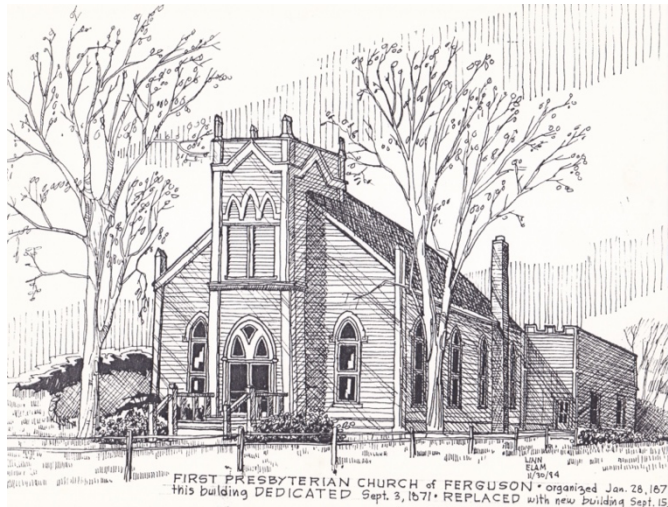


# Ferguson Has A History Museum

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.

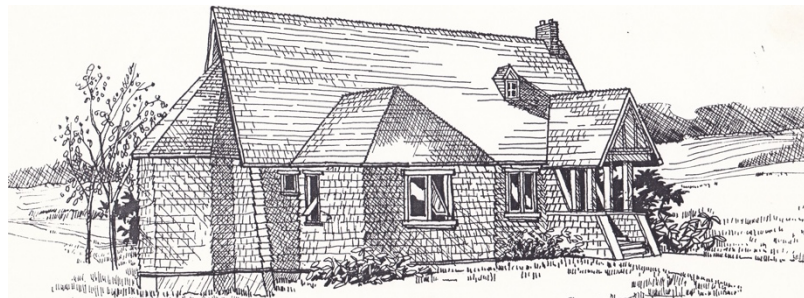
Last month we began the series of articles dealing with the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century churches in the Ferguson area. As a quick review, we discussed that there were families in the Ferguson area since the 1840's. Ferguson, however, did not become a city until 1894 – though the area was known as Ferguson Station since 1855. We know there were religious meetings prior to the building of the first recorded church (First Presbyterian Church of



Ferguson) – Presbyterians began formal meetings in 1867 with the church being built in 1871. Since last month, review of the archives has produced a drawing of that church by Linnell Elam (1984) (shown to the left). I have included it as it much more clearly shows the church than last month's photos. We have *no* new information about Mount Olive Baptist Church which was started by an ex-enslaved people. *If anyone has more information about this church, please contact us.*

For January, we will look at the second oldest church in Ferguson – St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Ferguson. There were Episcopal congregations as early as 1819 in the St. Louis area. By 1844 the Episcopal Diocese of Missouri was founded with nine congregations – Ferguson was not yet one of them. The current Episcopal Cathedral, Christ Church Cathedral, located at 1210 Locust in downtown St. Louis, was begun in 1859 and completed in 1867. Still no Ferguson.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Ferguson was founded in 1872 – making it the second oldest established church in Ferguson. The church was founded by Rev. J.M. Chestnut of Bridgeton as a Mission Church. Services were held in the home of Eliza



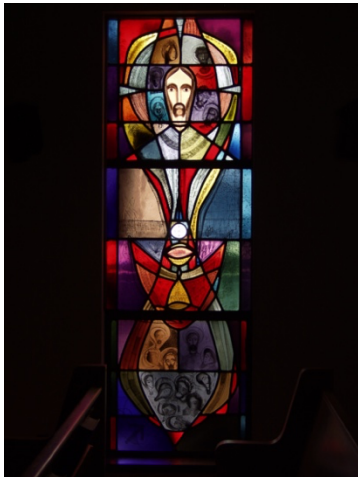
L. Walsh (located on Darst Road – near the present site of the church). In 1891 the first church building was completed. The Lennell Elam drawing above right shows this first church building on the corner of Clay and Darst. Nearby homes would serve for Sunday School and prayer study. In 1899 the church was consecrated and became a parish. By 1943 plans were being drawn up for an attached parish hall. In 1949 (remember there was a war going on between 1943 and 1945) the current parish hall was completed. That parish hall pretty much stands as it was built with a warm wood interior. An office was added in the 1970's



By the 1950's and 60's St. Stephens was growing quickly as the World War II vets become more established and the air and space industry was in full swing at nearby McDonnell Aircraft. By 1954 it was clear that two things may need to happen. One, the start of a mission church in Florissant (present day St. Barnabas). The other was a larger church building. The original building no longer being sound enough for enlarging, a new building

was proposed. In 1955 the last services were held in the old church and the worshipers moved into the parish hall for services.

By 1956, the new church was completed. The new church is a more contemporary building. The interior is definitely 1950's modern Christian with



a Great Cross the center of worship. The architect was Gale Henderson. New stained-glass windows were designed and built by Robert Harmon of the Emil Frei Studios in St. Louis. The windows show the sweep of the Liturgical Year. The windows are also of a contemporary design. Original windows from the old church continue to be used throughout the building.



The church is named for the first Christian Deacon and the first martyr of the Faith, St. Stephen. Over time, Stephen had angered the establishment and

was stoned to death. It is alleged that one of his sermons is related to the sermon found in Acts 7:2-53. St Stephens Episcopal Church in Ferguson, second oldest church building in Ferguson, stands on the corner of Clay and Darst – just across the street from the oldest church building in Ferguson, First Presbyterian.

In future months we will take a look at the other early churches in Ferguson: St. John and James Catholic (now Blessed Theresa), Zion Lutheran, Emmanuel E&R (now UCC), and Ferguson Methodist.

*Stories of churches in the Ferguson area come from documents in the Ferguson Historical Society archives.*

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.”***