



FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE

NEWSLETTER

June 2017

Volume 27 No. 2

PRESENTING THE ANNUAL

LECLAIRE PARK BAND CONCERT & ICE CREAM SOCIAL



SUNDAY, JUNE 25
4 P.M.

Featuring the fabulous
Edwardsville Municipal Band!

Free Concession Stand hosted by
Friends of Leclaire.

Bring your blankets or lawn chairs and settle
in for a relaxing hour-long concert at Le-
claire Park.

Free Concert! Everyone welcome!

GOOD CLEAN FUN AT LECLAIRE PARK!

About four times a year, FOL volunteers get together for a morning of good clean fun at Leclaire Lake. They pull blocks from the lake that have been thrown in by vandals, then put them back in place along the walls and pick up litter from the banks or fish it out of the lake with long poles. Pictured below are Mike Reinhart and Mark Hartman. Other regulars who assist are Bob Nickrent, Lisa Skioldhanlin, Jim Milgrim, William Krause, Al Pauli, Kim Pauli and Theresa Morrison. Thank you for all your hard work! Call 618-659-2108 if you are interested in helping at the next clean-up date or check the Historic Leclaire facebook page for announcements!



WATER STATION, YARD SALES, GOSHEN MARKETS AND MORE

Since the last newsletter, Friends of Leclaire has hosted a water station, held the annual Leclaire Yard Sales, maintained Leclaire Park gardens, donated a tree at the Children's Museum, and hosted a table at the Goshen Market.

The Bonifest 5K Run winds through Leclaire, so at the two-mile mark, FOL (with the assistance of the great kids on the Edwardsville High School Student Council) hosts a water station and cheering section for the runners. Thanks to the Pauli family for providing water!

Mother Nature refused to cooperate for the annual Leclaire Yard Sales this year, but some hearty souls (with garages) were able to carry on. Others postponed and had their own "rain date."

The Goshen Market is an opportunity to educate the public about the history of Leclaire by distributing brochures and newsletters that highlight Leclaire's unique history. We are also able to sell books, shirts and other merchandise that promotes the neighborhood. FOL is at the market on the third Saturday of the month.

We are a very active group and are always interested in additional volunteers. Call 618-659-2108 if you are interested in volunteering.



The extraordinary EHS Student Council volunteers.

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

www.historic-leclaire.org ♦ friends@historic-leclaire.org ♦ 618-659-2108

MANUFACTURING IN LECLAIRE

By Tom Schalk

With the February 2016 opening of the Confluence Fab Lab in the former N.O. Nelson Manufacturing complex, the location is once again home to the constructive talents of the Edwardsville community.

A Fab Lab (fabrication laboratory) is a workshop offering personal fabrication tools, equipment and training. Originally, fab labs began as outreach projects from MIT that have since spread to over 900 locations in nearly 100 countries. Each Fab Lab must meet strict requirements, but each lab is unique in that it can go beyond those requirements.

The Confluence Fab Lab is hosted by Lewis and Clark Community College at the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus. A partial list of available work spaces and equipment/resources includes the following:

- Metalworking – metal lathes, milling machines, plasma metal cutter, welding
- Woodworking/Plastics – lathes, drill press, planers, table saw, bandsaw, joiner
- Electronics – soldering, oscilloscopes, breadboards, voltage meters, third hands
- Finishing/Painting – sand blasting, paint booth with hood, vinyl-sign cutter, laser engraver
- Computer Design – computer drafting and design, 3-D scanner, projector
- Assembly – two large workbenches, hand tools, vises, clamps
- Two desktop 3-D printers as well as two industrial 3-D printers.
- A full range of hand tools are available for checkout.

Currently, the Fab Lab is host to many entrepreneurs/hobbyists who use the area to design and craft their products. These include professional woodworkers constructing specialty furniture, SIUE students manufacturing struts for cars, robotics club members building robots for competition, artists creating metal sculptures and much more.



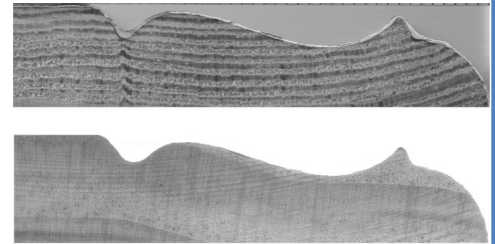
A view of some of the equipment available at the Fab Lab.

Photo courtesy of Paige Allen.

And, for those Leclaire homeowners looking to restore and repair their historic homes, the Fab Lab offers a full range of woodworking machines and wood production equipment. This equipment includes a computer-controlled table router/lathe that has been used to replicate wood components to match vintage parts..

In addition, the lab is maintained by a full-time shop manager who can provide instruction in the use of equipment. The lab is currently open Tuesday - Friday 2 p.m. – 9 p.m. and Saturday 8 a.m. – 8 p.m. Tours are available Saturday mornings or by request. The phone number is 618-468-5941. Visit the web site at <http://www.lc.edu/fablab/> for more information including membership rates.

An example of recent work to replicate a section of damaged baseboard from a 110-year-old house in Leclaire. Above is the original baseboard profile. Below is the baseboard produced at the Fab Lab.



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 ~

June 13	7 pm FOL meeting
June 17	8 am-Noon FOL at Market
June 25	4 pm Leclaire Park Concert
July 11	7 pm FOL meeting
July 15	8 am-Noon FOL at Market
Aug 8	7 pm FOL meeting
Aug 19	8 am-Noon FOL at Market

210 FRANKLIN AVENUE HOME BUILT BY OWNER

Contractor John L. Schwager built the house at 210 Franklin Avenue for his own growing family in 1921. His home was one of 17 houses his company built in Edwardsville that year, an impressive feat for a 28-year-old father of four.

His story begins in 1893 when he was born to Fred and Emma (Nungessor) Schwager at a rental house in what was known as "Lowertown" on North Main Street in Edwardsville. In 1899 his parents moved to a house on Grand Avenue, and in 1913 they built a new house at 827 Grand Avenue.

On May 10, 1916, John was married to Miss Clara Stieren at St. Boniface Church. Clara was the daughter of Joseph and Minnie Hess Stieren and she too was born in Lowertown, probably in the house right next door to where her future husband was born. Her grandfather, Nicholas Hess, and her father, Joseph Stieren, were both long-time employees of N. O. Nelson although neither chose to live in Leclaire. She lived on North Main Street until her parents moved in 1910 to a home in the neighborhood known as "Dublin Heights," so called because a number of Irish families settled there in early times. The Stieren home was at 315 E. State Street.

After John and Clara married, they settled into a home at 221 Franklin Avenue. At that time there were few homes in that area of Leclaire, but over the next few years, John Schwager played a major role in filling the area with charming cottages and bungalows. When the Schwagers moved to Franklin Avenue, they were practically in the country with only eight homes on Franklin and just three or four houses on McKinley Avenue.

By the time they built the house at 210 Franklin in 1921, their family had grown to include three sons and a daughter. It was a big year for John's company. In addition to the 17 houses

mentioned above (nine of them in Leclaire), John Schwager Construction was also building a new school in Alhambra. Work continued at that pace for the company until late 1923 when things came to an abrupt halt. While working on construction of St. John's Methodist Church, the new Edwardsville High School and numerous residential properties, Schwager became over-extended. The newspapers speculated that it was due to non-payment by clients which in turn made it impossible for John to pay for materials. In any case, he needed an immediate inflow of cash. He abruptly left for California where he and his brother, Wilbur Schwager, began building houses.



The John Schwager home at 210 Franklin Avenue as it appears today. The original garage (no longer in existence) had three stalls to accommodate trucks and other equipment for John Schwager's construction business. The advertisement below was run regularly in 1921 at the top of the "Home Builder's Page" in the Edwardsville Intelligencer.

Clara and the children (there were five by then) stayed at the house in Leclaire. In the meanwhile John's financial situation was causing problems for the school district as suppliers tried to take back building supplies. With encouragement from Edwardsville friends and other contractors, John agreed to return to Edwardsville to straighten out matters. After at least two trips back to Illinois, he decided to return to Edwardsville permanently. Due to the Edwardsville community's great respect for John, he quickly rebuilt his business

which included many "California" bungalows as well as schools, churches and the Madison County Country Club.

On September 10, 1934, John was returning from a business meeting in East St. Louis when his car collided with a fruit truck in front of the Country Club. He was just 41-years-old and left behind a widow and seven children ranging from the oldest, John Jr., 17, to the youngest, one-year-old Nancy Louise.

The seven-room house at 210 Franklin was auctioned off to settle the estate, but Clara's parents purchased the house. One can only image how difficult it was for Clara in the years immediately following John's death.

Continued on page 4

THE HOME BUILDERS' PAGE

JOHN L. SCHWAGER, CONTRACTOR AND BUILDER

PHONE 131-W.

FRANKLIN AVE., LECLAIRE

BUNGALOW CONSTRUCTION A SPECIALTY

Let me show you any one of the number of houses I have under construction at the present time. I will be glad to talk over your building plans with you and cheerfully furnish estimates

210 FRANKLIN AVENUE (cont. from page 3)

Although she had worked at the Palace Store before her marriage, she needed to be home to care for her younger children, so the older children worked and her parents also offered assistance. The years to come brought another kind of worry for Clara. During World War II, four of her five sons and a son-in-law were in service overseas (her fifth son was too young). Two of them, Wilson and Edward, met during the war when their assignments crossed in Hawaii in July 1944. Fortunately all four boys came home safely.

Clara's father died in 1939, and her mother, Minnie, came to live with her briefly in 1940. Six years later, in 1946, Minnie sold the house to Clara. At about that time, with the children now on their own, Clara turned the second floor of her home into an apartment for additional income.

The following year, after 13 years as a widow, Clara married a widower, Herbert Voyles, who was an employee of the U. S. Radiator Company. The children were grown so it was just the two of them in the first floor apartment at 210 Franklin Avenue.

On Thursday, April 5, 1956, Clara's mother was taken to St. Joseph's Hospital in Highland. Early the next morning, Clara was taken to the same hospital where she died shortly after arriving. Her mother died four hours later. A double funeral service was held at St. Boniface Catholic Church.

The Schwager family had some hard times in LeClaire, but they persevered. Clara saw their family through after John's death. Although he died too young, John Schwager's legacy includes some of Edwardsville's finest houses. These included the George Meyer House at #7 St. Andrew's Place, the Henry Trares "airplane bungalow" at 424 E. Vandalia, Dr. Eugene Wahl's home at 215 Commercial Street, numerous St. Louis Street homes including houses for Douglas Hadley at 1106 and Edward Stolze at 900 St. Louis Street as well as many charming bungalows and cottages in LeClaire.



Pictured above is John L. Schwager. Photo courtesy of his grandson, E. J. Schwager

A CENTURY AGO IN LECLAIRE

In 1917, America had just entered World War I and the workforce at the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company was encouraged to join in the fight. N. O. Nelson himself tried to enlist, but the military declined his offer. Mr. Nelson, a Civil War veteran, was 73-years-old. However he was a patriot and encouraged his employees to join by offering to match the difference in wages if the military did not pay as well.

Like other local companies Nelson Manufacturing also held Liberty Loan rallies where workers were encouraged to loan part of their earnings to the government to support the war

effort. The loans were in the form of Liberty Bonds.

The ladies in LeClaire formed a Red Cross unit in 1917. They would meet at the school house to sew hospital shirts, make bandages, knit socks and make other needed wartime materials. It was organized by Nelson's daughter, Julia Lawnin.

Some of the first LeClaire soldiers to leave were the Moorman brothers,. Frank Moorman was career military so was one of the first Americans to arrive in France. Guy Weeks is the only known Nelson employee to give his life in the war.

2017 FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE OFFICERS AND TRUSTEES

The new slate of officers and trustees elected at the Annual Meeting in April are familiar names, but they are attached to different responsibilities. After ten years as president, Mike Reinhardt has moved to secretary, and Bob Nickrent has accepted the duties of the president. Theresa Morrison left the secretary position for a spot as trustee. All of the FOL Board members are active participants in almost every aspect of work accomplished by the organization.

Please note that Bob Nickrent, the new FOL president, can be reached at 618-659-2108.

2017 FOL BOARD

Bob Nickrent	President
William Krause	Vice-President
Mike Reinhardt	Secretary
Jim Milgrim	Treasurer
Theresa Morrison	Trustee
Al Pauli	Trustee
Cindy Reinhardt	Trustee