



FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE

NEWSLETTER

October 2016

Volume 26 No. 3

HISTORIC LECLAIRE BOOKS

Mike and Cindy Reinhardt serve on the Friends of Leclaire Board of Trustees, but also organize a quarterly used book fair for St. Andrew's Episcopal Church. The combined interests recently led to an interesting find.

A box of books was donated to the Reinhardts by Dennis Pluta and his wife, Carol Van Gieson, who found them in a Troy Road house where they lived in the 1970s-1990s. Although none of the books were of great monetary value, they were priceless to the right person.

Some of the books have notations that they were used at the "Leclaire Institute" and "Leclaire Academy" and one book has a label inside the front cover (at right) from the Leclaire Public Library.

Thanks to news articles about a donation of books by Leclaire founder, N. O. Nelson, we know that Leclaire had a library from its earliest times until the village was annexed by Edwardsville in 1934 and it is possible that this book was purchased by Mr. Nelson himself. The above mentioned books were donated to the Madison County Historical Society because they are of historical significance.

The remainder of the books were inscribed by members of the Held and Geers families who lived at 814 and 816 Troy Road. William and Anna (Beucler) Held and their young children, Louise, Aline and Frederick,

Continued on page 3

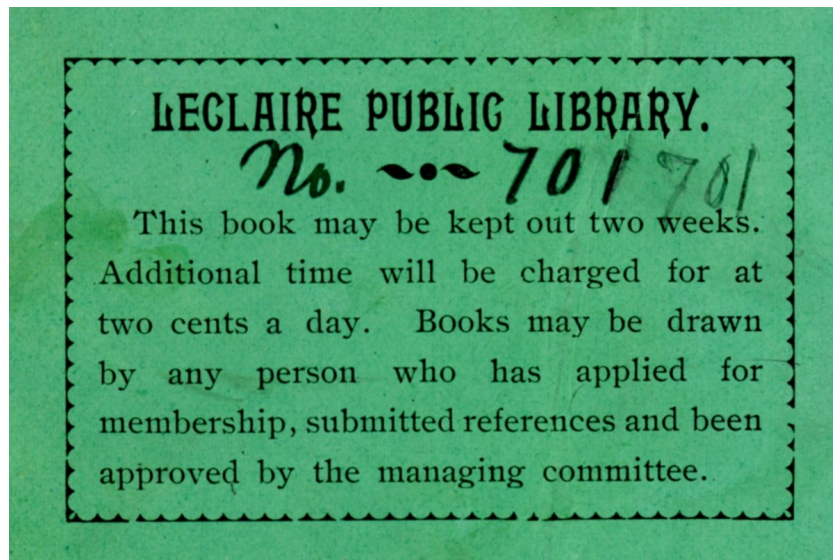
FREE TOTES & MAGNETS

Those who join Friends of Leclaire or renew their FOL membership at Leclaire Parkfest on October 16 will receive a FREE Leclaire tote bag as part of our 25th anniversary celebration. There will also be special 25th Anniversary magnet featuring the Leclaire Parkfest logo available to the first 200 people who visit the FOL booth at the festival.

THANK YOU SPONSORS!

FOL is grateful to our financial sponsors, to the City of Edwardsville for their cooperation and assistance, and to the dozens of volunteers who help make the festival possible.

We encourage you to support the following local businesses and/or individuals that have stepped forward to support the 25th annual Leclaire Parkfest.



TELL THEM THANKS!!!

TheBank of Edwardsville
Creative Options Graphic Design
Krause Properties (trolley sponsor)
Theresa Morrison
Attorney Keith Short
Jennifer Short, Coldwell Banker Brown Realtors

FOL GRANT REQUEST APPROVED

Friends of Leclaire is now recognized as a Neighborhood Association in Edwardsville's new ENERGI program, Edwardsville Neighborhood Enhancement, Recognition and Grant Initiative. The recognition makes the organization eligible for annual 50-50 neighborhood matching grants which will be used to enhance the historic neighborhood.

FOL's first application was for the purchase of a sign for Leclaire Park. The front of the sign will say simply "Leclaire

Park," but the reverse side will have a brief history of the park including photographs. The sign will be designed by Sherrie Hickman of Creative Options Design, built by Dave Thomas and mounted on signposts made by local artist Micah Wahl.

The term "Neighborhood Association" related to Friends of Leclaire can be confusing, because FOL is not a typical neighborhood association. Our mission statement has not changed, and membership in Friends of Leclaire remains open to anyone with an interest in the Leclaire neighborhood and its unique history.

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

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

409 Jefferson Road - The William Shaw House

Area residents and visitors to LeClaire often notice the house at the corner of Jefferson Road and Hale Avenue because of the beautiful home and the elaborate gardens that surround it. But most are unaware of the history of the house.

The Shaw House at 409 Jefferson Road is so called because it was occupied by the William Shaw family for sixty years. This house was one of those built by the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company and first purchased by Nelson employee Will Thomas in 1893. Five years later it was sold back to the company who leased it to the William Shaw family. William and Elizabeth Shaw purchased the house in February 1904 for \$1,650.

William Shaw was a machinist who in 1889 took a job with the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company in St. Louis.

After Nelson founded the Village of LeClaire in 1890, many jobs were moved to the factories in Illinois, but the company's headquarters remained in St. Louis. In the early years, some employees commuted to work in Illinois, either daily or weekly, by train. William Shaw was transferred to LeClaire in 1893. Even though he was foreman of the machinery department as early as 1895, like other employees who had family connections in St. Louis, Shaw didn't move his family to LeClaire until 1897.

The machinery department was eventually incorporated as the Bignall and Keeler Machine Works of the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company. According to a 1939 article in the Edwardsville Intelligencer, "Their principal business was the manufacture of pipe threading machines which have been sold all over the world. Various styles of machines are produced, the largest cutting threads for pipe with a diameter of 20 inches. The oil fields, packing plants and other industries using large quantities of pipe have been the principal patrons."

William's daughter, Mildred Shaw Briggs, in an interview with Bob Gill in 1990 said that when the company was young, they purchased a lot of used equipment and her father was responsible for keeping it in running order. At one time, before telephones, if machinery needed repairs when Shaw was at

home, the village's electric company would flash the lights three times as a signal to Shaw that he was needed at the factory. (The lights would flicker throughout the village!)

Mildred also told Gill how her father was responsible for the company's exhibit at the 1904 World's Fair. The exhibit included a Bignall and Keeler pipe threading machine that he would demonstrate and sell to national and international visitors. Mildred visited him at the fair numerous times with her mother.



The above photo shows siblings Laura and Kenneth Shaw in front of the house at 409 Jefferson circa 1904 (Courtesy of Elizabeth Shaw Stolte). The photo below is from the Madison County Historical Society's "Saddle Album" donated by the Nelson family. This photo of 409 Jefferson was taken before 1920.



In 1939 Shaw, who also served on the Nelson Board of Directors, marked his 50th anniversary with the company. By then he was working as Superintendent of Bignall and Keeler. Two years later, at the age of 81, he retired. Shaw commented at the time that in all his years with the company, he had never taken a vacation.

Family Life

William Shaw (1860-1957) was born in England, but came to America with his family as a young boy. In 1885 he married Elizabeth Reisel (1865-1948) of Freeburg, Illinois. The family lived first in St. Clair County, but by 1889 moved to St. Louis. In 1897, the family moved to LeClaire with their four young daughters, Edith, Irene, Laura and Mildred. In the coming years, three additional children were born, Kenneth, Evan and Ruth.

In the 1990 Gill interview, Mildred Shaw Briggs (1896-1993) recalled how N. O. Nelson, the founder of the village, was known for his love of children. When Kenneth Shaw was born in 1901, Nelson came to the house to hold the new baby and congratulate his parents on the birth of their first son.

Within a few years of purchasing the house on Jefferson, the family replaced the small front porch with a wide veranda porch as can be seen in the two photographs shown here. It was from this home that several of the Shaw daughters were married in elaborate ceremonies that included live music and "mountains" of flowers. The brides came down the stairway to meet their grooms.

In another recollection, Mildred remembered that Mrs. Nelson's driver would take her for a long drive in the family

The Shaw House (cont. from p 2)

carriage most evenings. Almira Nelson was fond of Elizabeth Shaw who lived across the street, and often picked her up for the drive along with one or more of the Shaw children.

Elizabeth “Dolly” Shaw Stolte, a granddaughter, writing about her memories of the house during the holidays, said, “We would all go to Grandma and Grandpa Shaw’s for Thanksgiving dinner and Christmas. They always ate their meals at the dining room table with a lace tablecloth on it. They had a large kitchen with only a HIGE black stove (coal fired and somehow oil fired too). They made great things on that stove! There was a marble or something topped table with some cabinets and shelves where they made their food and a pantry. There was also a real electric refrigerator for as long as I remember. It was a large empty kitchen.”

She also remembered, “They had a huge tree at Grandpa Shaw’s in the front hall each year. Mom always had the job of bringing escalloped oysters for Christmas.”



In this undated portrait the members of the Shaw family are: (from left, front row) Laura Shaw Crossman, Irene Shaw Miller, William Shaw, Elizabeth Reisel Shaw, Mildred Shaw Briggs, Ruth Shaw Smith; (back row) Evan Shaw, Kenneth Shaw, Edith Shaw McKee. (Courtesy of Elizabeth Shaw Stolte)

As a long-time member of Nelson’s Board of Directors, William Shaw would have influenced many of the decisions made regarding the Village of LeClaire. Also important to the village was his daughter, Mildred, who was an instructor at the LeClaire Kindergarten for over 20 years (See Dec 2015 FOL Newsletter). In greater Edwardsville, the Shaws through marriage became connected to many early settlers including the Lange, Stolte, Crossman, McKee and other families. A name that most will recognize is Kenneth “Buzz” Shaw, grandson of William and Elizabeth Shaw, who served as President of SIUE from 1977-1979.

There are a handful of men who were, along with Nelson and his family, significant leaders in the story of LeClaire. William Shaw was among them.

Historic Books (cont. from p 1)

relocated to LeClaire from St. Louis in the mid-1890s when William was hired as superintendent of the Marble Works. They moved into the home at 816 Troy Road and would eventually purchase the house.

Their oldest daughter, Louise, married a local attorney, Cyrus Geers, in 1905. They lived with her parents and siblings for a number of years before moving to a home of their own in Edwardsville. Although Cyrus’s family didn’t live in LeClaire, Cyrus and his brother, M. Lester Geers, were well known in LeClaire. Both were attorneys who attended the short-lived LeClaire College and were active in LeClaire athletics as young men.

The younger Held daughter, Aline, married Robert Sinclair in 1917 and built a house next door to her parents at 814 Troy Road. After Aline and her husband divorced in 1924, she moved with her daughter to St. Louis and leased her house at 814 Troy Road to Cyrus and Louise Geers. This was about the same time that William and Anna Held also returned to St. Louis where they joined their son, Frederick, who made St. Louis his home after returning from WW I.

In the early 1930s, Cyrus and Louis Geers also moved to St. Louis, but the family retained their property in LeClaire, renting the house at 816 Troy Road until 1944 when Anna passed away and the house at 814 Troy Road until Aline’s daughter sold it in 1973.

Imagine the number of renters over the years at 814 Troy Road, yet the box of books with the names of Held and Geers family members remained in the house until it was found by Carol Van Geison, when she purchased 814 Troy Road in 1974.

The oldest of the books had the inscription “Anna Beucler, Athens, MO, 1868” written inside the front cover. Athens was Anna’s childhood home. Two books were military related and belonged to Cyrus Geers during WW I. Others were school books or novels with the names of “Aline Held,” “Ferguson Geers (Cyrus and Louise’s son who liked to doodle),” “Emily Durer (M. Lester Geers’ wife),” and other family members. These books have now found a home with Jane Sheaffer of La Center, Washington. The books belonged to Jane’s father, grandparents, great-grandparents and other relatives. She was excited to receive them and in return sent a generous donation to the St. Andrew’s Book Fair.

It’s nice to know these LeClaire books are back where they belong.

Save the Date!

Last year’s Holiday Luminaria Walk was so well received that FOL is going to do it again! Dec. 4, 6-8 p.m. is the scheduled date with a rain date of Dec. 11. This is a wonderful opportunity for families to volunteer, giving children a real sense of accomplishment. If you would like to help with this project, please call Bob Nickrent at 618-407-5268 to volunteer.

Recent News

PARKFEST VOLUNTEERS

Leclaire Parkfest, our celebration of Fall and all things Leclaire, is fast approaching and as in other years, “many hands make light work.” Parkfest volunteers and vendors all have terrific, optimistic attitudes that make work fun! Set-up is 9 a.m.-Noon and take-down 5-6:30 p.m. on October 16.

If you are able to help, please call 618-656-1294 to volunteer. You’ll have a good time and FOL will be very grateful!

FOL Website Offers Help for Residents

The new FOL website, built by William Krause, was launched in June and has a number of added features that local residents may find helpful. In addition to the history of the Leclaire National Historic District, area residents will find links to city services, recommendations for contractors who specialize in historic restorations or renovations, and much more.

Filming in Leclaire

Film crews returned to 935 Hale Avenue in Leclaire recently to film a commercial for Ameren Illinois that will be shown on HGTV. It is one of a series of energy efficiency commercials featuring Matt Muenster, star of HGTV’s “Bath Crashers.” The beautiful Hale Avenue home was also used in the movie “Marshall’s Miracle” a few years ago.

City Tree Planting Program

Fall is the perfect time to plant a tree, and the City of Edwardsville encourages that activity by offering a 50% rebate on the price of a new tree. There is a list of approved trees at <http://www.cityofedwardsville.com> along with the application for obtaining a rebate on the home page under “Tree Planting Program.”

Fall Large Trash Clean Up

Mon, Wed, Fri, November 7, 9, 11 - Tues, Thurs, November 15, 17

Materials for the Fall Large Trash Clean Up should be placed at the curb by 6 a.m. on your usual trash day. Items that can be discarded include “white goods (such as refrigerators and dishwashers), furniture, mattress sets and large carpets (cut into 2ft by 4ft rolled bundles and secured with twine or tape). Glass portions of doors, windows, etc. should be broken and placed into a small box marked glass. There are some restriction on electronics and other items, so check the city’s website or call Allied Waste/Republic Services’ Customer Service Representatives at (618) 656-6883 if you have questions.

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.

Check our website and facebook page (Historic Leclaire) for announcements.

Sunday - Noon - 5 PM
Leclaire Park
Edwardsville, Illinois

2016 OCTOBER 16

PROCEEDS GO TO LOCAL CHARITIES
AND COMMUNITY GROUPS
www.historic-leclaire.org



Music

Old St. Louis Levee Band Trio
Dixieland Jazz • NOON - 2:30 pm

The Lodge Brothers
Old Time Folk Music • 2:30 - 5 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 available at Leclaire School, the Nelson Campus of LCCC or on streets within the Leclaire neighborhood. (no shuttle service).
Handicap parking available next to park.

Thank You to Our Sponsors

- TheBANK of Edwardsville
- Krause Properties
- Creative Options Graphic Design, Inc.
- Attorney Keith Short
- Realtor Jennifer Short
- Theresa Morrison

Coming Soon

Oct 11	7 p.m. FOL meeting
Oct 16	Leclaire Parkfest
Nov 8	7 p.m. FOL meeting
Dec 4	Leclaire Park Luminaria Walk
Dec 11	Rain date for Luminaria Walk
Dec 13	FOL Holiday Open House
Jan	NO FOL Meeting in January
Feb 7	7 p.m. FOL Meeting*

* Meeting on 1st Tuesday since the 2nd Tuesday is Valentine’s day!