

East Falls Past--The Bathey

The Fallser, August 2010, by Wendy Moody

With the opening of the *Trolley Car Diner at the Bathey*, (Ridge & Ferry Road), we remember its days as a bath house, built around 1910, with a public pool behind it. Can you picture the summer scene through the following Fallers' memories?



Bob Furlong

I was lifeguard there in 1949. The pool was drained every night and had fresh water daily. It was open six days a week, with girls and boys alternating days. The swim would last an hour, and when the whistle blew, everyone left. Because you needed a dry suit to get in, some kids put their wet suits on the trolley tracks (#61 on Ridge) to dry them under the trolley wheels. I remember guys diving off the high wall into the pool – dangerous, but fun. Some champion swimmers started there – Dr. Fiedler and Joe Furlong won titles for Northeast Catholic and Helen Furlong won an AAU title.

Jean Rowland:

A man opened the Bathey in the morning for you to go in. They only had 10 places to change into your bathing suit, so if you wanted one of them, you'd be there 6 a.m. waiting outside. We wanted to make sure we got a locker, because we'd be embarrassed, I guess. They had a lady who taught us to swim. That was nice.

Robert Connolly:

Inside the Bathey were lockers - no locks, of course. After changing, you walked into a shower room, a requirement. There was also a foot bath. To us, the pool was large. The water was cool, crystal clean, and smelled of Clorox disinfectant.

The rows of benches ran east to west. We had to be in line – no pushing or shoving – no horseplay as someone might get hurt on the concrete floor. Once in the pool, you couldn't leave unless we all left together. The pool was completely empty before the next gang could get in.

In the evening, the door was left open for adults and working people to enter as they arrived. No lines for them and they could leave whenever they had their swim. No children at those times.

A high wall surrounded the pool but I knew kids who climbed it for after-hours swims. There was never a fee - it was all free. The pool area was spotless – no glass allowed in the building. Lots of chlorine was used – also in the footbath. The pool was well-used.

Joe Petrone:

We went to the Bathey to get cool. It was the safest place to swim, although we also swam in the Schuylkill, Gustine Lake, and the Wissahickon.

- The building was a waiting area with long cast iron benches. You'd sit and wait for the door to open. You'd run to the dressing room on the right to change clothes.

- The pool was surrounded by a brick wall. The wall on the left was about 20 feet. My father and his buddies would climb the wall into the pool and skinny dip.

The pool had a shallow end, deep end, and diving board.

- The game was to dunk the other guys. The adults swam at night. There were no refreshments. Kids had bathing suits hanging out of their pockets. No towels.

- At Crawford and Ridge, you'd buy a loaf of Italian bread on the way home. It tasted really good!

The EFHS is displaying, at the Bathey, artifacts found during the recent excavation.

Bathey hours: 7am – 10pm.