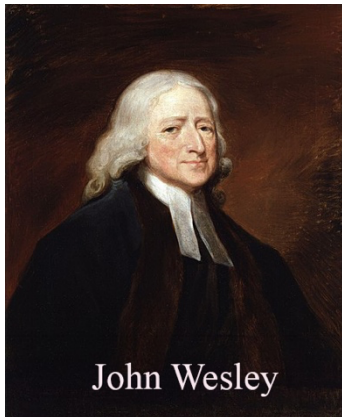


Ferguson Has A History Museum

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.

In the last three issues, we have been presenting information about four of the earliest church buildings in Ferguson: First Presbyterian Church (1871), St. Stephens Episcopal Church (1872), Mt. Olive (1880) and Sts John & James Catholic (Blessed Theresa) (1882). This month we will look at the Ferguson United Methodist Church. The Ferguson UMC is no longer an operating parish; however, the building still stands and has undergone a couple recent uses. More on all that later. In this article I will refer to the historic Methodist Church as “the Methodist Church” but the current iteration of the church is the United Methodist Church.

Like all Protestant Christian Churches, the United Methodist Church was ultimately the product of a separation from the Roman Catholic Church. There were several key people in this separation: Martin Luther for Lutherans, John Knox for Presbyterians and in the case of Anglicans, King Henry VIII. The Methodist Church began as a revival effort of the Anglican Church in the early 18th century by two brothers, John and Charles Wesley. John was the primary



John Wesley

theologian and Charles was the main music man. Modern Methodism is renowned for the wonderful music created by Charles Wesley. John Wesley traveled to the American Colonies (Georgia) in 1735 in order to offer worship to Native Americans. Apparently, it did not go as planned and he returned to England. Followers of the Wesleys did begin to come to



Charles Wesley

America as early as the 1770's and the beginnings of Methodism were on American shores.

There were three great growth periods in American religion. The first Great Awakening (1730-1740) was a great start. The “Awakenings” were a time when religion became more emotional – more personal – as opposed to rote attendance or intellectual study. This, added to the increased literacy of Americans, gave a more independent air to American religion. America was an essentially rural and spread-out society. Religions such as Methodism focused on bringing religion to as many people as possible – often not by ordained Bishops or ministers but by laymen dedicated to spreading the word. The Methodists were famous for “Circuit Riders”, often lay ministers who literally rode on horseback and offered services in the wide-open spaces, bringing religion to the “people”.



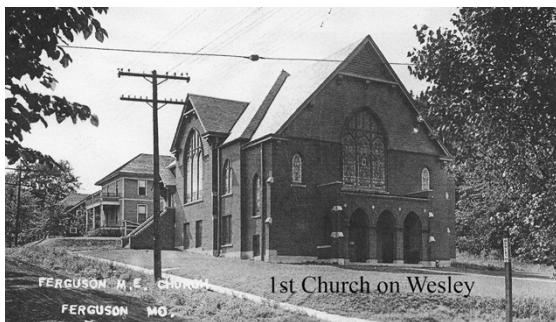
GOING TO CONFERENCE.

Following the death of the Wesleys, the Methodist Church formally separated from the Anglican Church and became “The Methodist Church”. The second Great Awakening (1790 – 1840) offered a real boost to the growth of the Methodists. By 1839 the church split into two factions over the issue of slavery creating a North and South church. Ironically, the two factions did not reunite until 1939. Over the years there have been many splinters in the Methodist Church. Perhaps the most famous is the AME or African Methodist Episcopal Church. In the early 20th Century the Methodist Church formally became *The Methodist Church USA*. In 1968 the Methodist Church USA joined with the United Brethren to become *The United Methodist Church* – where

things stand today.

It was a Reverend John Clark (an associate of John Wesley) who first brought Protestantism to Spanish America (Missouri) – west of the Mississippi River. In the late 1700’s, in Spanish America, it was illegal for a Protestant church to exist – but Clark persisted. He was stationed in Kaskaskia Illinois Territory. As a man who hated slavery and church hierarchy, he would sneak into Missouri to offer services then steal back to safety. This continued until 1803 and the Louisiana Purchase (then from France). By 1805 Clark moved to the Coldwater Creek area and established a church. In the early 1800’s there were four Methodist groups in the North County area: Coldwater Creek, Spanish Pond, Eden Chapel and the Bridgeton Church. But there was none in Ferguson. Ferguson Methodist Church formed out of these early churches,

In November 1886, the first services were held in Tiffin Hall (corner of Tiffin & Clark) – Tiffin Hall was a building used for many public purposes. Ferguson, at



this time was known as Ferguson Station and would not become an official city until 1894. By 1888 the Church moved into its own home (on the same corner as the Tiffin Hall) and that technically is the first Methodist

Church in Ferguson. Some years later, land was donated by Louis Maul (BarBQ Sauce fame) at the site of the present church (Wesley and Florissant Rd). In 1938 a fire completely destroyed that building.



The current church was completed around 1940. The educational wing and offices were added in 1960. The church had a



long and prosperous life in Ferguson until September 26, 2010 when the Ferguson United Methodist Church closed its doors and merged with St. Marks United Methodist Church. Like many mainline churches, what was once a large and successful church with a fine history simply goes away – in fact, not in spirit.

Since 2010 two churches have taken over the building which was once Ferguson United Methodist. The first came in around 2014, around the time of the Michael Brown shooting – The Wellspring Church. It lasted a few years and was instrumental in the community’s dealing with the shooting. The newest church is the current Liberty Community Worship Center. The spirit and the soul of Ferguson UMC is alive and well in the communities of new and different worshipers.

Next month we will explore another early Ferguson Church.

Stories of churches in the Ferguson area come from documents in the Ferguson Historical Society archives. Special thanks to Sandy Hunter, long time member of Ferguson UMC, for her personal input.

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 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.”