

# 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.



Nicholas Kasoff

Your Ferguson Historical Society has had a very busy first quarter of 2026. Last month we covered the Pat Washington talk on Ferguson's role as a *Sundown Town*. For the month of March, we sponsored the second of two Candidate



Maggie Sullivan



Adrian Shropshire

Ferguson Mayor. March 31<sup>st</sup> gathering at the Ferguson two candidates, (in Kasoff and Adrian Shropshire. is honored to host this forum preserving and sharing the intended to provide residents opportunity to hear directly from the candidates about their vision, priorities and leadership". History is more than "long-ago and far-way" and FHS, a non-political organization, wants to be

Forums presenting candidates for saw a good number of people Community Center to hear the alphabetical order) Nicholas "The Ferguson Historical Society as part of its commitment to story of Ferguson. This event is and the broader public with the opportunity to hear directly from the candidates about their vision, priorities and leadership". History is more than "long-ago and far-way" and FHS, a non-political organization, wants to be

part of history as well as a depository of history. Maggie Sullivan and Dr. Masa Massenburg-Johnson were moderators. Neither Maggie (a member of the FHS Board of Directors) or Dr. Massenburg-Johnson are a resident of Ferguson. Each candidate was given the opportunity to present their case, the audience was able to submit questions in writing, and each candidate was given time for their summary. It was a pleasant evening full of information. Results of the Ferguson Mayor race, on April 7, 2026: Adrian Shropshire won.

But this article is also about history, not recent but well in the past. In the March 2022 edition of the Ferguson Neighborhood News, we ran an article about Ferguson being a railroad town. In this part of a two-part article, we will cover some of that railroad history. In the second of we will reveal the social impact the railroad had and has on the Ferguson social world.

Steam power in the form of railroad engines begin in the 1840's and by the 1850's it was beginning development in eastern Missouri. By 1855 three railroads were developing in the St. Louis area. One, the *St. Louis and Iron Mountain Railroad* ran from St. Louis to Iron Mountain, operating mainly for the shipment of metal to the Mississippi. A second, the *Pacific Railroad* ran from St. Louis to Franklin Missouri (in Franklin County) and west. Franklin was renamed, Pacific, in honor of the railroad. (So, while the *Pacific Railroad* never made it to the Pacific Ocean, it did make it to Pacific). Both of these railroads later became part of the *Missouri Pacific Railroad*.



The third railroad was the *North Missouri Railway* – this is the one which mixes its history with Ferguson's. William B. Ferguson arrived in the area in 1845. At that time, it was a half days ride from St. Louis City. In 1855 he donated about 10 acres (in what is now downtown Ferguson) to the *North Missouri Railway* – as payment the depot was to be named “Ferguson Station” – Then Ferguson left and headed west to California. Enter Thomas T. January into the railroad picture. While January arrived here in the 1840's with his enslaved people and wealth and built a mansion on the hill over the spring-fed pond, January's Pond, he becomes important in our railroad history.

Steam engines need either coal or wood to fire the engine. They also need water – heated water becomes steam – steam is what drives the pistons which drive the engine – they are steam engines. Steam engines needed sources of water near the tracks. January had the spring-fed pond right here in Ferguson. A pipeline was run from the pond to the depot and the *North Missouri Railway* had the water stop west of St. Louis.

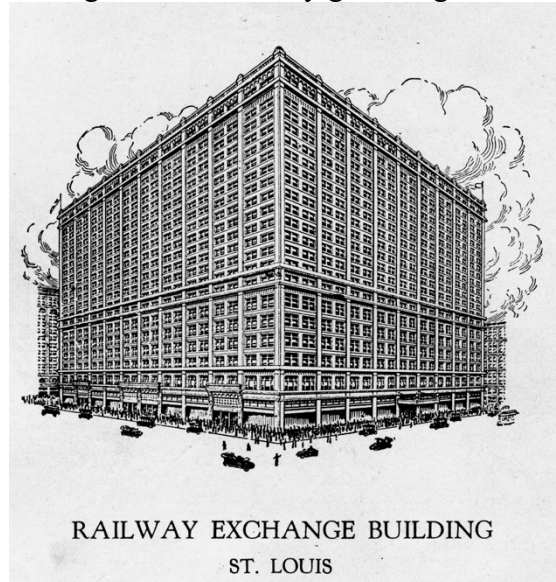


Enter the *Wabash Railway*. Railroads during the 19<sup>th</sup> century went through numerous bankruptcies and mergers. The *North Missouri Railway* became the *St. Louis, Kansas City and Northern Railway* in 1879. In 1915, it became the *Wabash Railroad Company* – the company we most associate with Ferguson. (Watch the words Railway and Railroad as they change frequently).

Ferguson's current depot was constructed in 1885. During the years between 1900 and 1950 there were as many as 8 tracks for switching along with 6 passenger trains daily – and passenger

trains were not as important as freight trains. Trains also served as a community communication center using the engine bells and whistles to issue warnings and community gatherings.

The Wabash became a Class 1 national railroad serving 5 states (Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota and Missouri) and one province in Canada, Ontario. Its national headquarters were in the Railway Exchange Building in St. Louis. If you are old enough, you might recognize the first eight floors of the Railway Exchange Building as the Famous Barr Department Store. While vacant today, the building is part of plans to revive some of St. Louis fine old buildings.



The Wabash underwent periods of change over the years. In 1889, it was the *Wabash Railroad Company*. In 1931 it was reorganized as the *Wabash Railway Company* only to go back to the *Wabash Railroad Company* in 1941. During World War II all railroads were critical – Ferguson included era - with Emerson Electric, the Match Company, and the aircraft industries in the area. By 1964, during an era of big railroad mergers, the Wabash became part of the *Norfolk and Western Railroad*. In 1982 the N&W became the *Norfolk Southern Railroad*.

Many trains still run past the old Ferguson depot however none stop here anymore. BUT – there is still part of the Wabash Railroad existing in Ferguson – that is the subject of next month’s article. On a hot summer day, you may take part in it – perhaps you have spent a 4<sup>th</sup> of July watching fireworks there – or maybe you have just enjoyed dropping a fishing line or taking a walk around the pond. We are talking about January-Wabash Park! But, in 1911 it was called “The Wabash Club”



More of this next month. Thanks to *Wabash Railroad Historical Society* for notes.

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). 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. We have capabilities to do oral histories and would love to add to our collection on any Ferguson or North County subject. ***“The Ferguson Historical Society preserves Ferguson’s historical record and engages the public through programs, research and exhibitions that deepen understanding, strengthen civic pride and connect past, present and future generations.”***

**Fergusonhistoricalsociety.com**