



MCHS BUILDING HISTORY

836 Ruskin Avenue - Edwardsville, IL

By Cindy Reinhardt, 2026

The John Zilch House

The charming bungalow at 836 Ruskin Ave. in Edwardsville was built for John and Amanda Zilch in 1925. According to an article in the *Edwardsville Intelligencer*, a 5-room house was built for John Zilch by contractor Fred Hanser at a cost of \$5,000. The location of the house at the corner of Nelson and Ruskin Avenues is on a lot in Leclaire that was purchased in 1908 by Amanda's father as an investment. He sold it to John and Amanda in March 1925.

John Zilch of St. Louis married Amanda Schroeder, an Edwardsville native, on Feb. 28, 1923. Their wedding took place at the rural home of her parents, Charles and Magdalena Fiesler Schroeder, who lived north of town on Springfield Road. Charles was a German immigrant and his wife, "Lena," the daughter of German immigrants.

John's parentage was also German in origin, but his family came to America generations before Amanda's. Although John was born in St. Louis, his family had links to Edwardsville where his parents were married. They remained in touch with old Edwardsville friends, which is likely how John and Amanda met.

Charles Schroeder was a well-known Edwardsville merchant who owned a butcher shop at 222 Main Street for 40 years. After John and Amanda married, they settled in Edwardsville where it is likely John went to work with his father-in-law to learn a trade. Amanda's brother, Charles Jr. had already been working at the market for several years. When Charles Sr. died in 1926, John and Charles Jr. went into business together.

On Sep. 9, 1926, the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* announced the formation of a new market, Schroeder and Zilch Meat Market. The men ran the day-to-day operations of the market, and Amanda was the bookkeeper.

The advertisements for the meat market were interesting, among them: "The Sanitary Meat Shop" and

"Home Killed Meats." You could evidently choose to buy a live chicken or one already slaughtered for your Sunday dinner.

To bring customers into their shop, they regularly allowed church groups or other community organizations to hold bake sales, rummage sales or other events at their store.

The partnership remained in place until the Great Depression when Charles left the business. The shop then be-



The Zilch bungalow as it appears today in the Leclaire National Historic District of Edwardsville. (Reinhardt)

came Zilch Meat Market, and Amanda began working in the shop. We know about this today because the *Edwardsville Intelligencer* reported in August 1936 that, "Mrs. Zilch suffered the loss of the first two joints of her index and second fingers, and the top joint of the third finger early Wednesday morning, when her right hand was caught in a meat grinder. She was working at the time in the Zilch Meat Market."

Back home on Ruskin Avenue, although John and Amanda did not have children, they didn't live alone. Soon after the death of Amanda's father, her mother, Lena, came to live with them. She called Ruskin Avenue home for nearly 25 years until her death in 1952.

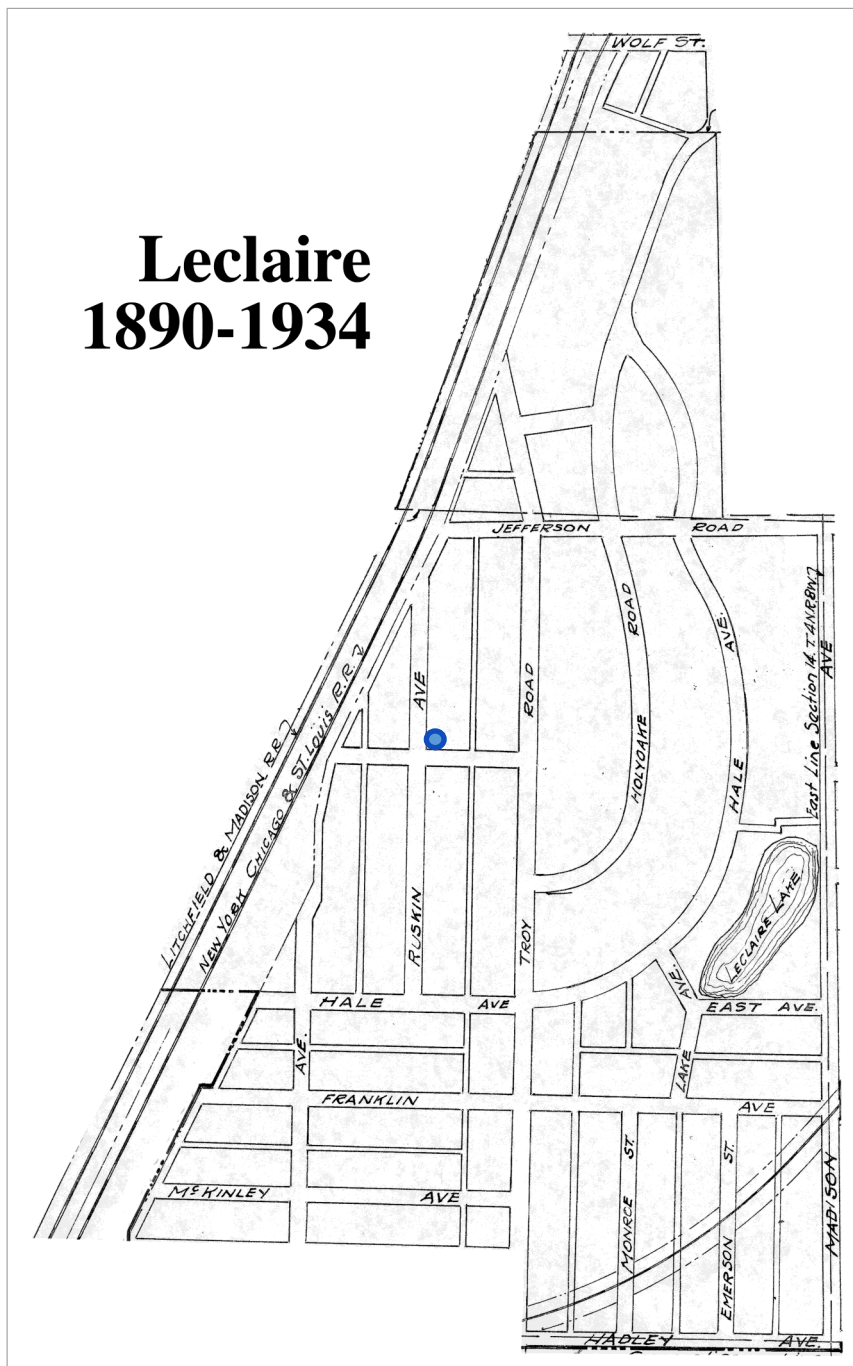
Amanda was an active member of the Edwardsville Garden Club and often provided programming on when to plant and what to plant in your home garden. In 1954, the Zilch home was on the Garden Tour. Peonies, roses, and other perennials and annuals were featured to emphasize both color and fragrance. John was especially active in church work at Eden United Church of Christ. At various times he served as president of both the Eden Brotherhood and the Eden Church Council.

John and Amanda Zilch were married 45 years when John died in 1968. Amanda continued to live in their bungalow, sometimes renting a room to a lodger. She sold most of her

personal possessions in June 1976 at auction prior to moving to a nursing home. The house sold a few months later. Amanda died in February 1978.

Although the first owners kept this house for over 50 years, in its next half century there were six different owners of the home at 836 Ruskin Ave. The house is fairly large for the neighborhood, partly because it was built later than most Leclaire homes. When built, its bungalow architecture was one of the most popular styles because they offered spacious rooms, and wide front porches. They were primarily one-story structures which were perfect for older buyers and young families. Today, bungalows like this one retain their popularity for the same reasons expressed more than a century ago.

Leclaire 1890-1934



When built, the Zilch home (blue dot) was at the corner of Lincoln and Ruskin Avenues, however, when Leclaire was annexed to the City of Edwardsville, Lincoln was one of two streets where the city had duplicate named streets. Lincoln Avenue was changed to Nelson Avenue, and Monroe Avenue was changed to Lindenwood Avenue. (MCHS)