

Leclair House Histories

201 W Franklin

By Cindy Reinhardt (Oct., 1999)

This home with an extra lot was built for Nathan and Hattie Forshaw around the time of their marriage in 1909. Nathan, who came from England, worked in the radiator plant of the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company. He planted the English privet hedge around the yard which remains today. After Nathan passed away, his widow, Hattie, married Alton Logan, a carpenter who made several improvements to the home. Ownership of the home remained in the family until it was sold to the current owners in the late 1990s.

208 Hale Avenue

By Jon Pettibone (Dec., 2003)

One of the joys of living in an older house is taking an interest in the history of it and the people who lived there before you. This is particularly true in a neighborhood like Leclair, where the social history of the person who built your home may be as interesting as the actual home itself. The history of my 1 and 1/2 story, front gable Bungalow proved to be quite interesting.

The original deed for the lot was sold in 1913 to a Mr. Pius Rotter. The seller was N.O. Nelson himself. Mr. Rotter originally bought all of lot 11 and the east half of lot 12 in addition 12, block 15. A person listed as Pius Rotter Sr. bought the west half of 12. Mr. Rotter paid \$650 for his lot and a half in the first addition to Leclair. Like most lots in the subdivision, Mr. Rotter had several requirements placed on the sale of the deed from Mr. Nelson. First, Mr. Rotter was required to use the land only for a residence or for educational purposes. Second, no building could be constructed within 30 feet of the lot line. And third, "no nuisance shall be maintained thereon", which presumably prevented raucous parties and confabulations.

Unfortunately for Mr. Rotter, he never actually built a house on the land. The land was sold to a Henry P. Hotz in 1925, and the seller was listed as Mr. Rotter's widow. Between 1922 and 1925, Mr. Hotz bought 19 other lots in the Leclair subdivision, leading to the speculation that he was a developer. He is also listed as owning a lumber company in the City Directory, supporting this assumption. This seems unusual for the Leclair area, where workers at the Leclair factory owned most lots and whose owners built the houses themselves. The exact date of construction for the house is difficult to establish, as the deed book that I need to pin this down was missing from the courthouse. What intrigue!

Working back from the next available deed record for the lot, it appears that a Mr. Henry Borchwart bought the lot and house from Mr. Hotz sometime between 1925 and 1932. Mr. Borchwart, however, never lived in the house. The first listing for the address in the city directory comes from 1927, listing the residents as Mr. and Mrs. Chris C. Schagunn, though sometimes his name is listed as Christ Schickow. From this information, it would appear the house was built sometime between 1925 and 1927, though it appears that the Schagunns were renters, rather than owners. Five years later, the Schagunns bought the

house from Mr. Borchwart. In an interesting twist, it is Mrs. Schagunn who actually bought the house!

Mr. Schagunn was a worker at the N.O. Nelson plant for much of his life. Early records indicate he was employed as a draftsman by 1921, though in 1934 he was listed as an accountant. Further evidence that he worked for N.O. Nelson comes from a memo indicating 10% pay cuts for all workers making over \$12 per week. Mr. Schagunn's name is hand written on this memo. By 1950, Mr. Schagunn no longer worked at the Nelson plant, instead working as a draftsman for the US Engineering department. His wife, Mildred, was listed as an insurance agent in the city directory of 1941. In 1968, over 40 years from their earliest record of occupying the house, the Schagunn's sold the house to Vera Luttrell. An additional sale likely occurred sometime between then and 1934, as at the 1968 sale, Mr. Schagunn is listed as the owner. Further, his wife is listed as Lillian V., not Mildred. This bit of intrigue will likely remain buried forever within the walls of the modest Bungalow that they occupied for so long.

The house was originally a modest 2 bedroom front gable bungalow with craftsman features. A full width porch graces the front of the house, with the original craftsman pillars and porch railings in good shape. Three knee brackets support the wide, overhanging eaves of the roof on the front and back of the house. The front entrance of the house retains the original craftsman door, flanked by two 6 pane sidelights. The original woodwork of the house was never painted, and retains its rich, dark, natural finish. I'm particularly fond of the original tiger striped (sometimes called "Jappaned") door and window hardware throughout the house. The doors employ a half mortise hinge, which was characteristic of kit homes of the time due to their ease of installation. The rear of the house originally had some kind of structure built at the door to the kitchen. Though I have found some of the original blocks from the foundation of this structure, the deck currently in place gives very few clues to its predecessor. Another interesting feature of the house was found in the back yard when I was putting in a garden. A large area of the back yard was made into a marble patio, using large but irregular pieces of marble. I like to believe that this marble came from the N.O. Nelson marble works, which seems possible.

840 Hale Avenue

By Cindy Reinhardt (May, 2005)

The home at 840 Hale Avenue was built by Daniel & Paulina Lindbeck in 1904. An interesting part of this family's story is that they moved from Bishop Hill, Illinois, a colony of Swedish religious dissenters, to LeClaire Village, a cooperative village.

Bishop Hill, near Galesburg, Illinois, was founded by Eric Jansson & Jonas Olson in 1846. The colony was organized on communal principles and at one time had 1100 members and property valued at over a million dollars. The settlers, known as Janssonites, persecuted for protesting the state religion in Sweden, left to form their own church which they attended twice a day and three times on Sunday. Dissolution and the end of the venture came in 1862.

Daniel Lindbeck, who came to Leclaire in 1904, was the son of Lars Lindbeck, an original Bishop Hill settler. Daniel heard about Leclaire and thought it sounded like a good place to live, work and raise children. The cooperative aspects of the village of Leclaire would certainly be appealing to someone brought up in the colony of Bishop Hill. From the beginning, Daniel found work in the Nelson factories.

Daniel and his wife Paulina brought with them six of their seven children. (By this time a daughter was already married and remained in Bishop Hill with her husband.) Although most of the homes in Leclaire were small, the Lindbecks were given permission to build a larger house due to the size of their family. They lived in a tent while Daniel, a house builder when he lived in Bishop Hill, built their Leclaire home. A greenhouse was attached to one side of the house with an entrance through the basement and Daniel kept bees in the back yard.

After Daniel Lindbeck, the next owner of the house was his son, Carl who brought his bride, Fanny, to live in the house in 1911. Although the Leclaire factories were a thriving concern, Carl didn't work in the Nelson factories. He was a mail carrier, but later become an accountant who helped set up many businesses in Edwardsville. He finished his career at the National Bank. Carl & Fanny had two children, Jay & Betsy who were born in the house built by their grandfather.

Betsy Lindbeck Gerdt has fond memories of growing up in Leclaire. She attended Leclaire Kindergarten, swam in Leclaire Lake and treasures her mother's stories of the early days in Leclaire. She remembers Hale Avenue lined with large trees that practically met at the top to form a green canopy over the street, the Leclaire Cooperative Store and the factory whistle that used to signal the end of the work day.

Carl Lindbeck passed away in 1930, but his widow, Fanny, continued to live in the house with her family until 1951. Although no longer owned by the family, the house at 840 Hale Avenue is still easily recognizable as the house Daniel Lindbeck built over 100 years ago.

Note: Information for this article was taken from a 1999 interview with Betsy Gerdt and her family by Cindy Reinhardt. This article was printed in the Edwardsville Intelligencer as part of National Historic Preservation Month in May of 2005.

826 Holyoake Road

By Cindy Reinhardt (Oct., 1999)

This home was built in 1890-1892 and pictured in a special issue of the Edwardsville Intelligencer printed in 1895. The original owner was Charles Vollentine. Mr. Vollentine was a botanist who planted a large variety of trees and plants in the large yard of the home. He also designed and built furniture to fit the corners of the octagon shaped living room of the house. In 1920 Leonard and Margaret Welch purchased the home for \$2600 with a loan through Clover Leaf Savings and Loan. They owned the home until the mid-1960's. Margaret Welch was a teacher at Columbus School and Mr. Welch worked for U. S. Radiator Company which made radiators for homes.

926 Holyoake Road

By Cindy Reinhardt (March, 2008)

The house at 926 Holyoake was built for John and Alice Allen between 1908 and 1910. Mr. Allen was a foreman in the packing room at the N. O. Nelson Manufacturing Company. The Allens raised 5 children in their small home on Holyoake. After John's death in 1936 two of their children, Jim and Mabel, remained in the home with their mother, Alice. Jim moved to 1025 Troy Road in 1943 when he married Margaret Schmidt. Mabel lived in the home alone after her mother's death in 1944 until she married George Moorman, Sr. in the early 1950s. George & Mabel did extensive remodeling to enlarge and modernize the house. Someone in the Allen family owned and lived in the house from the time it was built until the 1980's when it was purchased from Mabel Allen Moorman's estate by the Richard Massa family. The Massa family sold the house to its current owners in 1994.

The unusual 2 story garage at the back of the house was originally a one story building, but around 1930 a second story was added by Jim Allen for his paint shop. He'd taken some classes at Washington University and became a sign painter in addition to his job with the Terminal Railroad. Mr. Allen had a cot and stove in the shop where hobos were allowed to stay.

210 Nelson Avenue

By Cindy Reinhardt (Oct., 1999)

This home was built in the early 1950's for Marge Kays (later Marge Kays Lindbeck). At the time, she owned the home at 905 Ruskin (around the corner) which was built on two lots. She split off a section of that double yard to build her new home on Nelson so the lot is long, but narrow. It is one of the few ranch style homes in the Leclaire neighborhood and one of only two houses with an address on Nelson Avenue. The home is currently owned by a niece of Marge Kays Lindbeck.

Note: N. O. Nelson did not name a street after himself. Nelson Avenue was originally called Lincoln Avenue, but when Leclaire was annexed to the city of Edwardsville it had to be renamed because Edwardsville already had a street named after Lincoln.

824 Troy Road

By Cindy Reinhardt (May, 2000)

This home at 824 Troy Road was built in 1918 by N. O. Nelson. It was purchased by Adam and Mary Dauderman (originally from Alhambra) for their daughter and son-in-law, Edward and Lilly Volz. The original house was a one story frame dwelling with a kitchen, dining room, living room and one bedroom. In 1929 Ed Volz added a second story (half story) to accommodate his growing family. Ed and Lilly raised two daughters, Evelyn and Betty, and a son, Wilbur, in the home. The children attended Leclaire School and enjoyed skating, swimming and playing at Leclaire Park. They have wonderful memories of the neighborhood.

The Volz family enjoyed the home until the mid-1960s when the home was sold to Wayne and Joann Mount. The Mounts made significant interior renovations to the home during their residence. The current owners purchased the home from the Mount family in 1978 and have made additional interior as well as exterior renovations. Mr. Volz's handmade railings and closet doors remain in their original condition on the second floor and the front of the home looks much the same as it did after Ed Volz's 1929 expansion.. The current owners are grateful to Evelyn Volz Lane and Betty Volz Funston, sisters who were born in the house and lived there until their marriages, for touring the home and sharing the above history.

Note: Joseph Volz (Ed's brother) and family lived across the street from this house at 821 Troy Road. It was common for residents of Leclair to have family that also lived in the neighborhood. Many thanks to Kathy Krishnan for gathering information for this article

1025 Troy Road

By Cindy Reinhardt (Dec., 1999)

The house at 1025 Troy Road was built in 1908 for Joseph Schmidt, a painter with the N. O. Nelson company. The house remained vacant for the first year after it was built because Mr. Schmidt was ill (they called it painter's colic, but it was probably TB). Mr. Schmidt died after owning the house for only five years. His widow, Minnie Schmidt, was then paid a pension by the factory to raise her two children until the oldest, Nelson Schmidt, was old enough to get a job and support the family. When the Schmidt's daughter Margaret, married, she and her husband, Jim Allen, occupied the home. The home remains in the family to this day.

At the back of the yard, N. O. Nelson built a shed on the side of the Schmidt's chicken coop for the fire hose. When the fire whistle at the factory blew, Mr. Schmidt would run from the house pulling his clothes on as he went in his haste to get the hose. The hose was on a wheeled cart that needed to be pushed to the front yard where there was a fire hydrant in the front yard. It was his job to get the hose to the hydrant as soon as possible after the alarm was sounded.