

Finding Flat Branch
Slide Show Narrative
Sept. 21 2006

Welcome to this tour in images of the history of Flat Branch Creek.

The early history of the Flat Branch Park area is documented on beautiful brass plaques in the park, and I hope you all have seen them. I will refer to some of the history documented there, and I hope to show you some of the history that has not been widely told and some images that have not been widely seen. I concentrated on finding images of the creek and what went on around its banks from the earliest settlement of Columbia to the present day. One of the challenges is that, for the many years when the creek was in dire condition, people didn't take pictures of it. It wasn't something you wasted film on.

The story of Flat Branch begins with the creek as a central feature of early Columbia. Eventually it declined into obscurity as human activity covered it up and passed it by, until just recently, when it has been cleared of the rubble of commerce, and given a new life and new hope for the future.

(*) **WATERSHED MAP** This is a map of the Flat Branch Watershed which is the light gray area in the center. Flat Branch drains an area from West Blvd. on the west, and College Ave. on the East. To the north, about I-70, and it the creek runs south past Stadium eventually to the Hinkson. This area is the heart of historic Columbia. The creek is woven into the history of the city.

(*) **TRIBUTARY STEW PARK** A view of John A. Steward Park near Garth and Stewart helps us envision the land as it must have once been: undulating woods divided by rocky creek beds, and grass underneath some of the sparser woods in a savannah habitat. The grass would not have been mowed in 1800. ☺

(*) **FLAT BR PROV & STEWART** This is the bed of Flat Branch Creek near Stewart and Providence, probably much like it looked pre-settlement. The Osage, the Sauk, and the Fox Indians may have passed through, but no evidence of settlement has been found. For centuries the hills and creek beds lay quiet, undergoing their own cycles of birth, death and rebirth.

(*) **WAGONS WEST** After the War of 1812, a surge of westward migration began from the Colonies in the East along the Cumberland Pike or National Road whose destination was St. Louis. From there, the only overland route west was known as

the Boone's Lick Trace, at first barely a trail. Named for trailblazer Daniel Boone, it passed by the all-important source of salt known as Boone's Lick to our west. By 1819, so many settlers were coming into Missouri that one observer counted 271 wagons and 55 two-wheeled carts passing through St. Charles in one month. From then on until the middle of the century, thousands of settlers moved westward through Boone County along the Trail toward Kansas City (Independence), where it met up with the Santa Fe and Oregon Trails, which opened in about 1820. At that time, the Boone's Lick Trail passed through the present location of Brown's Station about 5 miles north of Columbia.

(*) GARTH & WALNUT, SMITHTON SITE In 1818, 35 shareholders of a land speculation firm, the Smithton Co., bought 2720 acres in what would later become Boone County. Most of the earliest settlers here were from the South, and the founders of the town were from Kentucky. They laid out Smithton on the ridge to the west of Flat Branch, and a cluster of log cabins arose near what is now Garth and Walnut in, 1819.

(*) VIEW ACROSS VALLEY TO COLUMBIA However, they could not find an adequate water supply on top of the hill. After three fruitless attempts to dig water wells in the clay soil – meanwhile carrying water up the hill from Flat Branch - they abandoned the hilltop settlement and laid out a new town, Columbia, on the East side of the Flat Branch in 1820. This is a view from the Smithton site across the Flat Branch valley toward the Columbia site. This photo was taken a block from our downtown water tower, which was placed on the hill to maximize water pressure, and it is ironic that today we get our water from a place the early settlers could not find any. Of course the tower gets its water through a pipe from the McBaine well fields.

(*) NEW TOWN LIMITS in a rectangular grid bordered by 1st, 10th, Ash and Locust Sts. Note that Flat Branch is right in the heart of the new town. This map shows the creek and some of its tributaries in blue. Stewart Park, Peace Park, Park St., and Providence Rd. around Douglass School. We'll find out more about what happened to those streams later.

The Smithton Co. had donated two parcels to the town for public use: a Public Square in the NE corner where the courthouse now stands, and a Market Square where Flat Branch Phase I is now located. It is fitting that the Market Square is once again a public space.

The new town was platted around the cabin of Thomas Duly, built in 1820, at what is now the corner of Broadway and 5th St., just two blocks from Flat Branch Creek. In its first year, Columbia was nothing but 15-20 log cabins huddled together in a clearing on the banks of the Flat Branch, surrounded by wilderness. Columbia grew rapidly with immigration for the next several years, with new stores, businesses and government buildings constructed by men with names like Hardin, Garth, Jewell, Gentry, and Sexton.

It is said that 7 springs fed Flat Branch at that time. We are not sure where most these are if they still exist today. Pavement can cut off infiltration of rainwater which feeds springs, so they can dry up, or they could be channeled into storm sewers so they are not seen on the surface. I found references to two of the historic springs: **The Ballenger Building at 27 S. Ninth Street** was originally constructed as a furniture store in the late 1800s. The building sits on a natural spring that lead to the founding of a soda water bottling company in the stone basement by Frenchman Rene Butel. He bottled soda water, ginger ale, birch beer, champagne cider, and other soft drinks. The operation lasted through the early 1900's. Today, the building is undergoing substantial renovations to restore it to its original condition. I suspect the spring, if still running, is directed into a storm drain now. The other one we know of is this lithograph of the University from 1875.

(*) UNIV. LITHO Of note is the inclusion of the long-vanished "Chalybeate Spring" pagoda at the bottom center. This appears to be the source of the Flat Branch tributary that flows through Peace Park today.

The Flat Branch valley was a good water source even in dry weather. Probably the stream itself was used for many years until sufficient wells were dug in the valley to use the shallow groundwater.

(*) STUCK IN THE MUD In a shrewd move motivated by profit, the city fathers managed to reroute the Boone's Lick Trail to the south through Columbia in 1822, assuring a steady flow of westward pioneers through the heart of Columbia, who stopped to spend money and buy supplies. Wagon traffic was so heavy through town and the crossing of the Flat Branch at what is now Providence and Broadway was so mired in mud (there was no bridge) that the City kept horse teams at the ready to pull out the stuck wagons of travellers. This is a typical Midwestern mud street in the 1800s.

(*) DAR MARKER In the early 1900s, the Daughters of the American Revolution placed a series of Missouri pink granite markers across the state to mark the

Boone's Lick Road. One of these monuments marks Smithton, and is located on west Broadway at the entrance to John A. Stewart Park. In 1925, Highway 40 was constructed to the north, and even later, I-70. All these roads exist where they are because one after another, they followed the same generalized route as the original Boone's Lick Trail.

(*) RIVER BOAT The Missouri River was of course a major thoroughfare through Missouri before many roads existed. Around the middle of the 1800s, the road from Columbia to the river town of Providence (near present day McBaine) was heavily used to haul merchandise from the river boats to the city.

(*) PLANK ROAD The growing popularity of all-weather wooden plank roads led to the construction of the Providence Plank Road. It was a toll road built by a private company. Its route can be traced along present day Providence and Old Plank Roads.

The road ran for ten miles from 5th St. downtown, over a covered bridge on the Hinkson (near the present day Reactor Park), past the Jewell Cemetery, and on down to Providence. Completed in 1855, it turned out to be an economic failure for the turnpike company, and only operated about 18 months, but it did serve to bring attention to the need for good roads and soon gravel roads were being constructed to fight the mud.

(*) PROV ALIGN MAP The original alignment of Providence Road into 5th St. brought the road into the center of town (there were no suburbs yet), as well as avoiding the Flat Branch valley. There were no box culverts, storm drains, pavement or curb and gutter, so the last place you would want to build a high traffic road was right in a creek valley. Providence would have to cross the creek to reach the town, so bridge building was avoided by connecting to 5th St., right in the middle of downtown.

(*) WABASH In the mid-1800s, plans were made for a Columbia to Jefferson City Railroad, which would later become a key feature of the Flat Branch Park area. That railroad did not come until later, in 1895. To the north of town, the North Missouri RR, later the Wabash, passed through Centralia on its east-west route in the 1850s despite a strong effort to have the main line come down through Columbia. City leaders were not as successful as they had been in moving the Boones's Lick Trail.

(*) COLT Not content to be bypassed by progress, Columbians launched a campaign to build a branch line which is today the Columbia Terminal (COLT) RR.

(*) WABASH STATION The line was completed in 1867 with great fanfare. A stone passenger depot and wooden freight house were constructed. Note the church at the corner of 10th & Walnut in the background. This site is in the upper reaches of the eastern tributary of the Flat Branch that goes up Park St.

(*) WABASH STA. TODAY The station served trains until 1964 and today, serves as the city bus terminal.

(*) GAS PLANT MEN Another historic industry on the banks of the Flat Branch was the Columbia Coal Gas Co., located near the Wabash Station, which provided the city with gas for light and heat from 1875-1932. Prior to the days of natural gas pipelines, these plants heated coal with steam to produce a burnable gas. It required water which it may have gotten from the east fork of Flat Branch, and coal, which came in on the Wabash RR.

(*) ORR ST. BUILDING This old warehouse behind the Wabash Station on Orr St. dates from the gas plant days. This photo was taken in the summer of 2006 and the building was torn down soon after to make way for the new city bus depot.

(*) SOIL CORE Coal gasification was a dirty technology, producing various wastes that were often dumped in nearby waterways. Flat Branch was probably severely affected by the plant and the smell of coal tar would have permeated the area. In those days any waterway became a convenient means of waste disposal. An investigation in the late 1980s found Columbia's plant was no exception. This soil core shows either a landfill of coal cinders (relatively harmless) or soil saturated with coal tar, which contains a number of carcinogens. An expert could tell by the smell – akin to asphalt and mothballs with phenolic overtones.

(*) AMEREN SERVICE HEADQUARTERS, PRESENT DAY The portion of the plant west of Orr St. was dug up in the early 1990s by AmerenUE under the oversight of DNR and EPA to remove the soil contamination. Today, the downtown fire station occupies the remediated site (off frame to the left). Across Orr St. to the east, the Ameren service headquarters sits atop a portion of the site, including former underground gas holders full of debris and coal tar. Ameren has initiated a voluntary work plan to further investigate and clean up this remaining portion of the gas plant site under MDNR oversight. Beneath this building lies a

very old box culvert that contains the uppermost reach of the Flat Branch east fork. The culvert extends west (downhill) under the Fire Station and along Park St. to Providence.

(*) **ORIGINAL MKT STATION** The Wabash was to be Columbia's only railroad until 1899 when the 8-mile branch from today's Flat Branch Park area to McBaine was built to connect to the Missouri-Kansas Texas (MKT) RR. The two railroads were never connected within Columbia but they both had connections to Flat Branch. Railroads depend on flat routes with as little grade as possible, so they often end up along streams and river valleys. As a result, industries depending upon railroads – stockyards, lumber, coal, petroleum, grain, a host of consumer products – located themselves near the tracks and, by association, next to the waterways. This led to heavy industry covering the riverbanks in our cities, a habit that is only now being slowly reversed as America rediscovers its waterways and begins restoring their banks to the pleasant and healthy environment they once were. Both rail terminals – MKT station where the park is today and the east branch around the Wabash station - were industrial centers.

In the late 1800s, piped municipal water supplies came along or at least community wells and cisterns had been dug, so people did not use the creek water for drinking any longer. However, this was well before serious sewage and wastewater treatment, so as population grew, the creek became a major outlet for waste. By 1900 the Flat Branch was probably pretty disgusting.

(*) **1904 MAP** Let's look at a map of the city in 1904. Broadway and Providence are marked in yellow to help you orient yourself. You can see the tributaries up Providence which apparently ended in some kind of pond. There may have been a spring there. The Flat Branch valley was historically a low income black neighborhood in a segregated town. Actually this map shows Negro occupied housing at that time. Housing was poor for a long time and running water, sewer lines and paved streets were only a dream in many areas all the way up into the 1960s.

(*) **LARSEN HOMES** This photo of typical houses near Third (Providence) and Ash from 1919 shows an outhouse right next to a drainage ditch that would have fed Flat Branch.

(*) **LARSEN HOMES** This one shows a number of outhouses along the Flat Branch. Some of these may have had pits, so the waste would seep more slowly into the creek and undergo some biodegradation first. Others were piped straight

to the creek. I've heard on account of an elderly Columbia native who remembered some of this from the 1920s. This man said that people would take an old telephone pole, cut it into a couple shorter pieces, lay these across the creek banks, and build an outhouse on them, suspended right over the creek. Voila, instant waste disposal. Of course, raw sewage in a creek would destroy the water quality that creek life depends on, as well as potentially spreading deadly diseases such as cholera.

(*) KITTELBAD HOME WITH LEVEE The location of this photo is unknown but we know it is from the general Flat Branch area, and it is interesting to note the mound on the right side of the photo. In those days, earth moving was not as widespread as it is today. No one would make a mound just for the heck of it. This is possibly a levee to keep flood waters out of the neighborhood during rain events.

(*) DOUGLASS SCHOOL This image of Douglass School in 1938 is a rare glimpse of Flat Branch before it was buried in its present-day box culvert in 1946-47. Note the shallow banks, not yet scoured out and deepened by urban runoff. Presumably the creek went right through a number of residential front yards along Providence on its way to the present day Flat Branch Park area.

(*) DOUGLASS TODAY Standing on top of the Flat Branch, corner of Providence and Park..

(*) STEWARTS BRIDGE On the south side of town, no slide show would be complete without a picture of the Stewart Rd. Bridge built to carry Stewart Rd. over both Flat Branch Creek and the MKT Railroad and into Stewart's Addition in the early 1900s. Note the dome of Jesse Hall on campus in the background.

(*) STEWART AND PROV TODAY Today the bridge and the railroad are long gone, and the creek is now a box culvert.

(*) PROV. EXTENSION CONSTRUCTION In 1954, Providence Rd. was realigned from its 5th St. connection to connect to the S. end of 3d St. where it dead-ended. This photo was probably printed backwards in the Tribune's 2001 retrospective book, because that appears to be the Sigma Phi Ep house, looking north from approx. the Lewis & Clark office buildings on campus at the big S-curve in Providence. Sig Phi Ep will figure prominently in a story involving the creek later. Remnants of the realignment can still be seen where Providence deviates from 5th St. at Conley.

(*) **BOX CULVERT** The installation of Providence across Flat Branch Creek required construction of the box culvert. Note one side will be used for the trail to pass through similar to a number of other places in Columbia such as Bear Creek at Rangeline. This will be done as part of the Flat Branch Park Phase II Construction project.

(*) **UMC POWER PLANT** Also of interest at this intersection is the University's coal fired power plant, which was located here in order receive coal shipped in by rail on the MKT. This photo shows, from the MKT Trail, the former alignment of the RR past the power plant and into downtown. Coal is now delivered by truck. Older Columbians remember traffic being blocked at rush hour when the trains came in across Providence.

Fossil fuel brings us right into Flat Branch Park. Both segments of the present Flat Branch Park and their immediate surroundings were industrial for most of the 20th Century. The MKT Railroad was again a major reason for this. For example, the Flat Branch Brew Pub building was a former lumber company. An ice company occupied the building now located at 4th and Broadway, and so on.

(*) **FLAT BRANCH I SANB 1931** Flat Branch 1 had petroleum terminals including National Refining Co. Water St. is now 4th St.

(*) **FLAT BRANCH II SANB 1908** Flat Branch 2 had cattle pens early on and was occupied by bulk petroleum terminals for a long time. Various fuels – gasoline, kerosene, heating oil, and diesel - came in by rail and were unloaded into tanks. They were then trucked to service stations or dispensed into portable farm tanks. The tanks were mostly above ground but some underground tanks were used.

(*) **FB II SANB 1948** By 1948 there were no less than 4 installations on the Flat Branch II site. These persisted until at least 1968.

(*) **LOADING PLATFORM** Here is a typical overhead liquid loading platform similar to what would have been used at Flat Branch. These systems were prone to spills, and the tanks and underground piping would corrode and leak. Flat Branch Creek was undoubtedly affected by spills during this period as well as constant leaching of fuels through the soil and into the creek. Again, this would stress life in the creek and possibly create fish kills, if there were any fish.

(*) WHITELY One of the companies occupying the area, the only one we have a photo of, is Whitely Oil. I am not sure of the location of this station but it could be at 4th and Cherry just E. of Flat Branch I.

(*) URBAN RENEWAL The 1960s brought a movement and a federal program known as Urban Renewal. People finally recognized that certain parts of our cities were sorely in need of infrastructure and housing upgrades – roads, storm drains, sanitary sewers, running water, public safety – had been wrongfully neglected on the basis of income and race.

(*) (*) (*) URB RENEWAL AREA PHOTOS Many of the homes in the Flat Branch area, from Poverty Hill where Osco now stands, for half a mile to the north, were run down, streets were still not paved, and many homes had no running water or sewers. Conditions were very much like they had been in the pictures from 1919 that we saw earlier.

(*) URBAN REN GROUP Plans to redevelop 100 acres of slums surrounding Frederick Douglass School along Providence picked up steam in 1956 when the city adopted a \$2M plan with 2/3 federal funding. The area was described in a city report as “blighted, unsanitary,” and “deteriorated.” Some 258 of the 414 structures in the area were considered substandard.

(*) DEMO WAL & PROV Much of the old housing was purchased by the city and demolished. A number of businesses fell to the wrecking ball as well.

(*) 3D ST MARKET This neighborhood market on 3d St. (Providence) is long gone.

(*) TIGER LOUNGE There was a very old cluster of black-owned businesses in the Flat Branch valley known as Sharp End on and near what is now a public parking lot across from the Tribune Building at Fourth and Walnut. The Sharp End was home to the Tiger Lounge and Liquor until urban renewal removed it. It is now the Tribune Building.

(*) NEW PUB HOUSING The former slums were replaced with bright new public housing, managed by the new Columbia Housing Authority. Construction of new roads, sewers, water lines etc. undoubtedly improved the environment of the area and of Flat Branch. No more mud runoff and no more outhouses with waste piped straight into Flat Branch.

(*) **BOX CULV CONSTR.** Along with all this new home construction came roads, sewers – and construction work on the Flat Branch box culvert under Providence and up into the new public housing area west of Providence. Originally constructed in 1946-47 (still looking for pictures of that), it may have been expanded, rebuilt or extended in the 60s. We're not sure of the exact locations of these photos, but herein lies photographic evidence of the entombment of Upper Flat Branch. First by digging a trench...

(*) **BOX CULV CONSTR.** ...then casting a concrete wall and floors in place...

(*) **BOX CULV CONSTR.** ...Finally, casting the roof and covering with soil. These culverts are strong enough to have buildings or roads over them. The Providence culvert has two channels, one under the right hand northbound lane and one under the sidewalk, from Park St. to Broadway.

(*) **AERIAL** One more look at an overview of the area in the 60s. The Osco site on Poverty Hill, industry around Flat Branch, the Providence bypass.

(*) **HITS BOTTOM** At this point, although seemingly surrounded by redevelopment, the Flat Branch Park area itself was about to hit bottom: declining industries throughout the park area with contaminated soil beneath them, the RR about to pull out, the upper reaches of the stream, though freed from much of the sewage and mud of prior decades by the housing initiative, was buried in a culvert under the street. Nobody paid much attention to Flat Branch anymore.

(*) **REDEVEL PLAN** In the 1970s, there was talk of an outside development company building a shopping mall on the edge of town, and this spurred the downtown business community and the City gov't to think about shopping, hotels and a convention center downtown. The eyesore that was today's Flat Branch Park area was targeted for redevelopment. The plan included a 40-acre area all the way to 6th St., two blocks away from the creek. The City's Redevelopment Authority would become a developer. This model was constructed by consultants hired to develop the plan.

(*) **VOTERS SINK** This was a very contentious issue in Columbia and bond issues to fund it were put to a vote. Not only was there misinformation spread by opponents, but the plan had so many projects included that there was something for almost anyone to dislike or be confused by. It was defeated in 1980. The Columbia Mall was built, but people continued to talk about renewing the Flat Branch area.

(*) **CONCRETE PLANT** The Chamber of Commerce building at Providence and Elm St. was a concrete plant for many years. This photo from the 80s is the only image I have been able to find of the site, but it gives a great view of the creek bank at Flat Branch Park Phase II. You can see the waste concrete that was dumped along the creek banks to stabilize the bank, build up flat land, and give a convenient means of waste disposal. No doubt the highly alkaline wet concrete had a detrimental effect on water quality. This concrete has now been removed from the banks during construction of the park.

(*) **CITY STAFF ARTICLE** The most politically popular facet of the rejected city plan was the creation of a park. Flat Branch was to languish for many more years before the park was realized, but discussion and planning started at that time.

(*) **ABSORBENT PADS** Newspaper archives are full of stories of spills into Flat Branch. This particular spill was caused by vandals opening a valve on a waste motor oil tank at an auto garage on Earth Day in 1991. This photo is at the end of the box culvert at what is now Flat Branch Park Phase I. Firemen are putting down absorbent pads to soak up the oil. The retaining wall of McAdams Ltd. is on the right. One state environmental official said “I came to find out whether there was a fish kill, but since there are no fish in Flat Branch, there was nothing to kill.”

(*) **FB I ABANDONED PETRO FACILITY** We are all familiar with what the park looks like today, but how many of you saw this area before? The City made efforts to perform environmental assessments in preparation for acquiring the properties. This photo from a 1993 assessment report on Phase I shows the overgrown site with dilapidated buildings and abandoned petroleum storage tanks. There were both above ground and underground tanks in place on the site.

(*) **FB I TODAY** The site is transformed.

(*) **FB I EXCAVATION** The site assessments at FB I did find contamination, and cleanup was done in the late 90s. This photo from 1999 shows contaminated soil being excavated from the site. The black color is the result of petroleum (probably diesel and gasoline) that partially biodegraded in the ground.

(*) **FB I PARK SCENE** The same area looks much better today!

(*) **FB II START OF WORK 1-06** The City later performed assessments on the FB II property and found contamination under the parking lot. The City received a

cleanup grant from EPA in 2004. Both sites were cleaned up under the direct oversight of DNR. This photo shows the start of work, pulling up pavement, removal of trees to allow the banks to be excavated and rebuilt. The Flat Branch banks were much flatter and the channel was wider in the old days, and they had filled in along the banks and straightened the creek before laying the tracks.

(*) **FB II FORMER RAILBED** This is the excavation under the sidewalk where the old railroad tracks were. Coal cinders from the locomotives were a convenient source of fill to use under RR tracks. The cinders sometimes had high levels of toxic metals like arsenic and must be removed. This material was going to have to go anyway to make way for the new stream alignment.

(*) **SOIL LAYERS** Here is the wall of that excavation showing the layers of native soil and fill. You can see the dark layers of coal cinders and fill soil that were laid down.

(*) **TRACK HOE DIGGING** This is a good example of the excavation of the subsurface contaminated soils at FB II. The petroleum leaked or was spilled into the ground, soaked in and seeped downhill toward the creek with the percolation of groundwater. So in some areas there was clean soil on top and black soil several feet down. This layer extended out under the creek but it did not reach the other side. It is almost certain that decades ago, contaminated groundwater seeped into the creek.

(*) **CONFIRM SAMPLES** This shows the locations of some soil samples taken to verify that the excavation was clean.

(*) **BACKFILL** Clean soil was brought in to refill the holes up to the desired grade for the park. A total of 7,500 cubic yards of contaminated soil was removed from the FB II site and disposed at the city landfill. 12,000 gallons of water was pumped out of the excavations and disposed of into the city sewer system.

(*) **READY FOR CONSTRUCTION** The banks reconstructed immediately with boulders to prevent erosion and provide a natural appearance. The site is now ready for the details of park construction. Note the curve, pools and riffles; shallower banks to give more available volume to the stream for flood events; ramps for bike trail. Park completion expected Spring 2007.

(*) **PARK SCENE** With the support of so many of its citizens, Columbia has resurrected the Flat Branch and created two beautiful blocks of parkland. We've

researched and remembered our history and our beginnings. The history of Columbia is tied up in transportation and water supply. Two roads - a crossroads – the Boonslick Road, and the Providence Plank Road – met at Flat Branch Creek. I’ve certainly enjoyed the search for Flat Branch and the tales it can tell.

(*) KAPPA PIGS There is more to be done – education about water quality is a constant need. This amusing article from 1990 concerns the Kappa Sigma house at Stewart and Providence. “When you have 77 college guys in one place, they are going to do dumb things sometimes.”

(*) OILY WATER No one would argue that the stream is worlds better than it was in 1970. But even today, there are oil slicks and a constant load of urban pollutants and trash in the water. We can dream of the day when our cities are designed to prevent pollution and everyone’s waste disposal habits are perfect. Renewing our urban streams all across America requires reversing the way we think about them: no longer as conduits for waste disposal, but as enclaves of natural environment within the constructed landscape of the city.

(*) UPPER FLAT BRANCH: LOST And perhaps we can dream of a day when the 7 springs of Flat Branch see the light of day again, and the entire length of Flat Branch are as beautiful as the FB Park you see today.

(*) I FOUND IT My search for the true nature of Flat Branch Creek let me to this storm drain across from Douglass School, which leads down into the entombed Upper Flat Branch. I hope to live to see it unearthed again some day.

(*) PROVIDENCE That could require turning this into a park. This is Providence looking north from Broadway. Call me crazy, but think about it for a moment. If you asked someone in 1970 if Flat Branch could be a natural stream again with a beautiful park alongside, they might have laughed, considering what it looked like then. But look what we were able to accomplish. Time changes things in surprising ways.

I hope you enjoyed the journey, and remember, get out and enjoy the FB and all our streams and parks.

References

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- 4 Columbia Daily Tribune Archives
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- 8 Jindrich, Jason, M.S. Thesis, "Our Black Children", UMC