MSM Bellringer

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# Holiday Memories at McCormick

Traditionally, at McCormick Elementary School (MES), the time between Thanksgiving and the Christmas holiday break was special. Many events and celebrations were held for all to enjoy. The following memories highlight some of the occurrences during the holiday season through the years.

Former student, Forrest Richardson, Jr., remembers one of his childhood Christmas music programs at McCormick Elementary School. He recalls wearing a white robe and standing with his classmates on a platform situated against the north wall in the multi-purpose room. The stage, he says, was available for the holiday program they were presenting. The teachers, parents, and families were seated in rows of chairs that filled the remaining floor area in front of the stage and platform. The packed room was warm, and the children (including Forrest) were singing carols when suddenly the boy on his right swayed and slunk down onto the platform! The singing stopped, the fallen boy was revived and checked (he was okay, just overly warm and excited), and the program resumed.

Kindergarten through fourth grade children and their teachers surround the Christmas tree for carol singing and photographs in December of 1959. (From "This is Your Life" MES scrapbook vol. 1)

Longtime McCormick school secretary (1956 to 1982) Winona Hearle's volume 3 scrapbook includes the announcement of the McCormick Faculty Christmas Party held at Lois Hulland's Club House at 1460 N. Clarence (Stratford West Apartments) on Friday, December 11, 1981. The club house opened at 6:30 and dinner was served at 7 pm. Guests were told to bring a white elephant gift wrapped in brown bag paper!

A longstanding McCormick tradition (which continues into the present) is to situate a large, decorated Christmas tree in the first-floor atrium of the 1890s building. Prior to dismissal for the holiday vacation, the school children gathered around the tree for caroling and photographs. The 1959 photos included in the volume 1 scrapbook "This is Your Life, McCormick" show the kindergarten through fourth grade children and their teachers gathered around the tree for their annual observance of this holiday tradition.

In August 2021, Brad Berry, former McCormick Elementary student, posted the following on the MES Facebook page. "I had a dream about McCormick school last night. Some one used an artificial tree at Christmas on the main landing instead of the real thing! I was very upset." Brad acted on his dream and provided the museum with a magnificent balsam fir, and the tradition of placing a large, live Christmas tree in the 1890s building atrium resumed. In October of 2022, Brad posted again, "It's almost time to deck the halls again! Last year we put a huge live tree back in *Continued on back*

## OUR MISSION

The mission of the McCormick School Museum is to showcase and protect its historical and architectural importance while telling the story of Wichita Public Schools through artifacts and archives.

The mission of the Advisory Council is to guide and assist in long-range planning, marketing, and development of the McCormick School Museum, seeking opportunities for growth and recognition through increased educational opportunities and significant fundraising efforts.

The Newsletter of the McCormick School Museum, Inc. is published six times per year to inform constituents of the Wichita Public Schools and other interested patrons of activities and events taking place at the museum. Contributions help us to produce this publication.

You may send your gift to McCormick School Museum, Inc. at:

McCormick School Museum, Inc.
P.O. Box 12881
Wichita, Kansas 67277
savemccormick.com

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the school for the first time in forever. It looked and smelled just like your memories of it from childhood."

McCormick's 1975 Bicentennial issue of the *Bellringer* shares the following, "*In Memoriam: December 1968:* At the close of the McCormick School Christmas program and her fifth-grade class Christmas treats, Mrs. Belk walked out of her classroom never to return. She had a heart attack during Christmas vacation and passed away in January."

These are just a few holiday memories from the archives and cherished memories of former McCormick students. The museum is open for visitors on Sunday from 2 to 5 pm and Wednesday from 9 am to noon. Come by and enjoy the holiday season at McCormick School Museum and make some memories of your own.

## EVENTS & MUSEUM HOURS

The McCormick School Museum is open Wednesday from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and Sunday from 2:00 to 5:00 pm. Park to the north of the building; enter through door #4 (closest entrance to the parking lot). Ring the doorbell if needed. You may call 316-708-0676 to confirm museum hours before your visit or to schedule tours outside regular hours.

The Museum complex is located at 855 S. Martinson in Wichita. Currently, the stairway to the multipurpose room is handicap-accessible for events. Admission is by donation; your support is always appreciated.

## SAVE THE DATES

### DECEMBER 5

**Annual Holiday Open House:** 9 am to 5 pm
Musical performances by USD259 students from 9:30 am to 3 pm.

### DECEMBER 6 & 7

**Holiday Open House Weekend:** noon to 5 pm both days
All are invited to come and experience an old-fashioned festive season in school.

### DECEMBER 11

**Carol Sing Around the Tree:** 6:30 pm to 8 pm
Sing and be merry at this seasonal holiday evening event. Hot cider and cookies will be served.

### JANUARY 24

**Kansas Day Chili Feed:** 4:30 pm to 6:30 pm
Celebrate Kansas Day with folk songs, homemade chili and toppings, cornbread, and cobbler. Suggested donation: $10; kids under 12 are $5.

To reserve a room for your event, contact the museum office for reservation information and availability of dates.

**For more information and to contact the museum:**

**Website:** www.mccormickschoolmuseuminc.com
**Donations:** www.savemccormick.com
**Facebook:** McCormick School Museum
**Gmail:** mccormickschoolmuseum@gmail.com

**Telephone:** 316-708-0676 (call or text)
**MSM Office:** 316-558-5804 (leave a message)