



FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE

NEWSLETTER

October 2019

Volume 29 No. 3

Sunday • Noon - 5 PM
LeClaire Park
Edwardsville, Illinois

2019 OCTOBER 20

PROCEEDS BENEFIT LOCAL CHARITIES,
COMMUNITY GROUPS AND ARTISANS.
www.historic-leclaire.org



Music

Riverside Jam Trio

Dixieland Jazz • NOON - 2:30 pm

The Lodge Brothers

Old Time Folk Music • 2:30 - 5 pm

Greg Silsby & Friends

Americana • 1-3:30 pm

Food & Drink

A wide selection of delicious festival fare including a beer and wine garden hosted by Bin 51

Arts & Crafts

Browse a variety of craft booths featuring local artisans.

Trolley Tours

Narrated trolley rides through the LeClaire National Historic District.

Exhibits

Historic photos and memorabilia, vintage cars and tractors!

Children's Activities

Book Sale

Thousands of used books. Something for everyone. Lots of bargains!

Pet Adoption

Cuddly pets ready for adoption.

Parking is available on neighborhood streets or at LeClaire School on Franklin Avenue.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

- **TheBANK of Edwardsville >>>Busey Bank**
- **Cassens - Dodge, Chrysler, Jeep, Ram**
- **Creative Options Graphic Design, Inc.**
- **Krause Properties**
- **Attorney Keith Short**
- **Taqueria Z**

FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE SUPPORT NICKEL PLATE RESTORATION



At the September meeting of Friends of LeClaire (FOL), thanks to member pledges of assistance, FOL voted to donate \$1,500 towards restoration of the Nickel Plate Station in LeClaire. The location of the station in 1890 was a key factor for N. O. Nelson when he chose a site for his model village of LeClaire. A century ago, LeClaire had thousands of visitors that all used the station to reach LeClaire, a charming country village that provided a respite from city life.

Now, the City of Edwardsville is partnering with the Edwardsville Children's Museum and the Edwardsville Community Foundation to begin the process of moving, restoring, and re-opening the 135 year-old Nickel Plate Railroad Station, located on the N.O. Nelson Campus of Lewis & Clark Community College in the Historic LeClaire neighborhood of Edwardsville, Illinois.

A BRIEF HISTORY

In August 1883, the Toledo, Cincinnati and St. Louis Railroad built an unusually large train station overlooking fields and coal mines south of Edwardsville. Its original address was 508 S. Fillmore Street. Over the course of its 80+ years of service, this unique country station welcomed thousands of visitors and newcomers to Edwardsville, witnessed historic events, sent local troops off to war, and played host to commuters, travelers, and merchants. In 1922, the railroad was purchased by the Nickel Plate Line. The last passenger train stopped at the station in 1959 and the station manager retired when the station closed in 1967. The station was then used for train crew quarters until 1983.

Its fascinating history and remarkable stability prompted the Goshen Preservation Alliance to save the station from the wrecking ball in 1989 and move it to a safe location in 1991. In 2000, GPA cleaned, painted, repaired and installed a new chimney and roof, adding decades to its survival.

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CURRENT NEWS

THE NICKEL PLATE STATION

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To make a donation toward the restoration of the historic Nickel Plate Station, visit the Edwardsville Community Foundation's donor page at <https://app.donorview.com/LQn6>

Or send a check made payable to "Edwardsville Community Foundation" (with "Nickel Plate Station" in the subject line) and mail to:

Edwardsville Community Foundation
P. O. Box 102
Edwardsville, IL 62025

For further information about this project contact SJ Morrison at 618-558-3062 or email stm11@hotmail.com.



TIME TO SAVE ON NEW TREES

The Edwardsville Beautification and Tree Commission is pleased to announce the opportunity for residents to participate in the "Edwardsville Tree Planting Program." This program enables residents to be reimbursed one-half the cost (up to \$75.00) of purchasing and planting one approved tree each year at their primary place of residence within the Edwardsville City Limits. Guidelines for the program are available at Public Works at 200 E. Park Street or can be found at <https://www.cityofedwardsville.com/432/Tree-Planting-Program>

If you live on Hale Avenue, in the construction area, a tree will be provided at no charge. Information will be distributed regarding this at a later date.



INSCRIBED BRICKS AVAILABLE AT LECLAIRE PARKFEST

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 Leclaire Parkfest.

FOL FALL MEMBERSHIP DRIVE

Do you like the work of Friends of Leclaire? If so, then please consider supporting FOL with an annual membership. Many people join in the fall so Leclaire Parkfest is their reminder that it's time to renew.

FOL are dedicated to preserving and enhancing the public areas in Leclaire and educating the public about the unique history of the former Village of Leclaire. FOL has spent thousands of dollars over the years for trees, landscaping, picnic benches, and other improvements to Leclaire Park. They also plant and maintain flower beds in the park (except those maintained by the Edwardsville Garden Club). Their educational mission is conducted through community outreach, publications (like this newsletter), a website, facebook pages, an annual festival, and continued research on the Leclaire National Historic District.

To join Friends of Leclaire or to renew your annual membership, please send your name, street address, email and phone # along with a check for \$20 made payable to Friends of Leclaire to P. O. Box 644, Edwardsville, IL, 62025. For further information, call 618-656-1294. Please note that Friends of Leclaire does not share membership information.



SAVE THE DATE: HOLIDAY SOCIAL!

The Friends of Leclaire Annual Holiday Social is set for Dec 10 at the home of Al & Kim Pauli. Members are invited to attend this annual potluck held in a historic Leclaire home.



2019 LUMINARIA EVENT CANCELLED

Please note that there will be no luminaria event this year, but FOL hopes to bring it back in the future.



PARK CLEAN-UP DAY OCTOBER 19

Please help us prepare for Parkfest visitors by volunteering to help spruce up the gardens of Leclaire Park. Work begins at 9 a.m.! Gardening tools and gloves are suggested.

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

- | | |
|--------|------------------------------------|
| Oct 8 | FOL Meeting, 7 p.m. |
| Oct 12 | Goshen Market, 8 a.m. - Noon |
| Oct 19 | Leclaire Park Clean-Up Day, 9 a.m. |
| Oct 20 | Leclaire Parkfest, Noon - 5 p.m. |
| Nov 12 | FOL Meeting, 7 p.m. |
| Dec 10 | FOL Holiday Social 7 p.m. |

Note: FOL does not meet in January

THE JOHN & DORA MICHEL HOME

A Brief History: 913 Hale Avenue

The home at 913 Hale Avenue was built and furnished by John Michel in preparation for his marriage to Dora Speckman. The couple was married on October 6, 1909, in the parsonage of Eden Evangelical Church where they both were members and sang in the choirs.

Dora and John knew each other almost their entire lives because their families were intertwined. This is often the case in small communities, but it was especially true for them.

Dorothea "Dora" Speckman was born on a farm near Edwardsville in Dec. 1884. Her mother died when she was three and in 1892 she was orphaned at the age of six. A relative of her mother, Edward Abenbrink Sr. and his wife Mary Hanser Abenbrink took her into their home as a foster daughter. Their exact relationship is unknown, but newspaper articles referred to their son, Edward, Jr., as Dora's cousin. When Dora's father died, her siblings were scattered, each going to live with a different family member although all except one remained in Edwardsville.

John Michel, Jr. was born in 1883 to John and Helene Dorothea Michel. (His mother, like his wife, was also called Dora, but for clarity will be referred to as Helene here.) Helene was a widow with children when she married John's father. One of her children, Anna, married Fred Hanser in 1896 which connected John's family with that of his future wife.

Fred Hanser's sister, Mary Hanser Abenbrink, was Dora Speckman's foster mother, and a few years after the death of John Michel's father in 1900, his mother, Helene, went to live with her

daughter on Hanser Street. In other words, although unrelated by blood, John and Dora had a strong family connection by the time they reached their teens.

Tall and slender, with brown eyes and hair, John Michel was more than a foot taller than his petite wife. He worked for the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company for 50 years, beginning in the cabinet shop, then moving to the marble shop where he worked as a cutter and polisher, and finally to a position as a machinist in the machine shop. At the time of his marriage, the *Intelligencer* called him "a prosperous young man."

Dora grew up at the home of her foster parents, Edward and Mary Abenbrink at 813 N. Main Street, just a block from where she married John in the Eden Church parsonage. Their wedding reception was held at the Abenbrink home. John also grew up on Main Street, eight blocks north of Dora's home.

It is unknown who built the Hale Avenue house since there were numerous carpenters in the family, but a list of bills against the home (paid when they took out a mortgage) include a number of Edwardsville contractors who worked on the house. On Sep. 25, a few weeks before the wedding, John went to Tuxhorn's to purchase furnishings for the new house. It's unknown if Dora went along to help choose, but a receipt shared by their grandson, Jim Michel, provides a glimpse into what life was like at that time.

The Michels were married for 62 years. They had one son, Hilbert, who became an engineer and moved out of the Edwardsville area. John died in 1962 after being disabled by

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The John and Dora Michel house as it appears today.



At far left is an invoice from Tuxhorn Brothers Hardware Company showing what items were purchased to furnish the new Michel home and what they cost in 1909.

The upper photo shows the house at 913 Hale Avenue in 1923. The dormer is already in place for the bathroom and it was shortly before the elm trees succumbed to Dutch Elm disease.

Below is the house and garage circa 1955 soon after the trees that shade the house today were planted. (All images courtesy of Jim Michel)

Edwardsville, Ill., Sept-25 1909

John Michel

Bought of Tuxhorn Bros. Hardware Company

THE HOUSE FURNISHERS
228-230 NORTH MAIN STREET

Implements, Hardware, Vehicles, Furniture, Stoves, Tinware, Cutlery, &c.

Terms..... Phone Main 6

Bed Room Suit	30 00
1 Dixie Mattress	9 00
1 #68 Spring	3 50
3 # 82 Chairs	4 20
1 Parlor Suit & Rocker	34 00
1 #642 Majestic Range	
Ware & Pipe	57 00
Coal Hod	35
Wash boiler	2 00
2 Stubs	1 00
2 Skillets	90
Washboard	45
	172 40

Paid Tuxhorn Bros Hardware Co

LECLAIRE PARKFEST VOLUNTEERS AND SPONSORS

Despite construction on Hale Avenue, FOL has been assured there will be no problem having the area around the park ready for the 28th Annual Leclaire Parkfest! If you are willing to volunteer for a few hours at the festival or help with the Park Clean-Up Day on October 19 at 9 a.m., please call 618-656-1294 and tell them you're a wonderful volunteer!

We are especially grateful for our 2019 Leclaire Parkfest Sponsors and urge you to consider using their services:

TheBank of Edwardsville (soon to be Busey Bank), Cassens: Dodge, Chrysler, Jeep, Ram, Creative Options Graphic Design, Krause Properties, Attorney Keith Short, and Taqueria Z.

THE JOHN & DORA MICHEL HOME (CONT FROM PAGE 3)

strokes for at least ten years. Dora continued to live in the home until 1971 when she moved to a nursing home for the last year of her life. Her neighbor to the north, Jerome and Helen Vieth of 909 Hale Avenue, purchased the house when she moved out and kept it for a few years before selling it to the Richard Terry Johnson family in 1975. The Johnsons sold it to the current owner, Mike Flanary, in 1985.

By the time Mike purchased the house it was in very poor condition, but fortunately he had carpentry skills that made it possible to restore the house. It took over two years to complete the initial restoration. From family stories it is possible to know exactly what has been changed and what remained the same and fortunately for the historic district, much has remained intact.

According to Jim Michel, the house originally had an outhouse, but in 1915 a bathroom was added on the second floor. To make room, a dormer was built on the south side of the roof as can be seen in the photographs on page three. Jim's father, Hilbert, had some artistic talent that was applied in the new bath where, above the chair-rail, he painted seascapes that included a schooner. The murals were already gone when Mike purchased the house, but the original clawfoot tub remains.

Jim Michel remembers a pantry at the back corner of his grandmother's kitchen where he could always find a bowl of fresh homemade cookies. Mike expanded and insulated the pantry to form a breakfast nook. It is the only change he made to the footprint of the house.

When the Michels owned the house, wallpaper was in vogue. Mike spent so much time removing layers of wallpaper that he has no intention of ever putting more on the walls. An advantage of the wallpaper is that it protected the original plaster walls that are now exposed. All of the woodwork in the house is original, as is the siding and all the lower level windows. The chimney was struck by lightning when the Michels still owned the house and after that, even after being repaired, it always leaked. Mike lined the chimney and has eliminated the problem.

The house had a garage built for John Michel's Model T Ford in 1928, but it didn't have a foundation and was too far gone to salvage by the time Mike purchased the property. He replaced it with a similar garage with a slightly larger footprint to accommodate a modern vehicle.

In addition to Jim Michel's recollections about the house, his father Hilbert stopped by one day in 1986 when he was traveling through Edwardsville. He had a conversation with Mike Flanary which he followed up with photographs and a letter wishing him well with the renovation. Hilbert said the house once had two large elm trees in the front yard which succumbed to Dutch Elm disease and were replaced with cherry trees. Those trees were later replaced with the sweetgum trees that still shade the house. His family named them John and Dora.



John and Dora Michel next to their hydrangea bushes at 913 Hale Avenue circa 1955. (Jim Michel)

The house had a cellar door in the back that made it easier for Dora to bring her wash tubs out to the yard in good weather and was a convenient way to bring vegetables into the cellar from her garden. Like most Leclaire residents, Dora had a practical garden, but her grandson also remembers a row of roses.

Mike has done an excellent job of restoring and preserving this historic Leclaire home. Nearly every feature of the house has been restored by his hand from the ceilings (he removed the 1970s era "popcorn"), to the floors now covered with new hardwood, to the walls, to the woodwork which had to be matched when radiators were removed. The exterior of the house, except for the paint color, looks nearly identical to how the house looked in the early 1920s. The Michels always painted the house white, but paint color is a personal preference not included in Historic Preservation Commission guidelines and many enjoy the shades of blue currently on the building. The house was awarded the Goshen Preservation Award in 1990.

Mike says that with his woodworking skills, the condition of the house in 1985 didn't intimidate him. He recognized the potential immediately, but he fell in love with the view. 913 Hale Avenue sits directly across the street from Leclaire Park.

LECLAIRE PARKFEST - SUNDAY, OCTOBER 20