

Forgotten Places – Foley Road (Andrews/O'Neil Cabin)

By: Karen Ferguson, Town of Kirkwood Historian

Now that the Kirkwood America 250 Celebration is over, I've been catching up on information requests. As I was doing research for those, I was once again reminded that there has been a lot of histories compiled for certain areas of the Town (Riverside, Main Street, Langdon, Five-Mile Point, and Brookvale) while other areas have little to nothing recorded about them in our Town records. This is understandable because a lot of the early members of the Kirkwood Historical Society recorded their family history and memories of living in those specific areas. The "forgotten places" tend to be more rural and not as populated. With that said, I have decided to take a short break from the Main Street series to focus on one of these forgotten places – Foley Road. I will be sharing my research in the section of Foley that includes Sherwood Valley, Johnson Road, and Quilty Hill. This is the area where I reside and have been digging into its history and trying to find early pictures of the area. *(If you have history or pictures from this area, I would love for you to share it with me so it can be preserved.)*

Foley Road lies in both the Town of Kirkwood and the Town of Windsor and parallels Highway 17/86. Foley Road was named after Robert E Foley who had a lumber company in this area, but the road wasn't built until Route 17 was expanded. The original road that residents used was known as both the Windsor Road and also the Binghamton Road. The creek that meanders through this area is Park Creek but was formerly named Fitch's Creek, after the first known resident of Kirkwood. Residences had private bridges across the creek that would then allow them to access Windsor Road directly. A deed from 1932 shows that Broome County purchased land from the property owners to reconstruct the "Binghamton - Windsor Part 1, State Highway No. 5022". There were two other acquisitions of land from the residents in 1953 and 1962 when the Binghamton-Windsor Road was made into a four-lane highway now known as Highway 17/86. It was during this construction phase that several businesses, residences and private bridges that once accessed the road directly were destroyed or relocated and side roads were built. Even the creek itself was rechanneled. Due to the increase of traffic, the State decided to create the overpasses and demolished even more properties in 1998 and 1999. It is because of all this reconstruction that tracing exact locations of early settlers of this area is nearly impossible.

There is, however, one original farm and farmhouse footprint that is still visible today that dates back to 1795 when Matthew Carpenter conveyed Lot 63 of the Robert Morris Patent (a/k/a/ the Watts Patent) to G.J. (George) Andrews and his wife. The property consisted of about 96 acres. It is my belief that they are the ones who first developed the land. The Andrews (also spelled as Andrus) family resided there until 1858 when the property was then deeded to James Christopher. Mr. Christopher then deeded the property to Michael O'Neil in 1868; however, the 1866 map shows him already residing there. Arthur O'Neil and his family immigrated from Ireland and was first found on the Census records in 1855. Michael was his oldest son. When he purchased this property, he was newly married to his wife Margaret. According to the 1870 Census, Michael and his wife Margaret were 35 years of age and they had 2 children: John, age 2 and Mary, age 4 months. After Michael's death, the property was passed onto their son John and remained in the family until his death in 1942. John had accumulated

adjacent property for a total of 133 acres. A few years after his death, his property was deeded to Neil and Julia Kennerup. The Kennerup family built their home in 1947. It was closer to the creek and Windsor Road.

According to Neil and Julia's son, Martin Kennerup Sr., who eventually inherited the property, the O'Neils were horse farmers. He recalled helping disassemble the original structures to use the wood to help build their home. The barn wood is still visible from the inside of the house in the attic. More than likely, the wood was milled from the Ferguson sawmill which was located near the intersection of Johnson Road and Windsor Road.

About 4 years ago, with Martin's permission, my husband and I hiked up the hill of the farm about a mile to the original farm's location. It is amongst the grove of trees. There is still barbed wire strung around as a large fence line for animals. There is a hand dug well from a natural spring that is only about 18 inches deep. From there the spring flows into a trough made of rocks to help water the animals. That same natural spring feeds ponds further downhill. There are various large foundation stones for the buildings that once stood. Scattered around the property are broken parts from a wagon, wagon wheels, horse shoes, tools, etc. It is these types of artifacts that help give us a look into the past. Without Martin's guidance, this farm's history would be lost.