



# FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE NEWSLETTER

December 2020

Volume 30 No. 4r



## Leclaire Merchandise Available for Holiday Giving

Those interested in Leclaire merchandise for Christmas should call 618-656-1294. There are a variety of shirts (\$15-\$30), Leclaire history books (\$15 and \$22), cloth shopping bags (\$3), gift memberships (\$20) and beautiful sets of Leclaire notecards (\$10) and prints (\$15 and \$20) with designs by artist Jon DenHouter (pictured above) available.

In addition, Friends of Leclaire sells inscribed bricks that are installed around the bandstand at Leclaire Park (\$50). An order form for bricks can be found on the Friends of Leclaire website ([historic-Leclaire.org](http://historic-Leclaire.org)).

Proceeds from the sale of merchandise and memberships in Friends of Leclaire are used to beautify the neighborhood or to fund the cost of educational materials related to the history of the Leclaire National Historic District, including the cost of this newsletter. Friends of Leclaire are grateful for your support.

## WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER ...AGAIN

For those of us in Leclaire that live in century-old houses, a “flu ban” or lock down is nothing new at our addresses. In 1918, the residents of these homes lived through a similar experience, although 21st Century residents have many advantages, some obvious, and others that don't readily come to mind.

Confined mostly at home, today's residents are easily informed and entertained through television, radio or the internet. We can also call or email to check on friends and family. In 1918, telephones were not yet common, and it would be decades before television came along. Radios were not commercially available until 1920.

There were telephones, of course, but few people had them in their homes at that time. They were primarily located at businesses. In Leclaire, messages were often left with the operator at the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company or at the Cooperative Store, to be delivered when there was time. Often news relayed in this manner was to announce the death of a family member from a different community or other distressing news.

Most news came from the newspaper, and in late 1918, it was almost all bad news. The good news usually found in the “Society” column was nonexistent since all social events were canceled. Flu bans were in place, although not as deep as they had been in early November 1918. For example, the churches could hold Christmas services, but all the children's programs were cancelled.

The shop windows in Edwardsville had a dazzling array of merchandise for sale over the holidays, but children were warned not to congregate on the sidewalks or press their noses against the glass for a better view.

Today, we can purchase almost anything we need (discounting the temporary toilet paper and

*Continued on page 2*

## Jingle Bells at 6 p.m. on Christmas Eve

There's a new tradition that has been spreading around the globe where people are encouraged to go outside at 6 p.m. on Christmas Eve and ring jinglebells for two minutes as a way to celebrate the “spirit of Christmas and help Santa fly his sleigh.”

That may be the original intent, but everyone can make it their own. Ring your bells to say “Merry Christmas” to friends and neighbors who you can't visit this year. Ring your bells to say “Thank you” to all the first responders and healthcare workers that have worked to keep us safe. Ring your bells to celebrate the beginning of the end of a very rough year. And, yes, ring your bells to celebrate the spirit and meaning of Christmas. All of that and more, and, if it happens to also help a certain little old man dressed in red who has a belly that “shakes when he laughs like a bowl full of jelly,” well, then, that's all the better.



Friends of Leclaire ♦ P. O. Box 644 ♦ Edwardsville, IL 62025  
[www.historic-leclaire.org](http://www.historic-leclaire.org) ♦ [friends@historic-leclaire.org](mailto:friends@historic-leclaire.org) ♦ 618-656-1294

# WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER...AGAIN (CONT. FROM PAGE 1)

cleaning supply shortages), but in 1918, with a war going on, there was rationing of everything from food to shoes to building materials.

At the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918, World War I came to an end. Despite a flu ban people couldn't help but celebrate. There was literally dancing in the streets as people who had been cooped up for months let loose and celebrated the end of the "war to end all wars." The flu ban was lifted a week later, in time for Thanksgiving. But area residents paid a price for all the celebrating and Thanksgiving gatherings. December had another wave of influenza, so the bans had to be instituted again.

For military families in 1918, even though they celebrated the end of the war, it would be weeks before many local families would know for certain that their soldier sons had survived the war. Numerous Leclaire men, encouraged by N. O. Nelson, served in WW I, as well as at least one woman, Esther Rizzoli, who was a nurse in France during the war.

Employment was also affected by the flu in 1918 as it is today. Many businesses had trouble staying open when so many employees were out due to either influenza or war service. The Leclaire Store and other businesses that had previously offered morning and afternoon deliveries now only delivered in the afternoon.

Another major difference is the healthcare available in 1918 vs. 2020. During the earlier epidemic, at a time when antibiotics were not yet available, pneumonia was often fatal. In 1918, death certificates of influenza victims almost always listed both pneumonia and influenza as cause of death. If

there was influenza in your home in 1918, anyone passing by would know since you were required to place a bold sign in the window or at your door to warn people away from your house. No one in the household was allowed to leave the house for work or shopping until released by a doctor. Because the war created a shortage of doctors, the few remaining were often making house calls late into the night.

A major difference in 1918 was that people in the prime of life were hit hardest by the influenza and were most likely to die from it. That's one of the reasons that so many soldiers were victims, they were in the most at-risk age group and were crowded together in barracks or on ships where it spread like wildfire.

In 1918, despite a much lower population than today, there were nearly 500 deaths due to influenza in Madison County, including 30 in Edwardsville. The only known deaths of Leclaire residents, were that of Robert Feldner who died while a soldier in France, and 23-year-old Lulu Russell.

Leclaire has witnessed two pandemics since the village was founded in 1890. Overall, today's residents may grumble and complain, but, unless they or a family member become ill, the ordeal is easier today in comparison to 1918. Lessons learned in both pandemics: social distancing and masks work. Stay safe everyone and support local businesses to the extent you are able. Remember, we're all in this together....again.

*To read more about the 1918 influenza epidemic in Madison County, go to the Madison County Historical Society's website: <https://madcohistory.org/mchs-news-volume-3-number-1/>*

## RECENT NEWS

University Care Center sends a big "thank you" to all those who stopped by in October for the drive-by chicken and dumpling dinners. Their benefit fundraiser for residents earned almost as much as at Leclaire Parkfest.



Leclaire Parkfest, the FOL Holiday Social, the Luminaria, and other events all had to be cancelled in 2020, but we've

still been able to keep the Leclaire Park gardens in shape, and decorate the bandstand with lights for both fall and Christmas. Thank you, volunteers!



FOL was saddened to hear of the recent death of Helen Weimers. Helen grew up in Leclaire and has shared many photographs of life in Leclaire in the 1930s-1940s.

## 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. Membership is just \$20 annually. To join, send dues to Friends of Leclaire, P. O. Box 644, Edwardsville, IL 62025. For information, call 618-656-1294.

FOL normally conducts business meetings at 7 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month except in December and January, but the schedule is currently "as announced" due to COVID.

All members are welcome to attend meetings which are normally held in Room 201 of Building N4 at the Historic N. O. Nelson Campus of Lewis & Clark Community College in Edwardsville. Alternative locations will be announced during COVID.

The quarterly Friends of Leclaire Newsletter is written and edited by Cindy Reinhardt. Contact her at [cynreinhardt@yahoo.com](mailto:cynreinhardt@yahoo.com) with questions or feedback.

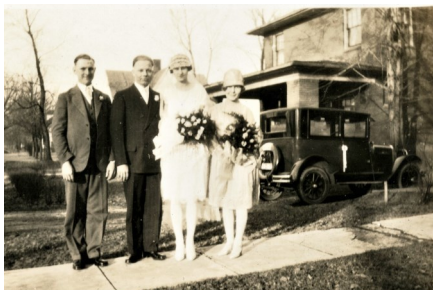


# FOUR BRICK HOUSES - ALL IN A ROW

Four brick houses on Troy Road, south of the intersection with Hale Avenue, were all completed within 18 months of each other in 1923-1924. Although the first was a four-square, the other three are bungalows. They were built by various contractors and although alike in some respects, they also have differences.

## 1100 Troy Road—The Allen Home

This corner house, built for Aurelius and Mary (Sabine) Allen in 1923, is a full two-story brick four-square. The builder was Edwardsville contractor Charles Theuer. Theuer was a second-generation contractor in Edwardsville who built a brick bungalow for himself soon after this one. The Allen home was larger than the three homes that would shortly be built next door. It was a ten-room home that cost \$7,500 to build in 1923.



*Shown at left are Clarence and Frances (Feldworth) Meikamp and their wedding party in 1928. Behind them can be seen the house at 1100 Troy Road. The Meikamps held their wedding reception at her parents' home next door at 1102 Troy Road.*

Aurelius Allen was born Sept. 4, 1886, in Cassville, Missouri. He married Mary Kent Sabine in 1909. It is unknown when the couple moved to Edwardsville, but according to Aurelius' WW I draft registration, by 1918 they were living in a house at 217 Franklin Ave. Aurelius was a salesman for Richards Brick Company.

By the time they built the house at 1100 Troy Road, the Allens already had four children, two boys and two girls, and a fifth, Aurelius Kent Allen, was born at the house in 1925.

In 1928, Aurelius, still employed by Richards Brick, was transferred to St. Louis. He was leasing his Troy Road home to a widow and her daughter in February 1929 when a fire broke out in the house. The tenants weren't home, so the fire had a good start before being discovered by a neighbor. The alarm was sounded and, as was the custom, neighbors organized to try to save valuable furnishings from the fire. The only item they could remove from the house was the piano and it was already smoldering and could not be salvaged. The fire resulted in estimated losses of \$5,000.

The Edwardsville Fire Department (EFD) brought their pumper to help battle the fire, a situation that caused much controversy later. The EFD charged a \$50 fee to make runs outside of city limits, but since the call was not made by the owner, the tenant or by the N. O. Nelson Company, no one was willing to pay the fee. This was evidently becoming a common problem for the EFD at the time.

The Allens placed a want-ad after the fire that said, "remodel it to suit your desire; a real opportunity to get a good house at a bargain." Evidently no one took them up on the offer because several months later they advertised "newly refurbished throughout, furnace in first class shape." It was thought that the furnace may have been the cause of the fire

so it was important for people to know the furnace was safe.

Although often advertised, it would be more than a decade before the house finally sold. The Allen family never returned to Edwardsville.

## 1102 Troy Road - The Feldworth Home

In 1924, while the new resident at 1100 Troy Road worked for Richards Brick, John Feldworth, the new owner at 1102 Troy Road, worked for Alton Brick Company. It is not known if they each used bricks from their respective employers to build their houses.

Newspaper articles from the time said that contractor Edward H. Frank was building an eight-room brick house on Troy Road for John Feldworth at a cost of \$7,500. A newspaper article on Dec. 3 said that the house had been completed "a few days ago."

Although born in Missouri, John Feldworth's family moved to Hamel Township before 1880 when he was still a toddler. In 1901, he married Louise Hellrung who grew up in Pin Oak Township. John was a truck driver for Alton Brick until it closed. After that he worked for numerous other companies doing the same work. The couple shared especially close family ties since John's brother was married to Louise's sister.

The couple often participated in activities of St. Mary's Catholic Church and the community. They hosted parties for friends and family at their home, and Louise belonged to a card club that played pinochle.

John and Louise had two children, a son, Leo and a daughter, Frances. By the time the Feldworth family moved into their new house on Troy Road, Leo had already graduated from high school and moved to California. After high school, Frances worked at Henry C. Gerke's abstract and title office until her 1928 marriage to Clarence Meikamp. Clarence was a pharmacist who was employed by several local drug stores over the years.

Clarence and Frances shared the house on Troy Road with her parents, even after their daughter, Eunice, was born in 1928. Shared households were common during the Depression where multiple bread winners could assure that the family survived. In the late 1930s, the Meikamps purchased the house at 1239 Lindenwood Avenue, just a few blocks away.



*John and Louise (Hellrung) Feldworth in 1901.*



*1102 Troy Road is shown here shortly after the house was built (note the plank sidewalk).*

## TROY ROAD HOUSES (CONT. FROM PAGE 3)

After John's retirement, he and Louise sold their house on Troy Road and moved to a smaller home on Johnson Street. John died in 1946 at the age of 71. Louise was 74 when she passed away in 1952. During the last months of her life, she lived with her daughter and son-in-law on Lindenwood Avenue.

### 1104 Troy Road—The Pizzini Home

William and Florence Pizzini moved into this house in the fall of 1924. The approximate date of their move is known today thanks to a newspaper article in late November 1924 that tells of a burglary at their home just weeks after they moved in. A watch, a revolver, and \$2 from the baby's bank were stolen before the thieves were interrupted when the Pizzini family arrived home.

William Pizzini was born in Glen Carbon in 1897. He was the son of Dominik Pizzini, an immigrant who came to America from the Tyrol region of Austria, now Italy, an area that was the original home of numerous Edwardsville and Glen Carbon families. When he first arrived in America, Dominik spent a few years in New Jersey before coming to Glen

Carbon. In New Jersey he met William's mother, Elizabeth, who emigrated from Saxony when she was 14 years old. All this is to say, that the family had numerous connections to New Jersey where William would eventually meet his wife,



*The William and Florence (Pasolli) Pizzini family with children Glenn and Loretta.*

Florence Pasolli. They were married in Patterson, NJ in 1922. The first year of their marriage was spent in Glen Carbon before moving with their baby, Loretta, into their new house in Leclaire.

Like his father, William was in the beer distribution business before Prohibition. At the time of his marriage, he was working for Raffaele and Ferguson, a candy and tobacco distributor, which he purchased in 1932. The following year, when Prohibition came to an end, he was one of the first to apply for a "Beer Bond." Pizzini Distribution, a distributor of beer and other liquors, would be a significant business in Edwardsville for 80 years through four generations of the Pizzini family.

William and Florence Pizzini remained in their Troy Road bungalow longer than any of the other original owners of these four houses. They built a new house on Briar Lane in the late 1940s (The contractor was their former neighbor, George Ostendorf.) and were going to move, but Florence wasn't ready to leave Leclaire yet. Instead, when their daughter, Loretta, married Robert Stullken in 1947, the Stullkens moved into the new house. More than a decade later, Florence and William moved into another new house on Briar Lane. Florence could still visit her old home though. The Pizzinis sold it to their son, Glenn Pizzini and his family continued to live in the family home until the mid-1960s. The Pizzini family occupied the

house at 1104 Troy Road for over 40 years.

It is thanks to the Pizzini/Stullken family that FOL has many wonderful pictures and stories about Leclaire. Loretta, who was older than her brother Glenn, shared the story of walking from her home to the Leclaire Kindergarten with her friend Lola Hopcroft who lived around the corner on Franklin Avenue, of the school's special May Day celebrations and of skating at Leclaire Park.

One of FOL's favorite pictures of Leclaire Lake shows Loretta's in-laws, Edna Meyer and Raymond Stullken, in a boat during their courting days.

### 1106 Troy Road—The Ostendorf Home

The home for George J. and Marie (Overbeck) Ostendorf was also completed in late 1924. The newspapers didn't list the builder, but since George was a carpenter/contractor for over 50 years in Edwardsville, the house was likely built by one of his crews under his supervision.

While the Allens and the Feldworths were older couples, the Ostendorfs, like the Pizzinis, were a younger couple just starting out. Also for that reason, the houses at 1104 and 1106 Troy Road were more modest in size than 1100 and 1102 that were built for the older couples who were more established financially.

George and Marie Ostendorf were married Oct. 24, 1924, in Edwardsville, and this was their first home. They would live there less than 20 years. In 1943 they built another new house, not far away, at 631 Roosevelt Drive.

George and Marie had no children and are difficult to research because there were three George Ostendorfs living in Edwardsville at the same time (two of them were George J, Ostendorf)

The Ostendorfs sold the house on Troy Road to retired farmers, Fred and Lydia Poos. Fred had several family members in the area, including his brother Edward at 953 Hale Avenue and sister Amelia at 901 Troy Road. Lydia also had relatives in Leclaire, including her nephew, Clarence Meikamp, who by then was living on Lindenwood Ave., but whose in-laws still lived at 1102 Troy Road.



*Robert and Loretta (Pizzini) Stullken leave 1104 Troy Road after their wedding reception in 1947. (Woman at right in gown is a bridesmaid.)*



*Thanks to Kathryn Stullken Biarkis, Kathy Genczo and Diane Fore Malench for sharing family photographs and stories for this article.*