

Martin County Historical Bits & Pieces

Although there is certainly a wealth of substantial historical information relating to Martin County, there is also an abundance of what might be considered as lesser known facts as well. However, these lesser known facts can certainly prove to be quite interesting in and of themselves. Although these somewhat obscure facts might be referred to as “trivial,” this is in no way meant to imply that they aren’t in many ways both significant and noteworthy. The following are a few examples of what might be considered some lesser known historical facts relating to Martin County’s history.

There happens to be a street in Hollywood, California, that bears the name of William G. McCadden, an individual with ties to Martin County. The name of the street is McCadden Place. It is a street in Hollywood that runs north and south, one block east of Highland, with the northern most point of origin at Yucca Street. It ends at Wilshire in the Hancock Park area. In between, it meanders for several blocks and at one point disappears completely for one city block where Bancroft Middle School replaces it.¹

McCadden Place was named for William G. McCadden, a pioneer Hollywood real estate agent who was born in New York in 1843 and lived in Fairmont for a time. His connection to Martin County dates back to when he moved to Fairmont in 1863. Five years after his arrival in Fairmont, he married Lorena Davis. Later on, after his wife passed away in 1893, McCadden and his daughter, Jennie, moved to Lake Valley, New Mexico, in 1900. He and Jennie moved again to Hollywood in 1903 where he purchased a large tract of land just east of Highland Avenue that includes the street named for him. One famous address on McCadden Place is the house where *“Whatever Happened to Baby Jane”* (1962) was filmed. That location was at 172 S. McCadden Place in Hancock Park. William G. McCadden died at his home at 1356 Beverly Drive in Beverly Hills on January 9, 1935.²

The choice of television channels in Fairmont today is clearly abundant. Have you ever wondered how and when cable TV started in Fairmont? The original TV cable system began in Fairmont in 1957 with three functional channels. It was called “Clearview TV” in 1959. The cable system was purchased by the Plunkett family in 1964, and has evolved significantly over the years to the present present cable service in Fairmont, Midcontinent Communications. Cable TV rates in Fairmont in 1957 were \$5.00 per month. According to the CPI, adjusted for inflation, that would be the equivalent of \$37.67 per month today.³

¹ <http://blog.allanellenberger.com/index.php?s=fairmont>

² <http://blog.allanellenberger.com/index.php?s=fairmont>

³ <http://www.westegg.com/inflation/infl.cgi>

Fairmont was among the first cities in the state to have a library. In 1879, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law enabling the council of any incorporated city to levy an annual tax for the purpose of maintaining a library. According to a 1958 *Sentinel* article, under this law, the city of Fairmont became the second city in the state to establish a city owned library in October of 1879. Consequently, the first library began operating in 1880. Minutes of the first library board meeting were dated October 25, 1880, and included the fact that Miss Lucinda Daniels was hired as the first librarian at a salary of \$10.00 per year. In 1903, with the help of Frank Day and others, a Carnegie Grant was obtained. Construction of a new Carnegie Library commenced in 1903 and was completed in 1904 at 118 North Park Street. It opened on April 26, 1904, with Miss Minnie Bird serving as the first librarian. The city and county libraries eventually merged in the late 1960's, the Carnegie Library was demolished in 1968, and the current Martin County Library opened in October of 1969. The granite pillars, stained glass windows, and the granite cornerstone dated 1903, all from the Carnegie Library, are incorporated into the structure of the 1995 addition to the Pioneer Museum.

Fairmont has a number of motels to choose from for the travelers visiting this area. But, have you ever wonder what was the first hotel in Fairmont and where it was located? Some accounts refer to Fairmont's first hotel as being called the "Lake House," and other accounts indicate that it was called the "Hyatt House." Historical documentation indicates that Fairmont's first hotel was built in 1861 where Ward Park is now located. At that time, the Ward Park location was probably as desirable as today's I-90 location in terms of attracting people to spend the night. This hotel was indeed called the "Lake House," and was for many years considered Fairmont's "swell" hotel. It was also the home to the first store, the United States Post Office, the Register of Deeds Office, the County Auditor's Office, and offices for the Clerk of Court and the County Treasurer. A number of years later, in 1878, Ezra M. Hyatt acquired the property and changed the name of the hotel to the "Hyatt House." Consequently, both names, the Lake House and the Hyatt House, can actually be considered one in the same as being the first hotel in Fairmont.

Visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont for more information on the interesting history of Martin County.

William McCadden

(picture credit to: <http://allanellenberger.com/tag/william-g-mccadden/>)



Carnegie Library





Carnegie Public Library, Fairmont, Minn.

