

THE CHANGING GEOGRAPHIC FUNCTIONS
OF
LECLAIRE, IOWA

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by
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INTRODUCTION

LeClaire is a town of approximately 2,700 people located fifteen miles northeast of Davenport, Iowa, on the west bank of the Mississippi River. The town, which includes an area of 4.1 square miles or 2,629 acres, serves today as a satellite of the Quad-City Metropolitan Area.¹

LeClaire came into being along with the twin village of Parkhurst. Although both town sites were less than a mile apart, they were surveyed and laid out separately in the spring and summer of 1837. Antoine LeClaire had gained possession of a section of land at the head of the Rock Island Rapids in 1832 when the Federal Government was concluding a treaty with the Sac and Fox Indians. The first settlement of the present day town of LeClaire actually took place in Parkhurst in 1834. The two towns were incorporated as one in 1855.²

During the history of LeClaire its population has fluctuated greatly. In 1840, just three years after it had been surveyed, the combined population of LeClaire-Parkhurst was nearly 500. Between then and the middle of

¹Max Anderson Associates, "A Comprehensive Planning Study of LeClaire," (Madison, Wis., 1969), p. 1.

²Harry E. Downer, History of Scott County, Iowa, Vol. 1, (Chicago: The S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1910), p. 257.

the 1860's the population reached 1,100. Table 1 shows the population trends from 1870 on.

TABLE 1
POPULATION TRENDS, LECLAIRE, IOWA 1870-1970^a

| Year | Population | Per Cent Change |
|-------------------------|------------|-----------------|
| 1870..... | 1,093..... | |
| 1880..... | 1,061..... | - 2.9 |
| 1890..... | 906..... | -14.6 |
| 1900..... | 997..... | 10.0 |
| 1910..... | 690..... | -30.8 |
| 1920..... | 724..... | 4.9 |
| 1930..... | 691..... | - 4.6 |
| 1940..... | 881..... | 27.5 |
| 1950..... | 1,124..... | 27.6 |
| 1960 ^b | 1,546..... | 37.6 |
| 1970..... | 2,749..... | 77.8 |

^aAnderson, "Planning Study," p. 2.

^bAn annexation provided part of this figure.

The purpose of this study is to investigate the geographic concepts of site, situation, and function in LeClaire, Iowa. Special emphasis is placed on studying the relationships between changing situations and changing functions, thus the approach is historical geography. The situations and functions of LeClaire are a particularly clear example of how changes in conditions alter the quality of situation. Three different times in its history--1870, 1910, and 1970--were selected to measure the changes.

In 1870 LeClaire was firmly established and apparently prosperous as the population had remained relatively stable for the preceding two decades. In 1910 LeClaire was just reaching the low ebb of its population pattern and in 1970

LeClaire appeared to be booming with a phenomenal population increase in the last decade.