

History of Laclede Groves

Presentation by Clo Pottebaum
Village of Laclede Oaks (VLO) Residents' Meeting
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INTRODUCTION

First, I thought that I should let you know how I got this speaking engagement. It is because our president, Martin Zschiegner, learned that I had written the chapter "History of Laclede Groves" in this blue booklet entitled *First Residents of the Patio Homes in the Village of Laclede Groves*. The map of the Laclede Groves Retirement Community 1997 that I have given you is copied from this booklet.

LAND DONATION

For this presentation, I thought I would start with the years in the early 1900's. In the early 1900's this area was farmland and the property of a man by the name of Joseph Sheets. Due to illness, Joseph Sheets entered St. John's Hospital, which at that time was located at 307 South Euclid in the city of St. Louis, in the Central West End. In gratitude for the kindness and care received as a patient, in 1916 Joseph Sheets donated the 64 acres of land that we know as the Laclede Groves campus to the Sisters of Mercy who cared for him and were administrators of the hospital. The St. John's Hospital on Euclid was the predecessor of the present day hospital on Ballas Road in Creve Coeur in St. Louis County officially known as St. John's Mercy Medical Center and which is still administered by the Sisters of Mercy.

CONVENT

The Sisters of Mercy is an order of Catholic women founded in Dublin, Ireland, by a woman named Catherine McAuley. The purpose of the order was to combine

the contemplative life with active works of mercy such as care of the sick, care of the aged, child care, and education. These Sisters of Mercy came to the United States and eventually to the city of St. Louis. They kept growing in numbers, so they considered the donation of land from Joseph Sheets to be a "providential gift." In 1919, they constructed a convent with the chapel. On your maps it is the right side center of the building labeled CONVALESCENT HOME.

Today it is the entrance for the Lutheran Convalescent Home and the location of the Communication Center for this campus. It has the address 723 South Laclede Station Road. The Sisters responded to their donor by naming this newly constructed building St. Joseph Convent, and they had a statue of St. Joseph on a pedestal in front of the convent on what is now an enlarged parking lot, but roughly in the vicinity of where the statue of Jesus, the Risen Savior stands in the Robert and Florence Imse Memorial Garden. This St. Joseph statue and pedestal along with a plaque honoring Joseph Sheets has been moved to the grounds of St. John's Mercy Medical Center where the Sisters have a retirement home. [Note: *After this presentation, I learned that the Sisters of Mercy have recently moved the statue of St. Joseph to their Mercy Center located at 2039 North Geyer Road in Frontenac.*]

SCHOOL

The St. Joseph Convent built in 1919 needed to be enlarged because of the number of novices entering the order and because the nuns were caring for orphan girls. In 1922, two wings were added to the original building. They can be seen on your map. The north wing became the home for about fifty girls who were either orphans or had only one parent. These girls were cared for and educated by the Sisters and this school was appropriately named St Catherine's School for Girls after the Sisters' founder Catherine McAuley.

Over the years, the nuns continued to use some of the land as farmland—complete with grazing cows. St. Joseph Convent continued to serve as Novitiate and Motherhouse or headquarters for the Sisters of Mercy, first for Missouri, then for the entire St. Louis Province which consisted of seven states.

The grounds were also used as a burial place for some of the nuns whose bodies have since been moved. Looking on your maps above the word POND there is a drawing of a cross. This is the present day grotto depicting the crucifixion of Jesus. It is east of the apartments at 710 Imse Drive. The cemetery was located in this area near the newest garages built across from the corporate headquarters when it was enlarged in 2003. Since this map was made in 1997, the new garages are not on it.

ANNEXATION

In the early 1940's, the land of the Sisters of Mercy was included in the acreage annexed by the city of Webster Groves.

In the early 1960's, when Pope John 23rd convened the Second Vatican Council, also called Vatican II, it has been said that he "opened the door of the Catholic Church." Vatican II certainly opened the doors of the convents and monasteries in the Catholic Church and many religious left their orders. So, too, with the Sister of Mercy when religious women went out the door but very few came in the door or entered the convent. St. Joseph Convent of the Sisters of Mercy adjusted by opening their chapel and empty rooms to high school and college students for retreats lasting several days or over the weekend.

CHRISTY MANSION

So far, you have listened to me talk about what the Catholic Sisters were doing in the 1900's in St. Louis County. Now, we need to turn back and see what the Lutherans were doing in the city of St. Louis. Here, again, I am going to talk about the women. It was in the year 1901 that the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society was formed as a result of a meeting with the Reverend F. W. Herzberger, city missionary for the Lutheran Church, Missouri Synod, in St. Louis. These Lutheran ladies also performed works of mercy by caring for the sick and aged, by developing a Mission School and a home for homeless children.

In 1919, the same year that St. Joseph Convent was built, the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society voted to start a fund to establish a Lutheran Convalescent Home. The following year, in 1920, they were delighted to be able to purchase, renovate, and open Christy Mansion on Taft Avenue for initial clientele. Because of the care required for those in-house residents, the Lutheran Ladies Mission Aid Society appointed women to be responsible for management, and this group was called the Lutheran Convalescent Home Society. [Note: *There are pictures of the Reverend Herzberger and the original Convalescent Home on the east wall of the auditorium in today's Lutheran Convalescent Home on this campus.*]

As the years went by, the number of people using their services increased so they had to increase in size. Then, along came scientific advances that increased longevity and political changes that introduced Medicare and Medicaid. As federal regulations became more numerous, the Ladies realized the need for professional help and the need to make a big administrative change.

They learned that Lutheran Hospital was looking for an Extended Care Facility. They wisely decided to transfer their Lutheran Convalescent Home charter to Lutheran Charities Association whose administrative umbrella extended over Lutheran Hospital. The Ladies were proud that the fund that was started in 1919

with \$500 had increased so that in 1967 their transfer document included a "debt-free institution, a Memorial Expansion Fund, properties and securities worth almost half a million dollars." Having completed this, the Society reorganized and today we know them as the Lutheran Convalescent Home Auxiliary.

SALE

In the late 1960s, there were many changes within the Sisters of Mercy. They were busy with their newest hospital on Ballas Road. Meanwhile, the Lutherans were looking for an Extended Care Facility. So, in 1970, the Lutheran Charities Association purchased these 64 acres of land and the building on the property from the Sisters of Mercy.

LUTHERAN CONVALESCENT HOME

After the purchase of the Laclede Groves campus, the convent with its two wings was renovated to become the Lutheran Convalescent Home which opened its doors to frail elderly in 1972. With the passage of time, there were more renovations and an increase in size.

Looking on your map, at the beginning of the word "convalescent" is the newest addition, which opened in 1995, and includes GROUND SOUTH which is a 24 bed unit that treats those residents with specialized dementia including Alzheimer's disease. The Convalescent Home now offers skilled nursing care for a total of 240 beds, which includes Medicare and Medicaid operated beds. In 1996, the older telephone system by the Information Desk in the lobby was replaced by the Communications Center that monitors alarms for emergencies, identifies breaks in security systems, controls cameras for monitoring the pool, etc. The main telephone number is 968-5570.

GARDEN

Next, to locate on your maps, is the garden south of the apartments at 719 Imse Drive which was opened as a community vegetable garden in 1980.

MANOR

Three years later, the first apartments for active retired persons were built. On your maps, this is 701 Manor. In 1983, Laclede Oaks Manor, 701 South Laclede Station Road opened with 105 units.

If you would like to see how the campus looked after 701 Manor was built, there is a painting done by Ken Moladay in 1985 and it is in the Manor on the wall in the second floor hallway across from the restrooms available when the Meeting Room has activities. This painting includes remnants of the farming background of this campus.

The Manor was soon fully occupied. So there was additional construction at 705 Manor by 1988. This is shown on your map. Today, Laclede Oaks Manor has 204 apartments for independent-living residents.

The dining room in the Manor had an original seating capacity of 185. When the patio homes were built and occupied in 1994, the dining room increased in size with the construction of the semi-circle on the north with windows overlooking the lake. It now has a seating capacity of 240.

ENTRANCE / EXIT

Moving into the next decade, the 1990s, there was much construction on the campus. By November 1992, the entrance to Laclede Groves (seen on your map) had been enlarged to be directly across from the Georgetown Apartments. The Gatehouse was built but it was planned to be used primarily for special functions and not on a daily basis.

Since I am talking about the entrance to the Laclede Groves campus which we all use, I thought that I should call your attention to the Emergency Exit of the campus which is seen on your maps as EMERGENCY GATE. This emergency exit is a gravel/rock-type road on the west side of the campus leading directly from the employees' parking lot with passage through the closed wooden gate to the street, Edgar Court, then to Edgar Road. This second entrance/exit is a requirement for fire trucks.

DAY CARE CENTER

Move now to the right lower corner of your maps to the WEBSTER GROVES DAY CARE CENTER. This opened in January, 1993. The newly constructed building was specifically planned for child day care. This independent, not-for-profit agency was founded by the Ecumenical Ministry in Webster Groves and first opened its doors for children of working parents in September of 1973 in the basement of Christ Lutheran Church. Over the years, the number of children using this facility increased. These children regularly visited with the residents of Laclede Groves because the teachers recognized the value of interaction between the children and the elderly. So, the Day Care Center now leases the building and playground on our retirement campus.

LACLEDE COMMONS

The next building to look at on your map is Laclede Commons. In February, 1993, Laclede Commons was opened as an assisted-living facility with 80 apartment units. It expanded to its current size of 136 units in 1995.

VILLAGE OF LACLEDE OAKS – PATIO HOMES

The next construction was a Village of Laclede Oaks with patio homes for independent-living residents. When the Lutheran Health Care Association of St. Louis designed this, they planned to build the patio homes in phases. Phase One included eleven houses and would be started if there was a commitment for seven of the homes. There was an immediate commitment for nine homes.

McBride and Son was awarded the contract for construction. In early 1994 when they started work on the project, McBride found that they had to blast rock before they could start building the homes. This delayed the move-in date by two months.

The planned patio homes offered five different floor plans with a price range from \$124,500 to \$156,500. Commitment to buy included an initial \$5000 deposit. When the actual construction of the home started, there was an additional deposit of \$25,000 required. When the home was half finished, another check for \$50,000 was required, and on the day the new resident moved in, the remainder of the price of the home was due.

A person committed to buying a patio home had choices they could make. In the Manor, in the room that is now the Computer Room, there were four or five samples of vinyl flooring, samples of rug colors, stain colors for kitchen cabinets, handles for cabinets, etc. There was a \$400 allowance with Villa Lighting for a choice of ceiling fixtures and lighting. The hardest choices of all to make from the sketches were the outlets in the rooms for telephones and cable television. This was all included in the basic price. If a buyer wanted a screened porch, a Florida room, fireplace, attic fan, whirlpool bath, etc., extra money was required. Everyone that I know had something extra put into the basic home.

With good merchandising, selling techniques, and the popularity of the idea, it was easy for the Lutheran Health Care Association to move into Phase Two of its building plans to build more homes.

On June 24, 1994, the first residents, Bob and June Sperring, moved into 769 Eckrich Place where Harold and Helen Todd now live. On July 17, 1994, the first OPEN HOUSE was held, allowing visitors to tour some of the completed patio homes. By the end of 1994, nineteen homes were occupied and there were commitments to buy more of the homes. The Lutheran Health Care Association

decided to complete the building of all 54 units. For the last few patio homes, without committed buyers, the staff made the necessary choices for rug color, cabinets, etc.

VILLAGE STREETS

The initial planning for the Village included names for the streets. Eckrich Place was named to honor John Eckrich who was the administrator of Lutheran Hospital in 1967 when the charter and funds for the Lutheran Convalescent Home were transferred to the Lutheran Charities Association. Mr. Eckrich was president of Lutheran Charities from 1957 to 1984 during which time the Laclede Groves campus was purchased from the Sisters of Mercy in 1970. His picture is in the lobby of the Lutheran Convalescent Home.

Lohmann Forest Lane was named for Hilmar Lohmann, an assistant to John Eckrich.

Imse Drive was named to honor Robert and Florence Imse, generous donors of their time, talents, and money to Lutheran Charities. The Imses were successful in business and had no children. All of their gifts are too numerous to mention, but I would like to point out two given by Florence Imse in 1996. One of her gifts provided the new lighting system in the Chapel; the other provided the carillon chimes that can be heard several times a day on campus.

LAKE EGRET

Again, looking at your maps, the stream of water that runs through the property became a pond in 1993 when the dam was put in place. The lighted fountain was installed in October, 1994. Around 1998, a contest was held for residents to give this body of water a name. Many of us thought it should be called "Golden Pond" after the pond in the movie with Henry Fonda and Katherine Hepburn and whose plot focuses on generation gaps between the elderly parents and their adult child played by Fonda's daughter, Jane. However, the Naming Committee chose Lake Egret. To bring your maps up-to-date, the word "pond" should be changed to Lake Egret. As you know, the sluice gate was installed in 2004.

NAME / LOGO CHANGES

There were other name changes as well. The Lutheran Charities Association had a complete re-organization of their operations and in March, 1996, the Lutheran Charities Foundation was established as a separate entity. Lutheran Senior Services replaced other names including Lutheran Health Care Association because delegates thought Lutheran Senior Services a more

suitable name in describing their mission to provide the best possible care to older adults.

There was also a change in the logo. Initially, it was a full grown tree. In the late 1990's, the logo was changed to an oak leaf and acorns.

VILLAGE APARTMENTS

On your maps, the Village Apartment buildings on Imse Drive, each of which contain sixteen units, were opened in January 1997 when the first residents moved into the 718 Imse Drive apartments. With occupancy complete in the 719 and 715 buildings, the Village of Laclede Oaks now consists of 48 apartments and 54 patio homes with a total of 102 units. From the recent organization chart that was distributed to residents, the entire Laclede Groves campus has 682 units which includes the beds in the Convalescent Home.

RECREATION CENTER

While the Village Apartments were being built, we saw the original plans for the CLUB HOUSE on campus. This building is on your maps and is the building that we are in today. During the planning stages it was known as the Club House and consisted of a two story building with an elevator to the second floor and a pathway that would lead from the second floor to an east entrance of the Manor building. This turned out to be too expensive. Then it was learned that the city of Webster Groves was beginning to look around for more tax income. Finances have a way of changing one's plan, and as you can see today, we now have a one story building called the Recreation Center. In addition to a lovely reception area with a small kitchen adjoining that space, its principal attributes are a swimming pool and the room with exercise equipment. It was opened in December, 1997.

WALKING PATHS

Not seen on your maps, but completed in 1998, were the mulch trails among the trees behind 715 and 719 apartments on Imse Drive and the exercise stations and asphalt trails on the south side of the campus plus the asphalt trails around Lake Egret. The two bridges over Lake Egret were also constructed to connect the paths around the pond. The budget has never been able to finance the building and upkeep required for putting greens, golf tees and fairways that were planned for golf enthusiasts.

CONCLUSION

At the beginning of this presentation, I showed the blue booklet **FIRST RESIDENTS OF THE PATIO HOME IN THE VILLAGE OF LACLEDE OAKS**. In it the first residents were asked to write about themselves while the last chapter is on the History of Laclede Groves. It is a booklet available for reading in the Library on the fourth floor of the Manor.

At the time residents moved into the Patio Homes in 1994, there was a projection that there would be a complete changeover in occupants in ten years. Since this projection was not realized, a ten-year sequel of what had happened to the first residents was written. This is the green-colored booklet titled **MATURITY-MOVES-MEMORIES** which is also available in the library.

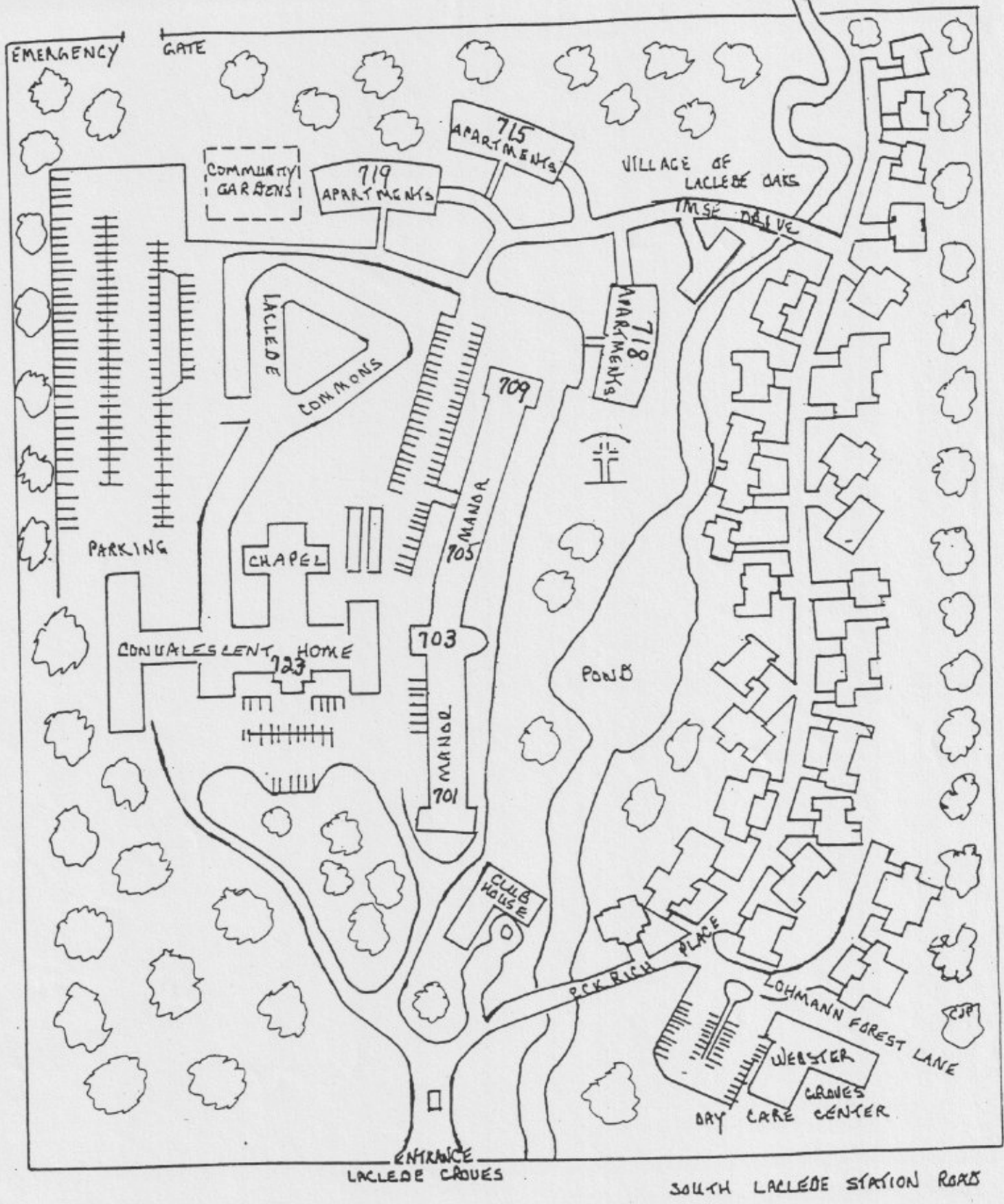
To give you a succinct update: By June 2004, of the original 54 homes, there was no change in 21 homes, a partial change of residents in 10 homes, and a complete change in 23 homes.

You are invited to go to the library in the Manor to read both the blue and green booklets. Hopefully, you will enjoy them.

ADDENDUM:

A special thank you for the production services provided through the courtesy of Eleanor Schneider.

very good copy



LACLEDE GROVES RETIREMENT COMMUNITY-1997

SOURCE: BOOKLET "FIRST RESIDENTS OF THE PATIO HOMES IN THE VILLAGE OF LACLEDE OAKS"