

# Ferguson Has A History Museum

Ferguson has a Historical Society and a History Museum. We encourage any people reading this article to join in the conversation. Contact information is at the bottom of this article.

There is an important historical connection between a one-time resident of Ferguson and the St. Louis Cardinals Baseball team – beyond the several players who resided in Ferguson. It is indeed a unique story in the history of baseball in general. We will take a look at the Cardinals first.

In 1881, a St. Louis bartender, Christian Frederick Wilhelm Von der Ahe purchased the then named “Sportsman Park”. Along with the park came a baseball team, the St. Louis Brown Stockings (so named because they wore – you guessed it – brown stockings). The following year the team joined the new American League (as opposed to the older, National League). By 1883, they were referred to as the St. Louis team. By 1885, they were called the St. Louis Browns and they were playing good baseball placing 1<sup>st</sup> in the American league 4 times between 1883 and 1888. The team switched to the National League in 1892 – and there they stayed. In 1898 the team went bankrupt and reformed in 1899 as the St. Louis Perfectos – with bright red socks. By 1900 red was the dominant uniform color and the name was changed to, what we know today, St. Louis Cardinals. The shade of red was referred to as “cardinal red”. Ironically, the team name, Cardinals, had nothing to do with birds.

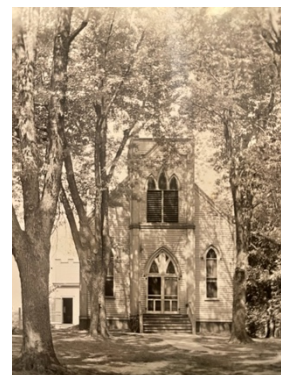


That is where the Ferguson connection comes into the picture. Most team logos featured the city from which the club came. For St. Louis it was usually “Saint Louis” or an overlaying of the “S”, the “T” and the “L”. It would vary between the lettered “St. Louis” and “Cardinal” logos until 1922. The year 1922 marked a change in the logo – the one we are familiar with today.

So how does the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ferguson connect with the St. Louis Cardinals? The church was founded in 1871 by nine members. First Pres was one of the earliest formal churches in Ferguson. The initial church building was located at the head of – guess the name of the street – Church Street. It was located at the point where Clay Street is currently located. The newer church is located at the corner of Darsh and Clay – not far from the original.



The church was holding a Men’s Fellowship Meeting and the manager of the Cardinals, Branch Rickey, was invited to the meeting. A member of the church, Allie May Schmidt wanted to do something special for such a great personality as Branch Rickey. Rickey was not as famous in 1922 as he would later be in the 1940’s when he brought Jackie Robinson into major league baseball.



Seeing a couple of cardinal birds on a branch gave Allie the special idea she needed. She placed her cardboard cardinal *birds on a bat* all around the tables at the meeting. Rickey was impressed by the birds on a bat and contacted Allie's father, Edward Schmidt (who happened to be the head of the art department of a major printing company in St. Louis), to create this new design for the team's uniforms. The "Birds on the Bat" was formally created and placed on Cardinal uniforms beginning in 1922. The "Birds on the Bat" remained the team logo until 1956 when it went back to "Cardinals". In 1956, General Manager, Frank Lane, after changing the logo, was to have said, "Wait till you see the uniforms and the men we have in them. I don't think anybody will be disappointed." He was wrong – fans protested and by 1957 the "Birds on the Bat" were back.



Over the years the exact nature of the "Birds on the Bat" has changed over 20 times, but, with the exception of 1956, Allie May Schmidt's concept has held steady up until today. It doesn't look like it likely to change in the near future.

From a team named first for the color of its stockings, then a color, cardinal red, to a team named after a stunning red bird is a story of baseball in America. The

Cardinals have won 4 American league titles (as the Browns), 19 National League titles and a whopping 11 World Series titles. By the way, in 1937, Allie May Schmidt (Keaton) was given a gold lifetime pass to all Cardinal games for originating the baseball team logo.

Information for this article came from the archives of the Ferguson Historical Society, St. Louis Post Dispatch, *St Louis Cardinals Uniforms & Logos* by Gary Kodner and Oliver Kodner, and from the 1<sup>st</sup> Presbyterian Church in Ferguson.

If you have any suggestions, questions, or items to donate to the Ferguson Historical Society, please contact Jerry Benner at [fjbenner@mindspring.com](mailto:fjbenner@mindspring.com). You are also welcome to visit the History Museum at 1064 Smith (behind the Community Center) by e-mailing the above address. Note: we will need to schedule a date for you, so ask well in advance.

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