

Ferguson Has A History Museum

Ferguson, indeed, does have a Historical Society and a History Museum and we are moving forward with the help of our readers of the past many weeks. We encourage any reading this article to join in the conversation. Contact information is at the bottom of this article.

As was discussed in the last edition, there are many family names important in the history of Ferguson. The names of Ferguson and January figured in the very naming and early growth of the city. Other names pop up over time – if you were here while I was growing up in the 1950's, the names of Mannino, Lammert, Bindbeutel, Quillman and many more come to mind. There may be two names which you haven't heard - but - have been important in the community we call Ferguson. Have you heard names of Rolwes and Long before? They have been here since before 1945. Maybe a hint is needed: add a first name – Geraldine. Add to that the word: Florist. Put them together: Geraldine Florist. Now it may ring a bell.

History is a funny thing. Most of us think of it as exploring the past. However, history is also constantly in the making. What we did yesterday is history – what we are doing now is about to become history. This is true about the history of Ferguson's remaining florist shop. Geraldine Florist came about in 1945 – started by Ben and Katherine Rolwes. Ben was a contractor who built some of the homes around the area of the floral shop. Katherine was a housewife with a daughter, Geraldine. Their home was the house and land just south of the shop. World War II was a difficult time for many people and Katherine was told by her doctor to find something which could relax her. Flowers became the answer and the rest is history. There is a street in Ferguson named Rolwes at one end and at the other named Rowles. You figure!



The Rolwes purchased a greenhouse, off Lucas & Hunt, and moved it to Ferguson at the current site for the shop. The family began by selling seedlings and plants (remember "Victory Gardens"). The current store front was added in the 1950's. It exists today pretty much as it was then. I know this because my dad and I used Geraldine Florist for our Valentine buying excursion. My grandson and I do the same, today.

The shop is named after the Rolwes' daughter: Geraldine (Long), who is the current owner. Geraldine is in her 80's, but attends to the shop daily. Her daughter, Debbie Guarino, also works daily in the shop. But this is a family business with Geraldine and Debby doing most of the floral work. Debbie's sister (Kelly Long) and Geraldine's husband (Raymond Long) handle the daily deliveries and occasional overloads. As

Geraldine said – they have never hired anyone outside the family.



For a small Mom & Pop floral shop, Geraldine's does a land office business focusing now on cut flowers and arrangements. The old greenhouse is still there, behind the store, but is used mainly for storage and work space. Sunday flowers for many local churches come from Geraldine's as do flowers for local funeral homes. When the Pope visited last, Geraldine provided flowers. Geraldine

indicated that they still get requests from around the country for floral arrangements – often through the internet. When you are in one place for a long time you have a long list of friends. When the work is done well and is personal, friends don't forget.



Geraldine Florist is at 615 S. Florissant Road. Phone number: 314 521-1107. If you drive up or down Florissant Road, you can't miss the shop tucked across the street from the dental offices. If you are not among the many Ferguson residents who already know of Geraldine Florist, maybe you should pay a visit to a working piece of Ferguson history.

If you have any suggestions, questions, or items to donate to the Ferguson Historical Society, please contact Jerry Benner at fjbenner@mindspring.com. You are also welcome to visit the History Museum beginning in summer (hopefully).

“The Ferguson Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Ferguson Missouri. Membership is open to all sharing our interest.”