



# 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.



This week we are going to take a look at two things: First a report on a Ferguson History Society event seen to the left. On April 26 FHS sponsored a trip to the Campbell House in St. Louis. The Campbell House (1850's) is the only standing building left as



part of a large “suburb” of St. Louis (around 15<sup>th</sup> Street) – St. Louis was much smaller in the 1850's – but crowded and polluted. The wealthy wanted out so the Lucas family developed plans for a “suburban” subdivision of around 30+ homes – Lucas Place. Our



document for this trip was Laura Watt – who also happens to be a serious student of the history of the Campbell house, Lucas Place and the Lucas family. On July 17<sup>th</sup> she gave a presentation to over 20 people. Now you might say “What has this to do with Ferguson?” The name Lucas is important in North County history – The Lucas family later established a fine home on – guess what road? – Lucas and Hunt (you see the two families married). It was a fascinating evening. The History House is planning similar programs in the future.

The second subject is one we introduced in last month's article on Vogt School – Central School.





Central is the large school building at the corner of Wesley and Clark Streets – just one block up from Florissant Road. The school was constructed in 1880 and is certainly one of the oldest continuously operating schools in Missouri. Currently, Central School serves pre-Kindergarten thru 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade students and their families. With around 20 classrooms, a Library, gym and cafeteria, it is a large building with large historic classrooms. To give a little more about the school, we will repeat a little of last month’s comments.

Ferguson established a public school system as early as 1867 with a 1-room building on Wesley Avenue near Florissant Road. By 1870 a second room was added. Then, the school was moved to a building (still standing and a private home) at what is now 110 South Clark. In 1880 a new building was built with

2 classrooms on the first floor and a village hall on the second – this was Central School. The original building is shown at the right (with newer additions darkened). The entrance to the building was on Wesley (as it currently is, but now in an early addition).



Central housed students from grades K through 10<sup>th</sup> Grade (2-year high school). In 1903 the *School District of The City of Ferguson* was established and the high school was extended to 12<sup>th</sup> grade (4-year high school). In both 1904

and 1908 additional classrooms were added to Central. In 1927 an elementary school was added on Chambers Rd., Griffith School (small frame building). By 1930 Central School was getting crowded with all 12 grades and only Griffith to take some of the load. A high school needed to be added and that school would be Vogt. In 1936 Vogt became a junior high as the new Ferguson High School (on January) was built. That building became Ferguson Junior High (now Ferguson Middle School) when McCluer High School was completed in 1962. Throughout all these additions and the many more which would come later as Ferguson, Florissant, Kinloch and Berkeley School Districts eventually merged into the Ferguson-Florissant R-2 School District – Central has operated as a public School for over **145 years!**



The above view is from the parking lot behind the school. In this photo you can see the additions over the years. To the left is the gym, the area between the gym and the original building is an early addition (better seen from the Wesley side) and to the right is another early addition. If you look at the second photo in the article you can see the newest attrition to the right on that photo – the darker brick. The bell tower, on top of the original Central School has been a source of enjoyment for students over the years. Originally sounding the bell would announce that school was about to start and students had best hustle. While no longer announcing the start of school, I can remember that on special occasions, over the later years, select students were allowed to ring the bell. I did attend Central School for first and second grades.

This article was mainly about the physical building. In future months we will go into the history of Central School not as a building but has a story of a school – a place for human history.

If you have any stories about Central School – please pass them along using the e-mail address below. We will be happy to talk with you and record your experiences. Your stories could become part of our History House collection or in one of the future articles. Any stories or documents you might have of any historical place, event, or family in Ferguson is always welcome and we are prepared to do recorded oral histories at your home or at the History House. Remember: History is yesterday but yesterday is only a blink away – today becomes history. We are also interested in what is happening just yesterday.

**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](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.”***