

Ferguson Has A History Museum

Ferguson, indeed, does have a Historical Society and a History Museum and we are moving forward with the help of our readers of the past weeks. We encourage any of you reading this article to join in the conversation. Contact information is at the bottom of this article.

Last month we reported on the Annual Fundraiser, with many photos and commentary. Your Ferguson Historical Society's "History House" is almost never idle. On Saturday December 4th we held our annual "Historic St. Louis" open house. This week we are also going to go further into the history of Ferguson's historic Central School.

The "Historic St. Louis" Open House is an annual event in cooperation with over 25 additional local historic organizations (like FHS) and buildings – many you may have visited in the past (Campbell House, Eugene Field House, U.S. Grant National Historic Site, etc.). While most of



these are older homes of various architectural types, the Ferguson History House (Good Shepherd's nun's home), built in 1959, is considered a "Mid-Century Modern" design (think -The Dick VanDyke Show). If you are in your 70's or younger, you may have lived in a mid-century modern house built, post-war, sometime in the 50's into the 60's.



Items from this time period are hot items today. The photo to the left shows our welcome entrance to the open house and offers a good example of *Mid-Century Modern*.



The photo to the right is a view of the unrestored kitchen complete with the colorful aluminum tumblers and pitcher, historic fridge and built-in oven and counter-top range. The turquoise metal cabinets are typical. The kitchen is a favorite place for visitors.

For this open house we tried to provide some typical *mid-century modern* Christmas décor. The silver Christmas Tree was typical of this time period as well as the gifts. The photo of the table displays a typical punch bowl and cups along with some snacks, antique ornaments and candle sticks.

If you want to see a classic example of mid-century modern, plan a visit to the History House (also see a lot of Ferguson History. In the next month or two we will feature a calendar of events for 2026.

The rest of the article will consist of more about Ferguson's historic Central School. To review, the school sits at the corner of Wesley and Clark streets. The first part of the Central School Building was constructed in 1880 (145 years ago).



Below is an early 1880's photo of the original building. The dark marks are the result of applying Scotch Tape to the back of the card (never do this!!). As we noted in our September article, the school has undergone many additions in it's 145 years. But we are not here to talk about the building – we already did that. We want to talk about some of the life of that building.



In 1980 Central School celebrated it's 100th anniversary of continuous education.

The button shown to the left is a product of that celebration. May 15th thru 17th consisted of three days of celebration provided by students, faculty, PTA and the then-current principal, Don Saali. The celebration included parades, a picnic lunch and an afternoon of races and activities for the students, along with building tours, a car show, an evening variety show and (this is most important) a ringing of the tower bell at 9:45 AM on Friday. That bell had not been rung in over 40 years (before WW II.)



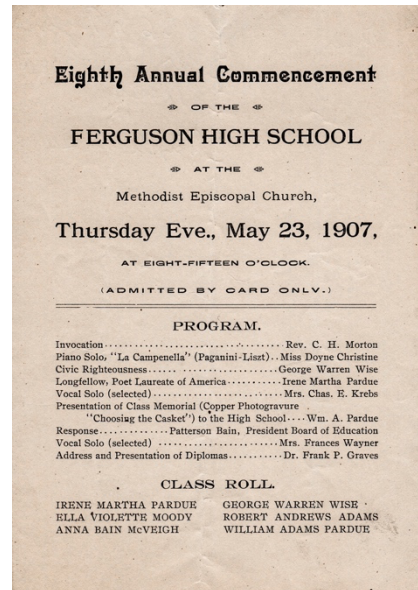
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That bell was the school's communication system with the community since 1880. The 1883 school year gives an example:

- 8:30 AM – to alert students that school will begin in 30-minutes.
- 8:50 AM – School in ten minutes
- 9:00 AM – School is in session
- Noon – lunch time (many students went home for lunch)
- 1:00 PM – Class begins for the afternoon
- 3:00 PM – School is out for the day.

In 1984, former principal Red Quillman, under the prompting of his teacher son, Jim, did a test of the bell's range. They determined that the bell, in part due to its height at the top of the 4-story tower on the top a hill, had a range of ½ mile. That translates into from Royal to Paul streets and from Dade to Elizabeth streets. Pretty much of Ferguson at that time. It certainly

covered Ferguson in 1880 – and maybe farther because of fewer homes and less-taller buildings. In 1894 the school year began on September 3rd and lasted until June 15th. Today we begin in August and end in May. Central consisted of four classrooms. Classroom One had Prof. J. A Miller (also principal), classroom 2 had Miss Bell G. Page, classroom three had Mrs. Amanda P. Baird, and classroom four had Miss Carrie E. Scott (primary grades). It wasn't a one-room school but a 4-room school educating grades kindergarten thru 10th grade. 1903 saw the addition of 11th and 12th grades. This 1907 (8th) Annual Commencement shows six graduates from the 4-year high school. FHS has a number of these annual commencements for researchers to search for Central graduates. In 1984 Central School became a National Landmark, thus preserving the building's exterior for the future.



We need to be reminded that in 1894 Central had a sister building, the Vernon School. Vernon was the “colored school”. Its original location was on Florissant Road near where the creek crosses Florissant Road (Farachi’s Pizza today). By 1927, Vernon had moved to Carson Road until it closed in 1964 (integration of the schools). Both schools, in the early years, were controlled by the Principal of Central School. We covered Vernon School in June 2024.

There is a lot more about Central School history which we can cover in future articles. If you have any documents or memories of Central School – anytime along its 145 years of education (or any Ferguson school)– please contact us at the address below. We have capabilities to do oral histories and would love to add to our collection on any Ferguson or North County subject.

If you have any suggestions, questions, or items to donate to the Ferguson Historical Society, please contact **Jerry Benner** at fjbenner@mindspring.com. If you wish to become a member or make a money donation, you can send it to Ferguson Historical Society at 716. N. Elizabeth Ave, Ferguson, MO 63135. You are also welcome to visit the History Museum. Please email me at the address to set a date and time to visit. Board meetings are on the third Wednesday at 6:30 PM. Interested people are invited to attend the meetings.

“The Ferguson Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Ferguson Missouri. Membership is open to all sharing our interest.”