

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.

One of the great joys of being a member of the Ferguson Historical Society is being around all the accumulated documents and items. Naturally anyone can access our files by making an appointment. The Society was founded in 1972 for the purpose shown at the bottom of this article. During those 50 years we have collected many reflections from past Fergusonians (or is it Fergusonites). After reading through some of the many documents we have come up with some interesting reflections – what it was like living in Ferguson many years ago.

Dr. Berkley Kalin (written 1960): “Maline Creek, which was then very different from what it is today (1960), was the ‘ole swimming’ hole’ of Ferguson. January Pond was not popular for swimming, the water was too cold, due to the deep springs from which it is supplied. In 1908, street signs were put on street corners. Also, all the houses were numbered in anticipation of mail carrier’s service. Florissant Road was designated as the line dividing the eastern and western halves of Ferguson and Carson Road and Darst Road as the north-south dividing line”. Times have changed since the early 1900’s. The divisions seem the same, but we now have a pool and rec complex to replace the creek and the pond.

Edward G. Cherbonnier (written 1967): “In those days the weather was much colder, and we could count on ice skating at January’s Pond from Christmas to New Year’s. New skates or a ‘shiny stick’ were prized Christmas presents and the proud recipient could hardly wait for his Christmas dessert pudding to set out for the pond. The big neck of the pond was our shinny field (later we called it hockey). The 150 yard stretch would be crowded with youngsters, the older ones bashing through, the younger ones scattering before their swinging sticks. . . . There was no hockey puck. The boy who brought a large rubber gasket was very popular, in the absence of that a rock of about the right size would do. Occasionally there was a split cheek, as a healthy baseball swing sent the rock flying at face height. There was no referee for the game and no time limit.” Again, times do change. There is no longer “shinny” and hockey (with face shields) has moved to Florissant with peaceful fishing and walking at January Park.

Ed has another observation to share: “The railroad station was the busiest place in town, as most Ferguson residents worked in St. Louis. There were three regular morning trains to the city, at 6:10, 7:05 and 8:00 o’clock. . . . The telegraph keys gave out an exciting elickety-clack and diminutive Mr. Thompson, the station agent, with arm bands on his sleeves, had a perpetually worried look as he sold tickets, sent and received telegrams and looked after the freight and express. He also stoked the waiting room fires in the winter and was custodian to the keys to the ‘Facilities’”. The Depot is still there but the passenger trains are long gone.

Curt Owen remembered: “Dr. Roy Johnson was just about 98% perfect. He took Maggie’s tonsils out for \$35 in 1936. He came back from World War I, a good surgeon and a good man. In 1920 I was four years old and playing with six year old Elmer, dropping matches into milk

Bottles. A Match went into my middy pocket (a middy is a loosely fitting shirt with a sailor collar). I ran to the house, where my mother was doing the laundry. She put out the fire, but I had a terrible burn on my right chest and arm socket. I stayed in bed about 90 days with a light bulb under my arm to dry out the wound. When the burn healed, the arm and chest were too close together. Dr. Johnson said he would fix that later. We owned an Irish Mail, or Flying Dutchman (a cart you pulled like a railroad cart). After many trips up and down Clay Ave. pulling that cart, the scar stretched so that no surgery was necessary. Dr. Hughes was also appreciated. He fixed my badly broken arm for \$8. He took out my sister Anita's appendix for \$30 or \$40. Dr. Jacobi was a fine dentist and a great guy. Dr. C. Rivers Schmidt was a good Osteopath. His office, like others, was upstairs in our medical building, 16-18 Church Street." We still have a medical building on Church Street – the doctors, their fees and medical methods have changed, however, Mr. Owen seems to have fared pretty well.

There are thousands of other recollections in the files. In future articles we will bring you more stories of the past. I know that many of you reading this article have recollections of growing up or living in Ferguson during the 1940-s or 1950's and onward. A good story doesn't have to be so old it has whiskers. A good story can be only a few years old. A good story is a good story! We would love to read *your* recollections, *your* stories or record an oral history of *your* story. You can write it down – or just tell it. Don't be shy – we all love a good story! The email contact is below, in the next paragraph. Let us know *your* story!

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.”