



# 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 five issues, we have been presenting information about five of the earliest church buildings in Ferguson: First Presbyterian Church (1871), St. Stephens Episcopal Church (1872), Mt. Olive (1880), Sts John & James Catholic (Blessed Theresa) (1882) and Ferguson Methodist Church (1886). In this issue we will explore the sixth, Immanuel UCC Congregation (formally Immanuel E&R Congregation).

The history of Immanuel UCC begins before it's first building in 1888. UCC stands for United Church of Christ. When Immanuel first came to Ferguson it would have been an E&R congregation (Evangelical and Reformed). The present UCC church is a combination of the E&R Church and the Congregational Christian Churches. The CCC has its roots in the Pilgrim and Puritan Churches of the early 1600's. The E&R has its roots in the German Reformed and German Evangelical Churches. As you will find when the history is revealed, Immanuel is a church with a strong German background.



In the late 1800's Ferguson area German farmers and others had been attending St. Peters E&R in Normandy. With the poor roads and slow transportation, the trip was long and slow. These men (and this movement was guided by the heads of household) wanted a closer congregation and better Christian education for their children. After forming a congregation, in 1888, they purchased land at Church and Lewis Streets in Ferguson (Immanuel's current location) and began construction of a wooden church. As with many other denominations building a church, the congregation used the Presbyterian church for services until the building was completed.

That original church was referred to as "the Rooster Church". Rather than a cross, the church had a rooster weathervane on its top.

There was a reason for this – quoting from *The People of Immanuel UCC 1888-1983*, “This bird was to be a reminder of the New Testament narrative when Jesus was awaiting trial before Pilate and he turned to St. Peter with these words: ‘*Ere the cock crow twice thou shalt deny me thrice*” At the completion of the church, services began – in German. For many years all services were in German, however, over the years English became more common and only certain services were in German. With the beginning of World War II, German was no longer used for religious purposes.

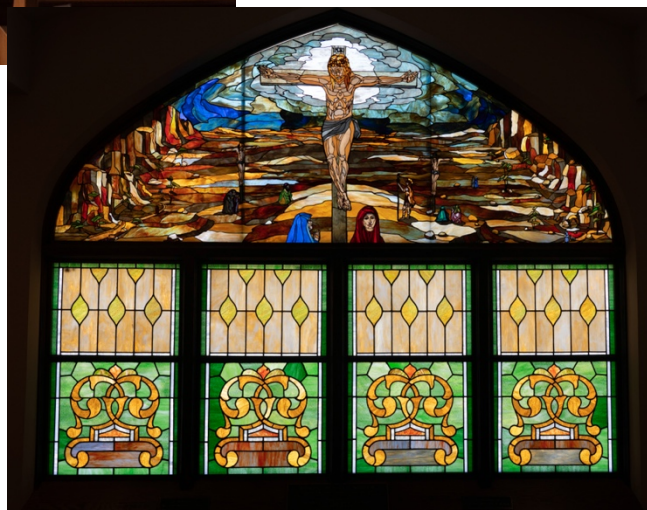
In 1889 the congregation built a schoolhouse. Grades 1-6 were taught in German. The school continued until 1918, when it closed. The original “Rooster Church” continued to be used, however it was becoming too small for the growing congregation. In 1929 a new church building was built – the current church building. The “Rooster Church” continued to be used until 1962 when it was



taken down. The rooster weathervane, however, has been preserved.

The second church has evolved over the years. The interior has a beautiful traditional worship area with a rosette-stained glass window over the altar. In addition to this, in the lobby is a large stained-glass window.

The congregation had a large growth spurt in the 1940's through the 1980's. This necessitated the congregation to have up to three Sunday services to accommodate the number of congregants. Sunday school had to rent nearby Vogt Junior High. In 1949 land was purchased on the other side of Church Street. In 1955 a new educational building was dedicated



on this new land. In 1959 a Fellowship Hall was added to the new structure. The completed building had space for church offices, meeting areas and a gym.



What began as a German Evangelical & Reformed Congregation in 1880 changed its name to Immanuel United Church of Christ in 1963. While the UCC reorganization was in 1957, the name was not changed until 1963, the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Immanuel.

The congregation is well known in the Ferguson area for at least two things. Since 1944 it has sponsored a Vacation Bible School. In recent years this has provided Vacation Bible School space for an ecumenical vacation bible school with several of the local churches. The second began with a Hasenphoeffer Dinner in 1941. Hasenphoeffer is a German dish, usually pickled rabbit. This evolved into a Sausage Supper and finally into, what we now know as, Wurstmart. Every year Immanuel Congregation prepares a German sausage meal – dine-in or carry-out, for the Ferguson Community. A very German thing to do.

In 1988 the congregation celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary. Inside the Church Building hangs a beautiful quilt celebrating that anniversary. Immanuel UCC Congregation is now 135 years old, at its original location, in Ferguson.



Next month we will take a look at the final early church building in Ferguson – Zion Lutheran Church

*Stories of churches in the Ferguson area come from documents in the Ferguson Historical Society archives. Much of this month's material came from "The People of Immanuel United Church of Christ 1888-1983" put together by members of the congregation.*

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.”***