

WASHINGTON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

HERITAGE HERALD

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VOLUME 9 – OCTOBER 2004 – #7 – KIT ZINSER, EDITOR

Thanks to everyone who responded to the last newsletter. I can't do this without you, and I appreciate every thought and each laugh we share. Eventually, all reminiscences will find their way into the newsletter to share Washington's rich and unique history.

The Fall Festival heralded in fall as well as the beginning of school one day after the festival closed. For years, the Labor Day weekend festival was the last hurrah for many of Washington's school children. In 1984, Don McCullough and I had a conversation about how neat it would be to revive something similar. Toward that end, we put together the first scrawny "Apple Festival" — minutiae compared to previous festivals and festivals since! In the next year or so, the Downtown Merchant Association and the Chamber of Commerce put together Good Neighbor Days and that has segued into the now very popular Cherry Festival. The very first Fall Festival was held in 1946.



Washington Reporter Headline Thursday, August 29, 1946:

CARNIVAL SPIRIT GRIPS WASHINGTON!!

"Thanks to the Chamber of Commerce and merchants, and Chairman Dave Snell thirty plus concession booths, gaudy decorations, games and rides will begin going up Friday. Opening day is on Saturday continuing to midnight Monday with the exception of Sunday morning when all local citizens and visitors are urged to attend their church. The square will be roped off each day from 10:00 AM until 12:00 Midnight. The American Legion has fulfilled its promise of something doing every minute and NO GYP concessions! The local talent contest features

eager contestants with Edith Brown in charge. Piano solo — Laurel Rich; Group Sing — Joy Kisser, Nancy Gainer, Marcia Banks, Ron Legal, Bill Skinner; Vocal Solo — Mrs. Guy Lucas; Dancing — Ruth Meyer and Don Alexander (who placed 1st); Sax Solo — Joyce Sprague playing Ragtime Cowboy Joe. (An aside: Even though Joyce Sprague Nordhielm didn't win first prize, her career has soared in many directions). At 9:00 PM Monday, a drawing will be held for a 1947 Studebaker provided by Meyer Motor Company. 'Studebaker -the first real post war auto — rugged, smart and sturdy!' The Legion will run all concessions except for the rides operated by persons from out of town. Parking will be a major problem. Leave your cars at home." In an adjoining article, "American Legion officials decided to carry on plans in spite of warning by doctors of keeping children out of crowds (especially indoors) in light of a polio outbreak." Legion officials felt the festival and children would not be adversely affected.

At this very moment, the heady, sugary aroma of cotton candy eddies in my head. I can hear the tinny organ music from the Merry Go-Round with my favorite black stallion bobbing up and down, He didn't seem to have the nicks and scrapes of the other horses — perhaps because black paint was easier to come by for sprucing up. The Ferris Wheel sat on the South corner of the square, and the Octopus operated on the West Side — a wild, jerky ride duly christened by Kay Jackson and Sharon Hett. Fortunately Barb Baer and Dee Dee Lucas were not wearing their Sunday best. Seared into my brain, however, is the infamous "Pup in a Tent" and just this year, I found that Tom Hexamer was responsible for those wonders. Plump hot dogs skewered on a stick dripping with real Marshall's chicken batter — fried to a deep, golden brown — Nirvana! It wasn't difficult to cadge fifty cents from Dad who was busy waxing philosophical at Marshall's. I sped to the tent and watched as Emmy Hexamer carefully placed a pup or two into the sizzling oil, finally handing the wax paper wrapped prize to the chubby kid with drool running down her chin. Some things can't be replicated. I just have to say, "Thanks, Tom."

Tom Hexamer shared his memories of the Fall Festival:

"Washington's Fall Festival and Marshall's Tavern — both jewels of Washington's History. What a wonderful way to bring folks to the center of town to play bingo (Dick Dingledine caller), ride the rides, visit and try to win a kewpie doll or some other silly prize with the full knowledge that you managed to beat the odds of winning anything. It was always exciting when the traffic of Route 24 had to be re-routed at Wood Street to Jefferson and back to Walnut if traveling East or if traveling West, down Elm to Jefferson to Wood and rejoin Route 24 at Bill Engle's Standard Station. (now the new Khoury's restaurant). One of the best known volunteer traffic directors was Gerv Reed and his wife. He usually directed the corner of South Main and Jefferson with a bright yellow armband, flashlight and a stern swing of the arm under the watchful eye of Mrs. Reed sitting on a camp stool on the sidewalk. My annual role for the Fall Festival was working for Marshall's Tavern. They would bring their deep fry cookers and stoves outside, and they rented a tent from a local undertaker. Not many folks knew the real owner of the tent. I guess it wouldn't be very festive having all this fun under a funeral tent. Chuck Lorengo and John Behrens and crew would use the chicken batter for deep fry the Pup in the Tent. I have seen pronto pups and corn dogs, but none equal Marshall's Pup in a Tent. Several weeks prior to the festival, I had the fascinating job of placing the wieners on the stick in the basement of the tavern. Hour after hour, I stuck weenies. The process was so lengthy, I was awarded a break — a bottle of pop and eating at Marshall's - employment benefits in my career unmatched by anyone since. The bandstand was communication central with a booming public address system which helped unite kids and parents at the festival and or band concerts. (Brute Hornbeck on drums, Clarence Slonneger and Mr. Hirstein as conductor.) It seemed to me that the festival's energy resulted from the returning World War II vets. The festival moved to the West side of town at the Legion headquarters and wound down from there."

I think Tom and others might agree we have a treasure in citizenry who provided this energy and were active in Washington's success as a unique and enduring community, and I have heard all my life Washington has the corner on intriguing nicknames. People like Toad, Raz, Hoot, Red, Snipes, Butch, Shrimp, Duck, Baggy, Moe, Cuz, Slip, Flip, Punk, Burpe, Bake, Poncho, Rip, Snakey, Bing, Govenor, Cobber, Termite, Okie, Heine, Moke Coon, Dune, Lefty, Hex, Boots, Fox, Shorty, Brute, Cocky, Doss, Boze, Butter, Blackie, Tulsa, Windy, Breezy, Drafty and Suitcase: Simpson. I left most last names out; however, if you're interested, I will share what I have. Some last names I don't have — perhaps you do? Call 444-3026 or email me at: k.zinser@netzero.net

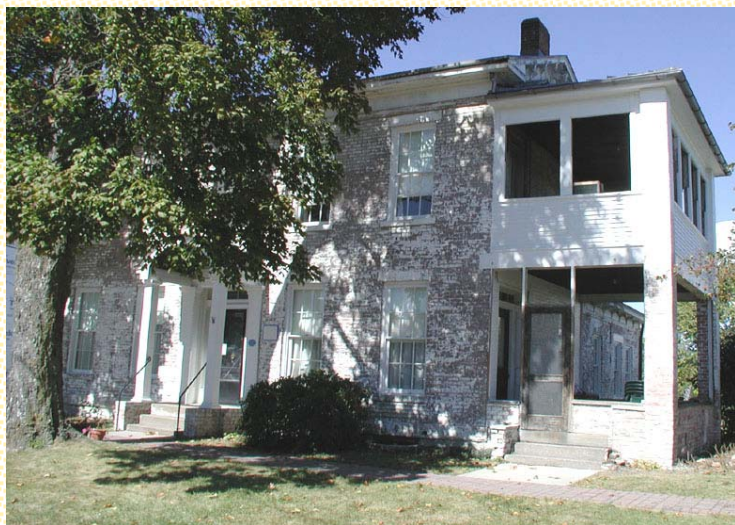
Announcements

October Meeting
Washington Presbyterian Church
October 25, 2004 - 7:00 p.m.

October Meeting

On October 25th our program will feature People and Their Collections. Five or six people will show up with their collections and tell us what motivated them to collect those specific items and some of the stories that go along with that collection process. Come, bring a friend and enjoy an evening of fellowship with other Washingtonians.

Have You Noticed?



If you have driven by the Historical Society property on Zinser Street, you will have noticed that we are painting the exterior of the Zinser house. We got a late start, but are on track to finish the first part of the job by October 31st. The preparation work (that which comes before a paint can is opened) is always the hardest and the most labor intensive. But by October 31st you should see a transformation on the south and east sides of the house.

kitchen is not on the tour, it will be much more pleasant for preparing food when we have teas with our events.

We are also sprucing up the kitchen with new paint and flooring. While the

There are Openings

We are always looking for volunteers to man the Zinser House. If you are interested, please call 444-8123 for further information. We are open on Wednesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday from 10-2 pm. We are also open on Friday afternoon from 2-4. Taking a three hour assignment will give you time away from your chores and a chance to visit with those who might drop in.