 at the age of 57. His wife transferred ownership of the house to her son in 1949 and soon after "For Sale" ads began appearing in the local newspaper. Lucille moved to Collinsville in 1960 where she died in 1977.

Throughout most of its existence, this house was shared by multiple families, including the entire time it was owned by the Stewart family. When purchased by the current owner, the house had a one or two-bedroom apartment on the second floor and a two-bedroom apartment on the ground floor. At times over the years, even the basement was offered for rent and newspapers often carried advertisements for sleeping rooms.

The house has now been converted to a single-family home as originally intended, but the enclosed porch and the shortened height of the building leave us to wonder what it looked like when first built. Even if there was a photograph somewhere that predated the 1914 fire, it's not likely that anyone would recognize it as the house at 1113 Troy Road today. Although the original architecture is difficult to ascertain, the history of this house is known and it is one of the most unusual in LeClaire. After all, how many people are able to claim that an airplane was built in their house?



The above 1989 photograph of the house at 1113 Troy Road is from the Betty Maloney Collection.

# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE NEWS

## LECLAIRE PARK GARDENING PROJECT

The latest gardening project for Friends of Leclaire was a raised border around the restroom building. Attempts to place plants around the building in the past have been unsuccessful because run-off from the roof and from the area around the bandstand always washed them out leaving a rutted bare area without vegetation. With the raised bed, rain splashes down onto the concrete block edging and the bed itself has been filled with a variety of hostas.

This Friends of Leclaire project has been approved for a City ENERGY grant which will cover half of the cost for the new landscaping. Professionals were hired to make the raised beds but FOL volunteers added soil, plants and mulch to complete the gardens.

## LECLAIRE SCHOOL HOUSE EXHIBIT AT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM

Work on a new Leclaire School House exhibit at the Children's Museum has been sponsored by Friends of Leclaire. The exhibit is not quite complete, but children are already able to enjoy this new exhibit as well as many others



*Mike Reinhardt was one of several FOL volunteers who helped with the Children's Museum gardens.*

in the newly renovated Children's Museum. FOL volunteers also helped plant the new Discovery Garden and other landscaping projects at the Children's Museum. The Edwardsville Children's Museum is located at 744 Holyoake Road in Leclaire.

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS

Although many of you renewed your memberships in Friends of Leclaire at Leclaire Parkfest (*Thank you so much!*), other memberships are still due for the coming year. Each membership renewal reminder costs FOL \$1 in printing and postage expenses. So, if you appreciate the work of Friends of Leclaire, please renew as soon as possible. We would be very grateful.

To purchase a gift membership in Friends of Leclaire or renew your membership, send a check payable to Friends of Leclaire, P. O. Box 644, Edwardsville, IL 62025 in the amount of \$20. Please include your name, address, phone number and email address. For your privacy, Friends of Leclaire does not share its membership lists.

Thank you for supporting the work of Friends of Leclaire through your membership dollars and donations.

# MAKE IT A LECLAIRE CHRISTMAS!

## LECLAIRE MERCHANDISE

FOL offers a variety of Leclaire gift items that make perfect gifts for the holiday season. The latest shirt design is inspired by the old Leclaire Blues baseball team, but there are also t-shirts and hoodies available. The notecards (at right) were new this fall, plus we have books on Leclaire history, Leclaire tote bags, and, of course, \$20 memberships in Friends of Leclaire. Call 618-656-1294 if interested in making it a Leclaire Christmas.

## INSCRIBED BRICKS AT LECLAIRE PARK

If you would like to honor a child, grandchild, friend or parents with an engraved brick at Leclaire Park, there is an application on the FOL website or you can call 618-656-1294. Bricks are \$50 each and proceeds are used to make improvements at Leclaire Park. The bricks are placed in the sidewalk surrounding the Leclaire bandstand. Applications will also be available at Parkfest.



*Beautiful notecards of scenes in Leclaire are available in sets of four for \$10 each. The images are by artist John DenHouter who donated the use of his plein air images.*

# HALE AVENUE HOUSE (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

the first decade of the house the Glass family leased the house while they were living elsewhere. Most coal mines in this area closed in the 1930s, so William found employment where he could find it. He died in 1944 and the following year the house was purchased by Henry and Paulina Poos as an income

property. Since 1960 the house has been rented or owned by faculty of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. The current owner has owned what is known affectionately as "Hale House" for a half century.