

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

LeClaire Historic District

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Edwardsville

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

56

STATE

Illinois

CODE

012

COUNTY

Madison

CODE

110

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES, RESTRICTED

YES, UNRESTRICTED

NO

PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Various--see enclosure

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Madison County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

County Building

CITY, TOWN

Edwardsville,

STATE

Illinois

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic Structures Survey - Madison County

DATE

October 1972

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Department of Conservation

CITY, TOWN

Springfield,

STATE

Illinois

# DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE: _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Industrial Village of LeClaire is situated entirely within the boundaries of the City of Edwardsville, (the County seat of Madison County). The site is a short way from the bluff which overlooks the American Bottoms and is approximately 20 miles from the downtown of St. Louis, Missouri. The area is generally level although parts are directed by stream valleys.

The LeClaire Historic District encompasses approximately 200 acres located in the southeastern quarter of the City. It is bounded on the West by Longfellow Ave., on the south by Hadley Ave., on the east by Madison Ave., and forming a point to the north. These represent the original boundaries of the tract of land which constitutes the district. The street pattern and names are those given at the time of its original subdivision.

The land use of LeClaire was carefully conceived by the developer, N.O. Nelson. Lands were set aside for residential, recreational, educational and industrial use. The residential character was preserved through the use of deed restrictions. As a consequence, the land use has largely remained unchanged with one exception, the manufacturing complex. While most of the original plant buildings remain intact, they are being used by Southern Illinois University for offices and art classrooms. Little vacant land remains within the district.

The street pattern, a combination of curvilinear and rectangular, has not been modified since original subdivision except for a two hundred foot section at the north end of Hale. The streets were named by N.O. Nelson in honor of men significant in the cooperative movement, Holyoake, Hale, and Ruskin.

Most of the residential and non-residential structures are original. However, many have been modified through the use of siding or the addition of rooms. At the time of development the site was in crop land. Upon development, N.O. Nelson introduced a landscaping program. Many of the trees along the parkways and at the LeClaire Lake are remnants of this program.

Of the 300 structures located within the district, 7 have been evaluated as possessing special architectural or historical significance.

# SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS-GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The LeClaire Historic District embraces all lands which were deeded to the Nelson Manufacturing Company between 1890 and 1895 for the purpose of building a model industrial village along the lines of a garden community. The funds to purchase the land were subscribed by the people of Edwardsville. The land was purchased by a citizens' committee and deeded to the Nelson Company in parcels according to a formula based upon the number of factory buildings erected and workers employed. The transfer began in 1890 and was complete by 1895.

LeClaire is distinguished from other company towns because of the social ideals of N.O. Nelson, its founder, and his conception of a total community. It represented a laboratory in which Nelson was able to put into practice a number of his ideas which were formulated over a period of years.

Nelson had experienced labor violence first hand during the railroad strikes of 1885 and 1886. Earlier he had become interested in economics, social problems, and a variety of philanthropic enterprises. He involved himself in settlement house work, worker self improvement organizations, the social gospel movement, profit sharing, and consumer cooperatives.

Nelson was a man who held strong social convictions. These convictions were shaped by several forces and movements of his time. One of these was the Ethical Culture Movement founded by Felix Adler, New York, 1876. Although a Unitarian, Nelson joined the Ethical Society of St. Louis, founded in 1886, and was a close friend of its first lecturer and organizer Walter Sheldon. A part of the creed of the Society was the belief "in man's efforts to establish the ideal on earth; it will draw all nations into everlasting brotherhood of creative work." In 1888, the St. Louis Society formed a Workman's Self Culture Halls Association. The aim of the association was to provide "opportunities for general self culture among working men and women." The Halls included free reading rooms, lectures and classes. It was the settlement house idea with a heavy educational accent. Nelson was active in the association and used it as a pattern for the Academy in LeClaire.

A second movement influencing Nelson was that of profit sharing. In 1887, he introduced a system modeled after that instituted some years earlier by the House of LeClaire in Paris, France. The profit sharing system was one of the foundations upon which the plants of LeClaire Village were established.

While predating Ebenezer Howard's garden city, LeClaire Village reflected several of the ideas later proposed by Howard. For one thing, Nelson believed "that nothing contributes so greatly to the welfare and contentment of the American Working Man as the possession (ownership) of a comfortable home.

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Further, "all who wish can grow their own vegetables and fruits and yet live within easy reach of their place of employment.

As many of his contemporaries, Nelson was influenced by Edward Bellamy's book, Looking Backward 1888. Nelson financially supported a magazine published by Bellamy and was involved in the establishment of the St. Louis chapter of the Bellamy Society. It also should be noted that Ebenezer Howard was influenced by Looking Backward, and was instrumental in its publication in England. Periodically, Nelson hosted the St. Louis Chapter of the Society at Leclaire.

While Nelson introduced a variety of social ideas into Leclaire he also created an intellectual atmosphere which influenced the village and its residents.

Leclaire differed from other model villages of the time in that it was not a "show piece" of the owner's paternalism, but, rather a social experiment predicted upon a set of social ideals.

In 1894, Nellie Bly, after a visit at Leclaire, filed a newspaper story with the St. Louis Post Dispatch comparing Leclaire with Pullman. In this story she noted the following, "as I walked through the factories I looked at the men. It is generally easy to judge a man's condition by his face. I noticed it so much in Pullman. The men, and more especially the women, had a sad, weary expression, as if they never had any chance to feel lighthearted and to laugh. But the workmen in the Leclaire factories were working away as if work was a pleasure. If one expects to find grandeur in Leclaire, one will be disappointed. The town is simple and pretty and it wears splendidly. The longer I was in Leclaire, the better I liked it. The longer I was in Pullman, the less I liked it. In Leclaire the streets are not laid out like a checkerboard, with barracks of brick tenements filling every square, as at Pullman. All the houses are frame, as country houses should be. There are no double houses for two or more families in Leclaire. There are no blocks of tenements with from six to a dozen people in two rooms as at Pullman. Every house in Leclaire is individual, and only one family in a house."

The Nelson Company specialized in the manufacture of commercial plumbing fixtures. The business and sales offices were located in St. Louis, Missouri and other plants were located in Alabama. In 1886, Nelson introduced profit sharing into the corporation or more precisely, labor copartnership.

In the late 1880's, Nelson in consultation with his St. Louis employees arrived at the decision of locating factories in a rural setting and creating a village where workers could own their own cottages. C. A. Cameron, a St. Louis architect, was employed to layout the original residential area and design the factory buildings giving special attention to the landscape treatment. In addition the company opened a cooperative store for its employees.

(Cont.)

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LeClaire was an open community. Lots, housing, recreational, and cultural facilities were open to any and all who wished to use them. Nelson insisted that LeClaire remain unincorporated, however, and it remained so until the 1930's. Services such as water, fire, and the like were provided by the company. Workmen in the factory could purchase lots through special company financing plans and the company would build the houses virtually for the cost of materials. There was no requirement for employees to live in LeClaire and many lived in Edwardsville. Periodically lots were placed on public sale. Planting materials for gardens were supplied at no cost from a company nursery and awards were given annually by the company for best gardens. In addition, the company provided recreational, educational and cultural opportunities. A school building known as the Academy was constructed. During the day it was used for a kindergarden and for a teenage work study program. At night it was used for adult education, lectures, parties and clubs. Nelson brought people such as Edward E. Hale, Jane Adams, and John Fiske, to lecture at the Academy. A lending library containing over 2000 books was established as well as a bowling alley. A musical band, baseball team, and football team were organized and sponsored by the company. No charges were made for the activities and facilities of LeClaire nor were they limited to the employees or residents.

The name LeClaire was selected by the employees at the founding of the village in 1890. It was named in honor of the Maison LeClaire in France which was an early experiment in profit sharing and cooperation. The development, organization and activities of LeClaire were widely discussed during the period 1890-1920. Articles concerning the village appeared in periodicals of the time such as the Independent, Charities, and Commons, and the Arena and in books by Ida M. Tarbell, William Tolman and Budgett Meadin.

Early in its history, LeClaire developed a strong identity, and this continues today. Visually the streetscape, the street pattern, landscaping and wood frame structures, give a sense of cohesion and intergrity which differentiates it from surrounding areas. Recently the people of LeClaire have organized the Residents Association with the intent of per-  
serving it's character.

STURCTURES OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE

1. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
744 Holyoake Rd.  
Photographs 19 and 28  
Built in 1894 for Louis D. Lawnin, Vice-President and later, President of N.O. Nelson Company. Mr. Lawnin was also the son-in-law of N.O. Nelson.
2. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
309 Jefferson  
Photograph #4  
This building was built and used as a rooming house for the factory workers in 1890.

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3. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
715 Hale Ave.  
Photographs #7 and #25  
This structure is the Academy Building, built in 1895.
4. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
S.W. Corner of Brown and Wolf Streets  
Photograph #3  
This complex of buildings constituted the N.O. Nelson Factory which was designed by architect E.A. Cameron and the surveyor and civil engineer Julius Pitzman, both of St. Louis, Missouri. Mr. Pitzman served as the Chief Engineer for Forest Park, St. Louis, from 1874, until its completion and was also responsible for the layout of many estates within St. Louis.
5. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
403 Jefferson  
Photograph #16  
This residence was built c.a. 1890 for the Allen Family.
6. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
S.W. Corner of Wolf and Leclaire Streets  
Photograph #11  
Built in 1889, this railroad station serviced the N.O. Nelson Factory.
7. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
408 Jefferson  
Photographs #15 and #30  
This residence was built for and used by the N.O. Nelson Family.  
Built in 1895.

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STRUCTURES OF OTHER SIGNIFICANCE

1. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
516 East Ave.  
Photograph #17  
Residence of N.O. Nelson Factory foreman, Mr. and Mrs. Halquist, built c.a. 1918. No major changes to the exterior of the home have occurred with the exception of the removal of the railing from the front porch.
2. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
829 Ruskin Ave.  
Photograph #8  
This residence is typical of the style of residences built in the earlier development of the Leclaire District. It is original and present owner is the Hanser Family, built in 1927. The majority of the homes of this period were constructed with wood siding. Mr. Hanser (Deceased) was an employee of the railroad company.
3. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
828 Ruskin Ave.  
Photograph #13  
A residence built in a more recent period, c.a. 1949, than the residence in Photograph #8 which is located just diagonally across the street. The character of the district has been maintained by the use of a wood frame structure and wood siding and by its scale. The residence was built for the Klaustermeyer family and has had a matching dormer added to the north half in 1978.
4. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
926 Holyoake Ave.  
Photograph #5
5. Madison County, Illinois  
Edwardsville  
861 Hale Ave.  
Photographs #12, #26, and #27  
An excellent example of the early residences of the district.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Budgett Meakin <u>Model Factories and Villages</u> London, 1905	W.T. Norton <u>Centennial History of Madison County, Illinois and Its People to 1912</u> Lewis Publishing Co. Chicago, 1912
Garner, John S. "LeClaire, Illinois: A model Company Town", <u>The Society of Architectual Historian Journal</u> VI, 30, 1971, pgs. 219-227	W.T. Norton <u>Dictionary of American Biography</u> Vol. VII, 1934 Charles Scribners Sons, New York

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 200

QUADRANGLE NAME Edwardsville

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1" to 24000"

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,6 2439,50 429,93,40

B 1,6 2439,50 429,88,50

C 1,6 2440,40 429,88,50

D 1,6 2440,00 429,80,40

E 1,6 2434,90 429,80,90

F 1,6 2435,50 429,86,00

G 1,6 2438,40 429,93,50

H                              

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION Commencing at the intersection of S. Brown St. and Wolf St. the boundary runs south on S. Brown St. continuing south along the east property line of LeClaire Subdivision Blk.2 to the intersection of Jefferson AVE., then East to the intersection of Hadley Ave., then West to the point 145ft. West of Troy Rd. then North to the interior property lines south of McKinley Ave. then west to the east line of the C&N & Nicol Plate R.O.W. then north and east along this R.O.W. line to the intersection of Wolf St. to include the Edwardsville railroad station.

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

David L. McDonough Chairman

January 19, 1979

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation Commission, City of Edwardsville

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

400 North Main St.

TELEPHONE

656-3444

CITY OR TOWN

Edwardsville,

STATE

Illinois

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*David L. McDonough*

TITLE

*Director, Ill. Dept. of Conservation*

DATE

*7/20/79*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

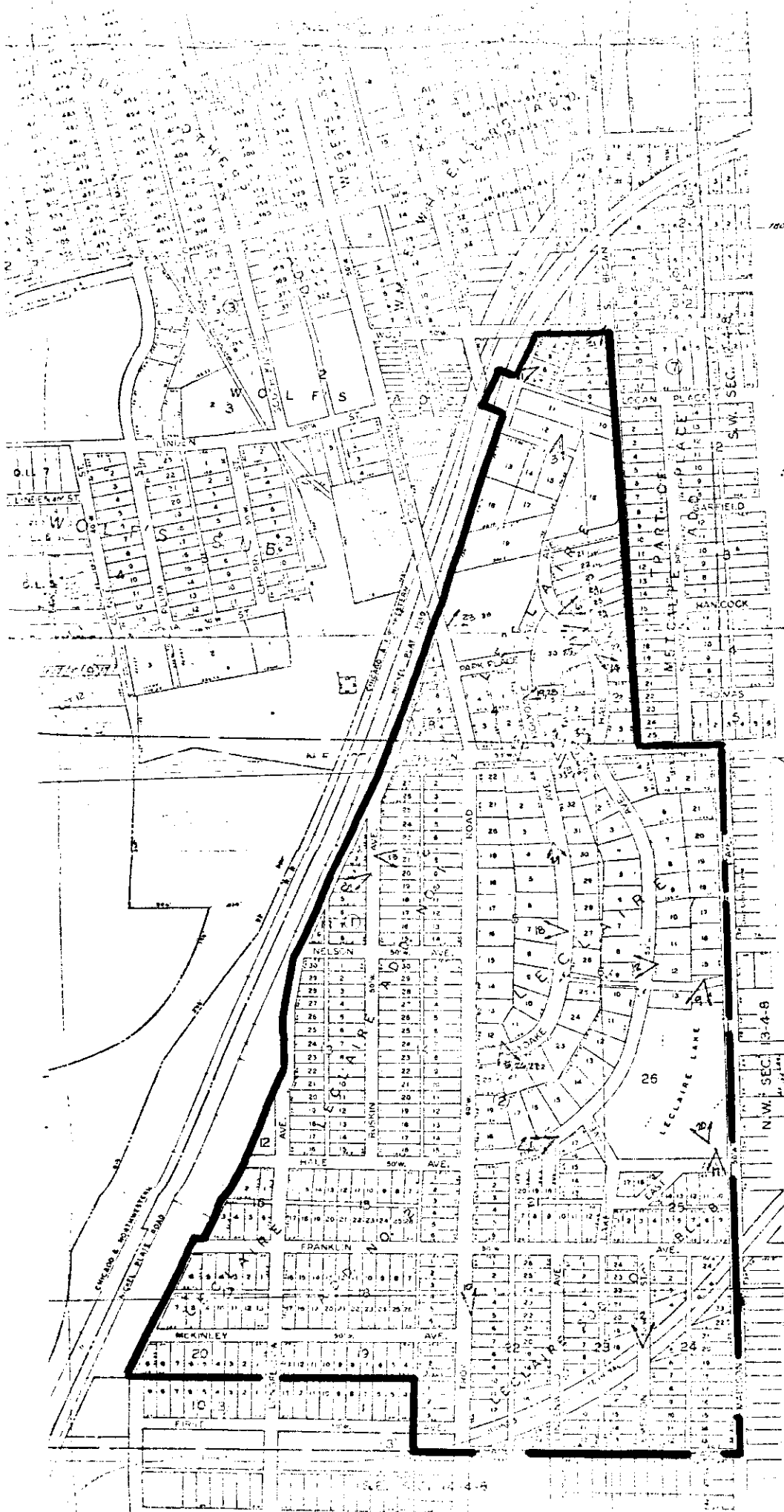
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION





KEY TO SUBDIVISIONS

- ① CROCKER PLACE
- ② CROCKER SUB.
- ③ MANDROP'S ADD.
- ④ STOLZ'S SUB.
- ⑤ GLETTIG PLACE
- ⑥ CLOVERLEAF ADD.
- ⑦ SUB. BUILT METCALE
- ⑧ RISSENTHAL'S REG'UL.
- ⑨ SUB. OF OLD 2 & 4 OF 1807

LE CLAIRE  
HISTORIC  
DISTRICT

KEY TO SUBDIVISIONS

- ① SUB. BL. 11 LECLAIRE
- ② RE-SURVEY LITS 18-20-22
- ③ PART OF MAHLE HEIGHTS

PHOTO VIEW MAP  
 ◁ VIEW AND PHOTO

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ILLINOIS

Date Entered AUG 8 1979

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
✓ Le Claire Historic District	Edwardsville Madison County
La Grange Village Historic District	La Grange Cook County

Also Notified

Honorable Charles H. Percy  
Honorable Adlai E. Stevenson  
Honorable Melvin Price  
Honorable Edward J. Derwinski

**COPY OF CONGRESSIONAL NOTIFICATION**

For further information, please call the National Register at (202)343-6401.