

East Falls Past--July 4 Celebrations

The Fallser, July 2011, by Wendy Moody

How was the Fourth of July celebrated in Falls in years past?

June 28, 1900:

Below is a sampling of the festive activities announced in the local paper, the *Weekly Forecast*. Church Sunday School picnics predominated:

The annual Falls Baptist Church picnic of the Sunday School will be held in Abbott's Woods. The planning committee is leaving "nothing undone" and will offer athletic contests, races, games, and "ample refreshments." Members should meet at 8:30am at the church to march to the grounds.

The Methodist Sunday School will offer a baseball game between the married and the single men at their picnic grounds, 34th St (Vaux) and New Queen St. Races for girls and boys include: a potato race, sack race, three-legged race, needle race, 100 yard dash, "running hop, step, jump," broad jump, and tug-of-war. The prize for winning? A "handsome badge with the photograph of the superintendent of the Sunday School thereon!"

The People's 4th of July Regatta will be held, as usual, notwithstanding the failure of City Council to make an appropriation for the purpose. The Schuylkill Navy Regatta, which includes 11 clubs, will be held next Saturday. The committee has been forced to charge entry fees, and the excursion boat for Councils' committee, with its usual stock of good cheer, will be omitted.

July 10, 1930:

4th of July Specials.

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Thirty years later, an article in the ***Suburban Press*** reported the tradition of Sunday School pupils spending the 4th of July in the woods was still going strong:

East Falls celebrated the 4th of July in the same old safe and sane fashion which has been the custom for the past 55 years. The Sunday Schools all marched in bodies to the woods of the neighborhood to enjoy all day picnics. Each of them reports more marchers than before.

The members of Grace Lutheran Church enjoyed the day along Midvale, below Warden Drive; the Baptist School, headed by its pastor William Hayes, went to the new grounds at the Y.M. A. property; and the Methodists were found ensconced in the grove of trees on the site of the proposed Presbyterian Church at Midvale and Vaux.

Rev. William Cooke and the Presbyterian pupils spent the day along the East River Drive, in the rear of their Sunday school building.

St. Bridget's parishioners with their clergymen, and P. J. Kelley as grand marshal, led by the Naval Battalion Bugle and Drum Corps, marched to their retreat in Merrick's Woods at Raven Hill.

The Lutheran Church of the Redeemer picnicked close to the church at Midvale and Conrad. On the Richards estate were the scholars and teachers of St. James the Less.