Walkersville Methodist Playground

1920-1939

In 1920 the Walkersville United Methodist Church constructed a large playground to the rear of the building. An expansive area of green grass and majestic trees provided a space for children to play and learn how to respect others while interacting together. In the beginning, the Esworth League of the Walkersville Methodist Church sponsored the playground activities and was later assumed by the church’s Young Adult Class.

The playground offered children of all ages a place to play. For the older kids, metal traveling rings were hung by chains from pipes fifteen feet above the ground. Boys and girls were enticed to swing like a monkey from one ring to the next, until they completed all eight rings of the course, or their arms gave way and they dropped to the ground. Four swings equipped with wooden seats were hung by heavy chains which provided kids the opportunity to pump and push with their legs to reach heights of eight feet. For little children, four swings suspended by ropes with wooden seats provided a place to safely learn how to swing like the big kids. Many piled onto the large merry-go-round and held on tight for a joyful ride, a popular activity evident from the rut that circled the apparatus that was formed by individuals pulling it around and letting go. The large sand box gave smaller children a place to imagine, create, and play for hours of fun. Metal see-saws provided the opportunity to go up and down for two people and sometimes many more. The biggest attraction was the sliding board. Kids patiently waited in long lines to climb the eight steps, one by one, to feel the rush of wind as their body speedily traveled down the metal slide and launched into a sand pit.

In the 1930’s, the big events for members of the town, especially the children, was the formal annual playground opening which occurred during the first week of June. It was a one evening event beginning at 6pm and included playtime, contests, dinner, and treats.

A fun contest was the Cake Walk which contestants paid ten cents to enter. They formed a circle and began to walk when a nearby band played music. The director of the event stood in the center of the circle with a yardstick, dropping the yardstick in front of each participant as they passed by. When the music ceased, the person in front of the yard stick won a cake.

To slow down and catch up with neighbors, the attendees could purchase paper plate suppers for $1.00 and enjoy a family style meal together. The menu was either crispy fried chicken or country ham served with creamy potato salad, tangy coleslaw, and homemade shaker lemonade. Located in a small frame shed was the snack shack. A wooden panel dropped down to serve customers yummy and delicious treats.; such as hot dogs, potato chips and Dixie Cup ice cream that ranged in prices from one to ten cents. Only during the annual playground opening, the snack shack sold candy bars as a special treat for everyone.

June of 1939 marked the final family-fun playground opening. The reason for the closure was the initiation of the Walkersville Fire Company No. 11 Carnival which began in July of 1940 and this year marked their 80th highly successful fund-raising event. In addition, the erection of the Walkersville School playground on Frederick Street offered kids additional places to play. The Walkersville United Methodist Church playground was an integral part of the Walkersville community as a gathering place for townspeople of all ages.

Article submitted by Walkersville Historical Society

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