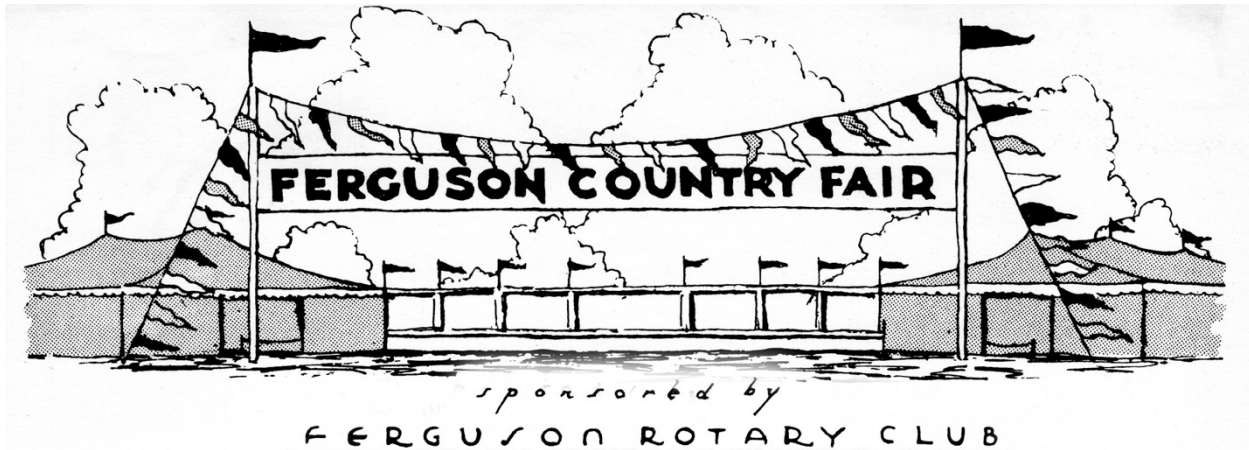




Ferguson Has a History Museum

Ferguson has a Historical Society and a History Museum. We encourage any people reading this article to join in the conversation and become a member.

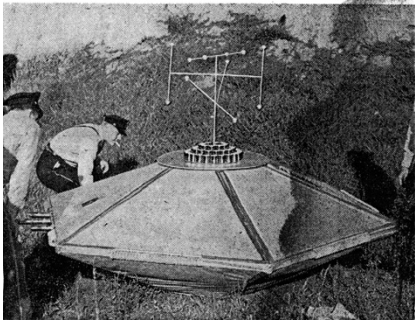


In the last two months we featured the Ferguson Country Fair – an event sponsored by the Ferguson Rotary from 1949 until 1961. We had mentioned that Rotary International was and is an organization of businessmen and professionals dedicated to assisting their community. Ferguson rotary disbanded in 2011. In this and next month’s article we will detail specific years of the fair along with some personal reflections of the fair. This month 1949 to 1956.

It was Bill Crume, President of the Ferguson Rotary, in 1949 who came up with the idea of a country fair – and lead the fair effort until the end in 1961. The fairs were all held on the parking lot on the south side of Florissant Road – the lot currently behind stores and next to Aldi. The 1949 fair had a definite “country” flair, consisting of two large tents and featured farm equipment, food and craft contests and home appliances. Of course, there were rides and “tests-of-skill” for the kids and “young” adults. The disk to the right was widely distributed around North County – rumor says that it was even dropped from airplanes – cannot back that up – but as you will see with future fairs, Rotarians were very creative people. Admission 10 cents.



Ferguson's 'Flying Saucer'



The fair continued in the “country” fashion with old fiddlers, jugglers, a performing mule and “DeeDee” the contortionist. There were also free chest x-rays and a dog show (only a slight resemblance was necessary) for everyday people and their “mutts”.

We don't have much information about the 1951 Fair – no folder exists. We do know that in 1951 they added a 4th day – the fair from this point ran from Wednesday to Saturday (in 1951, Sep. 5, 6, 7, 8)

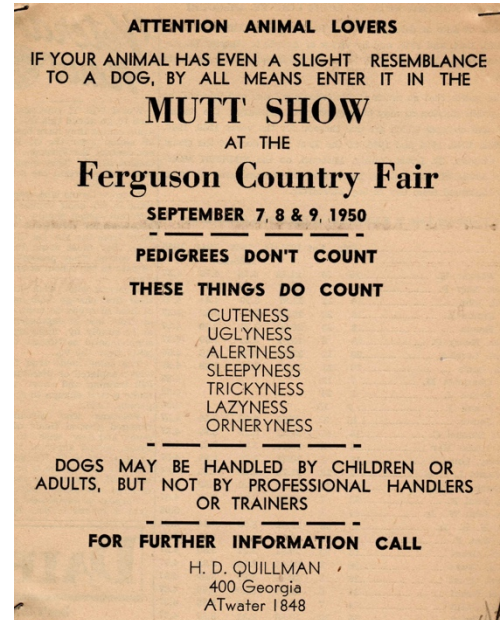
Sept. 3, 4, 5, 6 were the dates for the 1952 Fair. Along with the typical “country” tents and events, the Fair featured the following: a “Sad Sack” comedian (Sad Sack refers to WWII GI cartoons), boxing cats, a comedian/xylophonist, a trampoline act as well as “Lou Morgan” who *rides anything on wheels*. Don't know what that means, but was probably interesting. By now, the fair was a big success – but the creative Rotarians weren't through.

The 1953 Fair opened on Sep. 9th (10, 11, 12) with the promise of an actual wedding and an egg-throwing event at County officials and, for the first time, no food or craft competitions. This first was so unpopular that they were brought back in '54. The egg-throwing was also contested by some (some people complained that this was a waste of food (memories of WWII rationing) – the Rotarians explained that these were all “out-of-date eggs which could not be sold. However, nobody thought the idea of egging county officials was a bad idea!). The wedding, however was popular. Evelyn Kelley married Edward D. Allred (owner of *Eddie's Snack Bar* at January-Wabash Park) on Thursday Sep. 9th. The Methodist pastor, Rev. Robert Jones, married the couple. Local stores provided many wedding items with Ferguson Department Store donating the bride's gown. American Airlines donated transportation for the honeymoon in Mexico. Local entertainment included Norma Jean Aubuchon, a championship baton twirler, and Bill and Don from Radio station KXLW. Added to all of this was a rooster crowing contest (we assume among people not actual chickens). The Ferguson Country Fair always gave people something to *crow about*.

The 1954 Fair (Sep.8, 9, 10, 11) again featured the food and craft events – events which would continue until 1961. A new contest was presented – a

The second fair, in 1950, was also a Thursday thru Saturday fair (Sep 7, 8, 9). It kicked off with more than a round disk – we said these Rotarians were creative- it kicked off with a flying saucer. The stunt worked as people all over the US and foreign countries read of the promotion.

The fair continued in the “country” fashion with old fiddlers,



Clue No. 3
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DAY & NIGHT MARKET

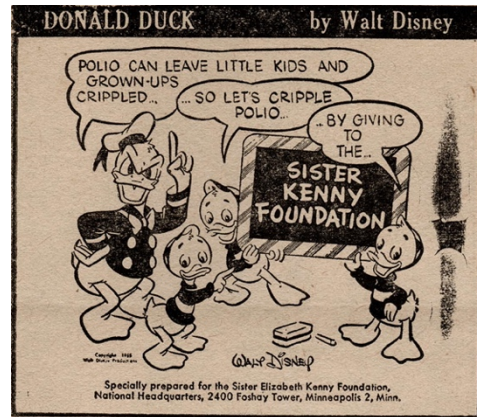
Our town may be a whistle stop,
 A tank town or a siding,
 But we are very obvious
 To those who go a-riding.

Please Note: All hiding places are within the city limits of Ferguson, and all are easily accessible without damaging any property or causing any disturbance. The Rotary Club and the other sponsors are not liable for any injuries or other damages sustained by or caused by treasure hunters.

“Treasure Hunt”. 10 tickets were handed out with \$250 in prizes possible (about \$3000 in 2025 money). Note the warning at the bottom of the ticket. As a result of this contest, a boy was rescued from a flag pole! In addition to the normal fair activities, 1954 featured a “sports-car” parade. On Friday night the fair featured an auction for a 1954 Ford-

perhaps from Stivers Ford, located just up the block. Local groups began to appear on the fair stage including Explorer Post 365 (St. John and James), dancers from the Emma Ogle School of Dance and the Ferguson High Mixed Ensemble. Over 30,00 people from all over St. Louis City and County attended the fair – and the number kept growing over the years.

In 1955 the Fair opened on Sep 7 (8, 9, 10) and featured Firefighting and Civil Defense demonstrations and exhibits. Civil Defense began during WWII and continued during the years following the war as we were now in the Cold War. Civilians, not military, took on the responsibility of making certain that we were secure. Big at the time were the new voting machines. They were present along with instruction of their use. Polio was still big in the news – the Sister Kenny Foundation had a solution and were present at the Fair (see cartoon at right). So was “Susie” the “Smartest and cutest baby elephant. Entertainment featured a local Rotarian, Dr. Louis Boettcher as “the Great Imposter”



The 1956 Fair continued to be a 4-day event (Sep. 4, 5, 6, 7,). The Fair began, as past fairs had, with a parade, this year lead by this truck (parked at the old fire house) and



featured even more vehicles from our military. The shot (to left) also shows you a visual idea of the location of the Ferguson Country Fair – the big sign at the entry to the Fair, between buildings on Florissant Road. The tank was towed here, it was not

part of the parade as tanks tend to tear up the road. This fair also featured local talent: once again was Dr. Lou Boettcher, this time as a pantomimist, the Ferguson High Majorettes, and Brownie Troop 783. A member of this troop was Judy (Craig) McCarty who's memories of the fair will be in next month's article, could not remember what they did – but enjoyed it. “The Teen Agers”, a song and dance group may have also been a local act. No information on them is given. They could have been a 50's “rock” band or not. We will not see “rock” a part of the Fair until next month.

We will conclude with some personal Fair reflections from Kathy (Owen) Noelker. Kathy was a child/teenager during the fair years. *“There were many booths of chance where you could win prizes. My favorites were the large stuffed animals, the celluloid figures like small dolls with colorful feathers on their heads. Every year I would win a goldfish or two. At this booth the tables were full of small round fish bowls and to win you had to throw a ping pong ball into the bowl. This was the fish you won! I always won a prize at the “guess-my-weight” booth. They never guessed high enough. My most vivid memory was the huge ferris wheel. The bar to safely hold you in did not lock! We were little kids and held on very tight while we rocked and rocked the chair of the wheel. The highlight of the summer was the fair coming to town.”*

More on the Ferguson County Fair in next month's article.

Information for this article came from the files of the Ferguson Historical Society.

Membership in the Ferguson Historical Society is open to anyone – membership levels range from \$20.00 to \$50.00 a year. If you are interested in joining or 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.”