

HISTORY OF SHERWOOD FOREST

by Ann Nlnneman

The history would not be complete without the history of Merriam. For without the establishment of Merriam there would never have been our "little part of paradise" known as Sherwood Forest.

- Notes from "From Hunting Ground to Suburb-the history of Merriam - Kendall Bailes

- The past adds a depth of understanding, a third dimension, to community living. In essence it is the history of thousands of town, the unique American story.

- Over 150 years ago Kansas was a vast wilderness...moving forward to 1828, William Clark of the famous Lewis and Clark Expedition, who at this time was the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, concluded a treaty with the Missouri Shawnees. They ceded their land near Cape Girardeau for a tract of 2500 square miles in Kansas. From 1828 to 1833 several groups of Shawnees from various states came together in a total of 1500 in their vast reservation Their headquarters were established in the town of Shawnee or Gum Springs as it was then known. Thus did the "People of the South Wind" cede their land to the "Southland"Indians. Much of the progress made by the Indians must be attributed to the faithful and diligent work of the early day Quaker missionaries. After much success in Ohio working with the Indians there, they were asked to open a mission school in Kansas. The Quakers were given a temporary right to 320 acres most of which today is within the city limits of Merriam. This would be around where the Crestview School is today. With this development marks the first significant development in the history of Merriam. Through many years of natural disasters and war the Quakers perserved in holding the Mission open for the Indians. In the later years they mainly were housing Indian orphans. By 1869, white settlers owned most of the surrounding territory, the Indians had moved on, the mission closed and the land was sold. The Quaker Missionaries would be proud of what still bears the name of Shawnee Mission.

- David Gee Campbell, arrived in 1854 to claim his share of land. He settled near Shawnee. He bought acreage around 1860 in Merriam and developed a prosperous farm by 1864. When Campbell moved here he was interested in a community settlement. With the beginning of community, the town was named Campbellton in his honor. Back then Campbellton consisted of around 20 homes and a few businesses, including a Nall hotel. Prairie Scooners passed through along with cattle herds headed to Kansas City. Around 1868 the railroad came through Campbellton in route to Olathe. In 1870 the first station in Campbellton was built. That station was changed to Glenwood and the town became known by the same name. Later, the station was named and in addition the town was named Merriam, probably in honor of Charles Merriam a one time secretary-treasurer of the railway. In 1908 another important development took place. The KC and Olathe electric Railway, one of the first electric railways, built a line from Kansas City to Merriam. The electricity was generated by natural gas at a power house in Merriam. With the electric railway Merriam grew from a country village to a suburb. Merriam was home to 1 of 2 amusement parks in the country. In 1880 the park was completed. President Grant was asked to open the park. The 40 acre park, were as many as 20,000 persons a day visited, included a lagoon, a

•zoo, dozens of concessions and games a large shelter house and the Pavilion. A baseball diamond, tennis courts, croquet ground and a horse-driven merry-go-round. There was a large Tabernacle where square dancing was held. By the turn of the century, Kansas City had built its own and the Merriam park went out of existence.

• Merriam was given the honor of having the first Bell Telephone office in Johnson County. In about 1908, the office was established in the rear of the post office building.

Campbell laid out eight acres of his land and the area became known as Campbellton. He gave some land on the east side of Turkey creek to Mr HK Adam for a blacksmith shop and home which became the first business in the town.

•Nall Hotel was later renamed the Glenwood

•The name became Merriam after Merriam Park was developed in 1880.

•Merriam was a stockholder and superintendent of the railroad.

•A cider mill behind the general store.

•George Kessler contributed to the work on Central Park in New York and then was hired by the KC,FT Scott and Gulf Railroad at the age of 20 and became the superintendent of Merriam Park. He was known for his work on Merriam Park, one of the finest designs in the country. He went on to be appointed engineer of the Board of Public Works in KC in 1892. In this capacity he was responsible for many of the parks and boulevards in KC, including Quality Hill, Pen Valley Park and the Paseo. ***While in Merriam, he built a seven room house built in 1884. The property was known as Kessler's Bluff. It is now Sherwood Forest. The trees are the result of Kessler's nursery. The property was in the Kessler family hands until 1947.***

•Merriam Park was in existence from 1880 till 1900.

•Another park came in in 1907 -1919. It was Hocker Grove Park, Located just north of where the Hocker Grove School is located today. Not as grand as Merriam Park was but just as popular with ball diamonds, horseshoe pitching, boxing and wrestling matches. Hot air balloon rides political rallies. Skating and dancing It ended with the decline of the electric line.

•Turkey creek flooded many times but was disastrous in the years 1914,1935,1951,1977,1993,& 1998.

• Fire Department 1947 Full police in November 1950.

•Meyers Bus Service-1st bus purchased in 1949.

•Johnson County Library System started in Merriam Nov. 1952

•1956 I-35 was built through Merriam.

•Shawnee Mission Medical Center opened 1962

•First JCCC opened in Merriam where now houses Irene B French Community Center.

•Merriam Swimming Pool - 1985

•Proposed in 1993-Turkey Creek Streamway trail

•1999 flood work plan

•Merriam market 2000

Timeline presented at Merriam's 150 year - 1864-2014 celebration held May

- 1864 - David Campbell purchased 80 acres from American Indian & built his home 9503 Johnson Drive. Campbell donated several acres for future town known as Campbellton.
- 1866 - Area was called Campbellton. It contained the H.J. Adam blacksmith shop and J.J. Walker Mercantile.
- 1867 - Railroad was brought through Campbellton.
- 1870 - Twenty homes, a hotel and several businesses were added.
- 1872 - First permanent school was built on what is now know as Merriam Drive.
- 1880 - Merriam Park, a 40 acre park, first in the area. Was built by the railroad and dedicated by President Grant.
- 1890 - Campbellton was renamed Merriam after the Superintendent for the Charles Merriam Railroad. Charles Merriam.
- 1900 - Population boomed to 250.
- 1907 - A trolley was established from K.C., MO. through Merriam and past Shawnee.
- 1908 - Bell Telephone office was opened, Hocker Grove Park was established and 17 homes were built along the trolley line.
- 1909 - The Post Office was established.
- 1911 - Merriam grade school and high school was built in what is now know as Irene French Community Center. 5701 Merriam Drive.
- 1922 - Shawnee Mission Rural High School was built.
- 1930- Merriam was the largest town in Johnson County. 4 grocery stores, 2 hardware stores, 4 gas stations, 3 drug stores, 2 dry goods stores, 3 restaurants, a bank, 2 garages, 2 barber shops, 1 beauty shop, 2 feed & coal yards, 2 tavernas, 2 churches, a real estate office, grade and high school, candy shop, post office, hatchery, hotel, lumber yard, tin shop, second hand shop and a ball park.
- 1941 - South Park was annexed into Merriam.
- 1944- Plane crashed at what now is known as Merriam Town Plaza.
- 1947 - Volunteer fire department was established.
- 1949 - Desegregation of South Park.
- 1950 - Merriam became a 3rd class city with Carl Engel serving as the 1st Mayor.

FACTS ABOUT THE FOREST

PLAT FILED 1947

In 1947 Jack L. Bear, Builder and Realtor was interested in purchasing the 40 acres owned by the George Kessler family. The original Kessler home, a seven room house built in 1884. The property was know as Kessler's Bluff, now Sherwood Forest. The trees are the result of Kessler's nursery. From what I can guess that property was located at 6305 Robinhood. The reason I say that is there is a well which has been covered up in that back yard.

- Jack acted as Secretary, did not have the funds to move forward until he joined forces with Dr. K.W. Carbaugh, Reginald (Esther J) Moore, (Mission Lumber)-purchased lot 28, Steve Alexanders in 1950. acted as President O.D. Moffett & Helen

- Principal place of business was located at 5830 Outlook in Mission.

- Articles of Incorporation of Sherwood Forest Development Company, Inc. filed October 19, 1946

- The agreement was to developed and be used as a high class residential district.

- Before the name Sherwood Forest was adapted, Dr. Carbaugh's, wife submitted the neighborhood to be addressed as a deck of cards, unique because of the 52 homes to be built. Each home would be a playing card for their address. When submitted it did not go very far.

- August 1948. Power lines were authorized in the forest.

- Bill moved in in 1950. Jack Bear built 2 spec homes 6318 & 6310 (O.D's).

- There had to be special permits for sewer and gas lines because of the location.

- Attorney in Mission, Bob Woodworth, wrote the original restrictions, most of which could not or would not be in effect in todays world. In place May 15, 1947. which were pretty typical for the time. Sherwood Forest was the most prestigious development in Merriam. The other similar neighborhood at the time was Lake Quivira.

- 6303 Robinhood was the last home to be built in the area.

- 6344 was owned by a Dr. Mercier, who had a clinic and a pharmacy in his home.

- Prior to the development of the Forest it was considered "lovers lane" by many. When it became the "place to be..." it was sometimes known as "snob hill" at the high school. At that time North was the only high school in the area referred to only as Shawnee Mission High School.

- In the earlier years Shawnee Mission Pkwy. was known as Hwy. 10. It was just a 2 lane back then. There was a weight station across the road from the Forest entry along with a produce stand. The school bus never came up into the Forest. All the kids were to meet at the corner.

- There were 3 TWA pilots and 1 Braniff pilot who lived in the Forest in those early years. Elite neighborhood, easy access to the highway and direct route to the old airport. Montgomery, Young & Thompson were with TWA and Hudson was with Braniff.

- In the mid 60's for many years with very few Moms working outside the home they would gather once a week at 10:00 AM with their sandwich in hand arrive at the Hostess for that week and play bridge until 2:30 just before the kids arrived home from school. There were lots of kids in the Forest during the 60's and 70's. Most every home had some. At one time there were over 45 kids who had all the surrounding woods and Turkey Creek for their playground. With all those kids came lots of pets. No lease laws at that time. There were no fences to keep them from running, riding their bikes or sleds down all the hills of the Forest. It was fun to dam up the storm drains after a rain. Good fishing in the creek. In the front yard of 6355 there was a very large pear tree that offered great treats on the way to and from the creek. 6315's drive offered a great runway for model airplanes. Back in the day...all the kids addressed the adults as Mr. and Mrs. unless they were Dr. which you were corrected if you got it wrong. They knew the rule. When the streetlights came on it was time to go home. No need to go home for a drink of water. They would just turn on someone's hose to get that drink. On Halloween if someone left a bowl of candy outside for self-help. If you were not the first kid you were out of luck.

- Before 1968 the parties were a little on the wild side with drinking. Had a New Years Eve party which was a swimming party in the 6328 Robinhood indoor pool, which no longer exists. In later years when 6328 Robinhood was for sale, the idea was tossed around to have the neighborhood purchase the home as the neighborhood clubhouse and pool. That idea was short lived.

- At one of the Christmas parties, Dr Pierce gave Dolores Holland a "gift certificate" for 5000 diapers on the birth of their 7 child. All in good fun. Dr. Pierce was a prominent pediatrician who was the founder of Alexandra House a community based, all volunteer, peer-led perinatal hospice and infant care system for parents, pregnant with babies with lethal or sub-lethal anomalies.

- There was the "Green Thumb Award" which was handed out every year. 1984 It was a sign placed in your yard handed over from the previous years winner.



- Participated in the Turkey Creek Parade in 1989 which took 1 of 3 awards. President, Doug Replogle wore a Friar Tuck outfit. This outfit was given to Travis Gunter this last Halloween. He promised to keep it moving throughout the neighborhood.

- There was music every year at the parties, supplied by neighbors. Jerry Haverkamp on the trombone, Val Quant on the trombone, Crayhorn on the trumpet with Howard Steir and Harold Haroldson on recorders.

- Had Santa Claus for a few years. Santa was Jerry Haverkamp and Weber was the Santa Elf.

- The Forest was also home to Construction companies, an Animator for Disney Corporation, lumber yard owners and

several Merriam Mayors to name just a few.

- The Forest has always been a very stable neighborhood. For years, no one moved. Our residents were the original owners and were here for 40 + years. It was funny when someone new moved into the neighborhood. It was never their home for years, it was always referred to as the original homeowner home.

- 1997 there was talk of morning coffees, evening after hours for those who worked. The after hours group worked for awhile but found folks were too involved.

- 1997 the Ninnemans started decorating the Forest as a “Christmas surprise.” It has continued since.

- 1999 Sherwood Forest played a part in the redevelopment of Turkey Creek (straighten out the windy creek-some of the Forest lost a bit of land as a result) and the flood plan which would affect Southwest Blvd and Cambridge Circle.

- In 1985 it was voted to clean up the “park lot” (main island). railroad ties posts on corners with chain strung between ties.

- COIN representative council member for community affairs. 1984-85.

- 1985 wrote a letter to the railroad about the excessive train whistles. Did nothing.

- UTurn issue has been going on since early 1980.

- Garden seminar called “Get Things Growing” was discussed in 1988.

- Suggestions had been made for a “Good Neighbor” award in 1989

- Sherwood Forest was incorporated in Nov. 1989.

- Garden committees had been in past years.

- In the 90’s when the Shuttlecocks were added to the lawn at the Nelson Gallery. The Steirs, 6318 Robinhood decided to accent their front yard. Fun, fun, fun

•1996 Railroad ties were rotting would be replaced with rocks. Wooden benches will be replaced with concrete ones. That year Steve Holland (Holland Construction) offered to bring up one of their dump trucks for a neighborhood work day. Those that could helped neighbors who needed things hauled away. He also helped with his equipment to add the rocks at the main island and entry. Turned out to be a lot of fun.

•2002/2003 -New streets and curbs are beginning in the Forest. Also the replacement fence on Sherwood Lane was a joint effort with neighbors in the Forest and some funding from the City. It had been taken down when the new curbs and streets were being installed. A great success under the leadership of Andy Oddo who supplied equipment from his construction company. That started several work projects in the Forest. Great neighborhood involvement.

2012 Sherwood Forest now has their own website. Part will be for public viewing and the remainder will be password protected.



2003 was one for the books as far as moisture goes. You thought it was a problem climbing the hill in the snow...MUD, MUD, and more MUD during the entire process



- 2003 We were in the Turkey Creek parade. Ann Ninneman and grandson Ben dressed up their PT Cruiser as an orange barrel and Val Qualnt and John Hill rode in a convertible with hard hats on.



- 2003 Funny story... at the annual meeting, a young girl, Madison, at the time was probably around 10 came to the meeting and stood up in front of everyone and said we need to slow down. She found a dead turtle in front of her house. Steve Holland, president at the time, also owner of Holland Construction, was so taken by her courage and determination he decided to have a turtle crossing sign installed in front of her house with stripping across the street. After doing so, the City asked him to come to City Hall for discussion concerning this matter. They told him he needs to remove the sign and the stripping...it was not to City code. After the discussion, Steve simply asked...are you going to go and tell that little girl safety for the turtles is not important because he sure was not going to. After a moment, the City told him, Oh, go on...just don't re-strip the street when it wears out.

- 2004 Ran a underground water line to the main island for future watering. It was hooked to the water line at 6353 Robinhood. It was used for a few years but decided we needed to come up with a better plan to care for the main island.

- Night Out Against Crime was held every August. We invited the Police and Fire departments. Sometimes we supplied the ice cream and sometimes they would. It was always refreshing to hear that Sherwood Forest is a very, very safe place to live.

- 2012 the program was moved to the Merriam police department. They feel they can cover more topics and draw more people from a wider area.

- 2005 Voted in neighborhood trash pick up. After looking into the costs it was determined that the residents would save almost 1/2 which included recycling. We did have to sign a 5 year contract.

- 2009 A committee was formed to look into revising our by-laws and then our restrictions. The original ones were from the formation of the Forest in 1947.

- 2009 It was decided to have a neighborhood blog set up. Hopefully to better spread the news.

- 2010 A new hard cover neighborhood directory was created.

- 2011 A committee was appointed to review the restrictions. The by-laws had been finished

•2011 An e-mail system was set up. Everyone was to send information to the appointed person and they would then send it out to the neighborhood. That way we would not be getting “junk” from anyone.

•2012 The State of Kansas formed the new Home Owners Bill of Rights and all Homes Associations must comply. We found out that what we had been working on for the past couple of years was not what we needed to accomplish. We contacted an Attorney who helped guide us through the process. After struggles, and lots of emotion the Forest came to agreement in September as to what we wanted and needed to move into the future. Our original restrictions will be put to rest forever.

•2013 With the new documents in place, we needed and wanted to appoint an Architectural committee to review plans from neighbors who wished to add improvements to their homes. At that same time the board appointed an Entertainment committee to help organize neighborhood activities. They have been successful in having two “Forest Crawls.” along with the annual dinner. We always used to have the annual dinner at someone’s home or in the street. With the train noise and needing to hear the important information it has been held at the Merriam Community Center.

•2014 Flashing solar light at the Shawnee Mission Pkwy UTurn added by the city. Not sure if it has made any improvement. Been a problem since 1980.

•2014 The first Halloween parade. With the kids being still so small, we have years to go to come close to the numbers of kids of the 60’s and 70’s. But, who knows, we are getting younger families moving in all the time.

•2014 A “island” committee was appointed to research companies and gather ideas as to how we can best move forward with the planning and care of the islands. The mowing and watering is becoming too costly to continue in the ways of the past. At the annual meeting plans and costs will be presented for neighborhood input and voting. We all know that it will take several years to complete the renovation process. We also know that change is difficult. So stay tuned for the updates.

Unusual Critter Sightings in the Forest

Throughout the years we have watched the the everyday critters, squirrels, rabbits and beautiful birds.



Every once and awhile we get an extra treat. Here are just a few.



This mother Fox had her hands full raising 4 little ones.

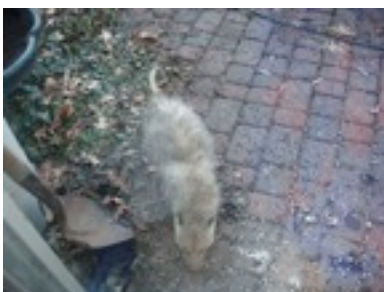
This female turkey stayed all summer. She would walk up your sidewalk and look in your windows.



This Blue Haroun ate half the fish in our pond.



Several deer are around. Don't seem to be afraid. This one was looking in the window. Probably because your bird feeder was empty and she was hungry



Possum do actually play possum!