

# ***FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE Newsletter***



Bob Blain on  
memorial swing

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P.O. Box 644, Edwardsville, Illinois 62025

March 2009

## **LAST WINTER CONCERT IN LECLAIRE FRIDAY, MARCH 13, 7 PM**

By the time you receive this newsletter, Edwardsville Parks & Recreation will have just one concert left in their very successful Winter Concert Series held in the Leclaire Room at the N. O. Nelson Campus of LCCC on Troy Road. The last concert will be the SIUE Jazz ensemble featuring Brett Stamps. Tickets are available at the Parks Department office in City Hall and at the Edwardsville Public Library. There is a suggested \$7 donation per ticket.

## **ANNUAL MEETING TUESDAY, APRIL 14, 7:00 PM**

Friends of Leclaire will hold their annual meeting and election of officers at 7:00 PM on Tuesday, April 14<sup>th</sup> in Room 112 of Building N3 of the Nelson Campus of LCCC. This is not our usual room since we sometimes have a larger crowd for the annual meeting. A slate of officers will be presented and nominations are welcome. The board consists of a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and three trustees. Please contact President Mike Reinhardt at 656-1294 with nominations or to express an interest in service.

## **MAYORAL FORUM**

**WED. MARCH 18, 7:30 PM  
LECLAIRE SCHOOL  
GYMNASIUM  
FRANKLIN AVENUE.**

Friends of Leclaire will host a forum with Mayoral candidates Gary Niebur and Wesley Tippit. Guidelines will be similar to those of the League of Women Voters. Candidates will begin with opening statements then respond to prepared questions from Friends of Leclaire. The floor will then be opened to questions from the audience. Audience members will be given index cards as they arrive so they can submit questions to the candidates. The questions will be read by moderator, William Krause.

There is also an aldermanic race in Ward 6 with three candidates running for the seat currently held by Welsey Tippit. The candidates are Craig Louer, Richard Rezabek and Janet Urbanek. FOL had hoped to hold a forum for those candidates also, but dates did not work for all candidates.

## **CHILDREN'S MUSEUM AT EDWARDSVILLE**

Open 10 AM – 4 PM on Tuesday, Friday, Saturday and by appointment for groups, the Children's Museum is interactive, educational and fun. 922 Holyoake Road. They will post their schedule of summer camps in March. Check [www.childrens-museum.net](http://www.childrens-museum.net) or call the museum at 692-2094 for more information.

## **SPRING DIALOGUE ON LECLAIRE**

**THURS. APRIL 16, 12:30-1:30**

The Main Street Community Center will host a Spring Dialogue on Leclaire in conjunction with SIUE's Office of Educational Outreach on April 16<sup>th</sup>. The hour long presentation by Cindy Reinhardt will begin at 12:30 PM at the center located at 1003 N. Main Street. No reservations are needed and the program is free to all who want to attend.

The Community Center also serves a hot lunch every day. Anyone interested in having lunch at the center before the presentation, should call at least 24 hours in advance to make reservations. The cost is \$3.50 and they begin serving at 11:00 AM. Call 650-3209 to find out what is on the menu.

Formerly the Edwardsville Senior Center, the reorganized facility now has activities for adults of all ages. For more information on the Main Street Community Center and its activities, visit their web site at [www.mainstcc.org](http://www.mainstcc.org).

**SAVE THE DATE  
18<sup>th</sup> Annual Parkfest  
October 18, 2009**

## **VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES**

Friends of Leclaire will again have a booth at the Goshen Market beginning in May. Once a month, usually the third Saturday, we need volunteers to work the Friends of Leclaire booth on a Saturday morning from 7:45 until noon. Mike Reinhardt and Jim Milgrim help with set-up and take down.

With the coming of spring, there will also be gardening to be done at Leclaire Park. The tentative date is Saturday, April 18 at 9 AM. Last year's snapdragons did well in the northeast flower bed so will be planted again. Also, mulch will be needed in the rose garden and in the Ketcham Garden. The zinnias we tried around the restrooms last year didn't thrive so we will try something new this year.

Please call 656-1294 if you are able to help with our projects.

## **DAFFODILS AT LECLAIRE PARK**

Last fall the Edwardsville Beautification and Tree Commission planted thousands of daffodils at the Cole's Monument and on Edwardsville street embankments. In addition, approximately 800 bulbs were planted at Leclaire Park along the banks and around the bandstand. Mike Reinhardt and Jim Milgrim planted about 700 bulbs around the lake and the Edwardsville Garden Club planted the remaining bulbs around the bandstand. Now we can sit back and wait for the "show" this spring.

## **E-MAIL ADDRESSES**

Please send us your e-mail address if you want to receive notices of our monthly meetings and occasional notes of other issues affecting the neighborhood and we will include you in mailings. The FOL e-mail address list remains confidential and is not given to other organizations or individuals. You can contact FOL at [friends@historic-leclaire.org](mailto:friends@historic-leclaire.org).

## **LECLAIRE RESEARCH**

Friends of Leclaire would like to thank Jim Fralinger for giving us a lead that led to the historic article in this newsletter and a dozen others from Chicago, Los Angeles and Boston papers. N. O. Nelson and his village were known across the country at the turn of the 20th century. While providing a glimpse into Leclaire's past, these articles also need to be read with caution due to a number of errors. In this article Leclaire is misspelled, they state that the factory buildings were all painted white (not the case) and are mistaken about who lived and worked in Leclaire. Leclaire workers had the freedom to live in or out of Leclaire, and Leclaire residents had the choice to work in the Nelson factories or elsewhere. But despite these errors, they got it mostly right and have provided additional clues we'll want to investigate in the future.

If you find historical documents on Leclaire or have photographs we can copy, please call 656-1294 or send an e-mail to [friends@historic-leclaire.org](mailto:friends@historic-leclaire.org)

## **RESEARCHING YOUR LECLAIRE HISTORIC HOME**

A worksheet with resources for researching historic Edwardsville homes has been posted to our Leclaire website ([www.historic-leclaire.org](http://www.historic-leclaire.org)) for use by anyone who might be interested in finding the origins of their house. Cindy Reinhardt prepared the worksheet as a handout for a recent program for HPC and the Edwardsville Public Library on researching older homes. The Historic Preservation Lecture Series will continue through June. Upcoming programs will cover historic landscaping, repurposing older buildings, cemeteries and vintage tools. For a complete listing with times and dates, visit the library at [www.edwardsvillelibrary.org](http://www.edwardsvillelibrary.org) or call the library at 692-7556.

## **MEMBERSHIP IN FRIENDS OF LECLAIRE**

Membership dues for Friends of Leclaire are used to promote the history and preservation of the historic Leclaire neighborhood. Founded in 1890 as an experiment in cooperative living, Leclaire was designated a National Historic District in 1979. Walking tour brochures, books, DVDs and other materials on the history of the neighborhood are available. Send an e-mail to [friends@historic-leclaire.org](mailto:friends@historic-leclaire.org) or call 656-1294 for additional information. Members receive quarterly issues of the Leclaire newsletter and the gratitude of FOL for their support!

Interested in joining Friends of Leclaire? Renew your membership or join Friends of Leclaire for just \$10 per year by mailing a check to: Friends of Leclaire, P.O. Box 644, Edwardsville, IL 62025. Please include your name, telephone number, e-mail and street addresses.

## **PASS THE WORD**

### **MAYORAL FORUM**

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## **THANKS**

Thanks as always to Cindy Reinhardt who makes this newsletter possible by providing copy even when she is overwhelmed with the work of moving the SIUE University bookstore back into its newly renovated quarters.

We hope you enjoy as much as we did reading about the Sehnert House and the 1902 article from the Chicago Tribune. One wonders if Nelson's philosophy of profit sharing and low cost home mortgages had been adopted nationwide whether we would have the debtor crisis we now face.

Bob Blain, Editor

## HISTORIC LECLAIRE HOME

Last spring the Edwardsville Glen Carbon Chamber of Commerce received an inquiry from a woman in West Virginia who had located a house identical to hers on their web site. Margaret Hambrick had googled “Victorian half turret” and one of her hits was the Chamber’s web site which includes the Leclaire walking tour brochure produced by HPC several years ago. The house described as having a “Victorian half turret” is the one at 716 Hale Avenue.

The Chamber contacted Friends of Leclaire who began exchanging information with Margaret Hambrick. She knew what FOL was unaware of, that the house at 716 Hale Avenue was built from plans out of a catalog published around the turn of the last century by J. H. Daverman and Sons of Grand Rapids, Michigan. She had a copy of the catalog page which listed the house as “Modern Colonial No. 18” as well as a full set of house plans that came with her house. She was looking for vintage photos of the house to help her determine paint colors for her restoration.

Friends of Leclaire were able to locate a clearer photo for her at the Madison County Historical Society and she provided copies of the catalog page and house plans. Then additional research on the Leclaire version of the house began. We learned that the lot in Leclaire was purchased in 1908 for \$500 and the house was completed in 1909 for Erwin and Emma Sehnert.

Erwin “Dick” Sehnert was born on January 6, 1885 in Greenville, IL, but came to Edwardsville as a young child. His parents, John L. & Frances Sehnert, operated the Sehnert’s Hotel which many may remember from more recent times as the building that was home to the Corner Tavern, just outside Leclaire on Wolf Street.

It is doubtful that Erwin Sehnert worked in the Leclaire factories. He



**The Sehnert House at 716 Hale Avenue**

Photo courtesy of the Madison County Historical Museum - Archival Library

is listed in one city directory as a painter, but spent most of his career as supervisor of state highways and superintendent of streets for the city of Edwardsville. Notes from his family say that he also ran a small tavern and packaged liquor store with his brother on Main Street but it had to close when Prohibition came along.

He married Emma Rizzoli in 1906 at St. Boniface Church. Emma was born in 1886 in Ohio of Tyrolean (Austrian) immigrant parents. She was the daughter of Joseph and Clementina Rizzoli. The 1900 census lists her parents along with 5 children and a niece in Leclaire. It is not known when they moved to Leclaire, but family history says Emma’s youngest brother, Leo, was born here. He was 7 years old in 1900, making them one of the earliest families to move to Leclaire. The Rizzoli family lived just down the street from the Sehnert House at 754 Hale Avenue. Emma’s father, Joseph, was a cabinet maker at the Nelson factories.

The Sehnerts had one child, a son, who was killed in an accident at the age of 28. They also had an adopted daughter, Helene Rizzoli, listed in the 1920 census. Erwin &

Emma lived in their Hale Avenue house until Erwin’s death in 1951. Shortly afterwards, Emma sold the house to Chester Eaker.

## AREA HISTORIAN SEEKS EDWARDSVILLE POSTCARDS FOR BOOK

Cheryl Eichar Jett, historian and author, is looking for vintage postcards and Real Photo cards of Edwardsville for a postcard history book to be published in the fall by Arcadia Publishing Company. The book will include about 200 postcard images of Edwardsville from the late 1800s through the mid 1900s. Anyone who has vintage Edwardsville postcards, whether a large collection or just a few, call Jett at (618) 567-6895 or [cheryl.jett@hotmail.com](mailto:cheryl.jett@hotmail.com).

All postcards will be carefully scanned and the originals returned promptly to the owners; image credit will be given in the book to those who permit their postcards to be included. Postcards and Real Photo cards of people, residences, businesses, and events are especially needed, in addition to public buildings, parks, schools, churches, monuments, and others.

## Chicago Tribune

November 23, 1902

### ***A Town Where Everybody is Happy***

Properly fitting a young man or woman to cope with the world these days is to educate not only their mind but their hands as well, according to the teachings of N. O. Nelson, a St. Louis millionaire. To carry out his ideas Mr. Nelson has recently equipped at Le Claire, a suburb of St. Louis, a modern training and industrial school. This school is fashioned much after the one at Tuskegee, Ala., under the direction of Booker T. Washington. Mr. Nelson's training school is for children of poor folk only. He recently turned over a number of buildings at Le Claire to the nonsectarian church workers of St. Louis who will have charge of the institution.

At Le Claire, a happy and contented class of people is found. Two hundred families live there, finding dependence upon Millionaire Nelson, who owns four huge plumbing factories, the sole source of employment to every resident of Le Claire. He employs his men upon a profit sharing basis, and has done everything to surround his shops with an industrial haven of rest.

#### **Where Crime is Unknown**

There are no city officials, no jail, no lawmakers for the town direct. Le Claire is located in Illinois and comes under the state laws; otherwise its residents are hampered by no rules and regulations other than their own conscience, which is especially delicate when it comes to wrongdoing. No crimes are ever committed in Le Claire. No young woman or any of the young men have turned into evildoers. In short, the town is a modern Arcadia, where everyone seems happy and content.

In founding the town Mr. Nelson bought 125 acres and chose the best land he could find in the Mississippi River bottoms. He built his four factories of brick and covered them with a coat of white paint. Then he

planted flowers, grass and shrubbery, so as to hide the barrenness of the walls and make the place more presentable. The interior of his factories was airy and commodious and from the start he provided for the men who were to work for him by the establishment of a free dining room, a light luncheon free, and shower baths for every worker. One of the wishes of Mr. Nelson was that every man should take advantage especially of the baths.

#### **Sixteen Years of Profit Sharing**

He commenced in 1886 to allow his men to share in the profits, realizing that his business would always keep him rich, despite the thousands of dollars that he was giving away to his helpers. His first dividends were paid in cash, but a few years ago he decided that he was going to retire from the business before long, and he commenced paying the profits of his employed in stock of the concern, thus relieving himself of his holdings at a slow rate, and placing only the faithful in charge. He has already distributed \$70,000 worth of stock to his helpers.

The true purpose of profit sharing, according to Mr. Nelson, is to make the employees fellow owners as well as fellow workers. Each man's share of the profit is in accordance to his wages. Only men of clean and unblemished character are hired in the Nelson factories, so that new comers will not tarnish the good reputation of the town. There are no rented houses, although 200 or more neat cottages adorn the clean and picturesque wide streets. Mr. Nelson always builds a new home for every new man added to the community, and the man pays for it out of his wages.

#### **Town Paints Private Houses**

By common consent of the profit sharers, a great portion of the earnings of the factory are now being used to beautify the town. The houses are all being repainted out of this common fund. It sounds odd to the outsider,

but it is actual industrial conditions as found in this prosperous village.

While Mr. Nelson is an eccentric millionaire, his cup of human kindness is always overflowing. He sits in his office in St. Louis, surrounded by a dozen helpers, but he is never too busy to drop his work and talk with some poor and deserving person about his troubles. But his steel gray eyes are piercing, and he can detect a fraud in a moment. By those who are worthy a vain appeal is never made. He lives among the working people at Le Claire, and his family associates with the workmen and their families. He quits the city early every day to return to happy and peaceful existence at his spacious but plain home in the town that surrounds his works. He is the leader in everything, but he wields no power, for he claims that all are equal.

Mr. Nelson has original ideas upon the industrial problems that are bobbing up every day. He has employed hundreds of men for years and has never had a strike. He says, "The public utilities upon which every convenience, and, we may say life, depends, should be owned and controlled by the public. Under present industrial conditions any private capitalist can recognize the rights of labor by sharing profits with them. This has been done by myself for sixteen years. Union wages are paid, then interest on capital, and the remainder is divided in a fixed proportion between wage earner and employer. A majority of employees in my shop are shareholders, and the intention is to gradually work the property into their control. The employees manage my place even now. Strikes are bound to continue just so long as there are wage earners on one side and employers on the other. To settle this there should be a division of the profits all around. This is one of the most successful and the only feasible plan to settle forever all labor troubles."