

Fairmont Social Life in the 1880's

What did Fairmont's social life consist of in the 1880's? It seems that for some, it revolved around the game of "euchre."

Around 1885, there were several young professional and business men that decided to start a "euchre club." Most of them were married, though there were a few romances in progress at the time. Newspaperman Frank Day, lawyer J.L. Higgins, and lumberman J. D. Young were responsible for starting the club. The club lasted for twenty years without either officers or dues.

Meetings were initially held every two weeks, however, it was later decided to meet only in the winter and that there would not be any prizes awarded. Everyone that was a member of the club had their supper early so that playing could start promptly at 7:00 p.m. They followed a fairly rigid schedule, as refreshments were served at 10:00 p.m. and the party was over at 10:30 p.m.

The food was usually quite simple. It often consisted of coffee with doughnuts or sandwiches. Frank and Lucia Day once served mush and milk. Occasionally around Christmas, there was a more elaborate party that included dancing.

All the members walked to the party unless there was a storm, and then someone in town with a team and a sleigh was hired as a taxi to drive them to the meeting. The men in the club would then chip in to pay for the ride.

People wore their best clothing for the club. For the ladies, this meant new dresses annually. Fifty dollars was considered reasonable for a new dress at that time, however, since styles didn't change, a club woman could be well dressed with one new winter dress and one new summer dress. Last year's dresses were also considered fashionable second bests. Semi-formal dress was worn by the men in the club.

The ladies wore genuine pearls and real stones in their rings and brooches, or they wore none at all. Costume jewelry was not worn. The women didn't go to beauty parlors, so they curled their own hair putting it up on rags or wearing it in smooth pompadour style over a pad made of their own combed hair kept washed and neat.

Fairmont's Euchre Club, which included a number of Fairmont's leaders of that time and their wives, was pictured in a June of 1905 twentieth anniversary Hazelmere lawn party. Among the members of the club were Henry D. Gerth, J. D. Young, Henry Rippe, Frank A. Day, C. N. Peterson, William Viesselman, J. H. Quinn, George Lester, T. R. Alston, U. J. Pfiffner, E. Betz, J. L. Higgins, John W. Gorman, Harry W. Sinclair, F. A. B. Patterson, and others.

For more information, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.

By
Lenny Tvedten
Executive Director
Martin County Historical Society