

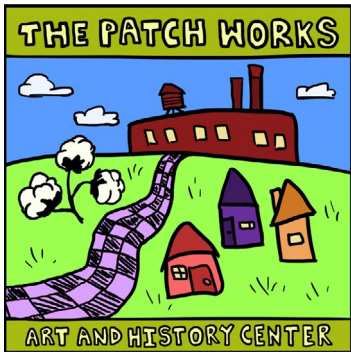
# Fifty Years Ago: NOT EVERYTHING SUCKED

By Nina & Jake Elsas, The Patch Works Art And History Center

We take a break from our regularly scheduled history article to bring y'all this Special Bulletin... da-dit, dit, dit, dit, da-dit...

**"The Cabbagetown Reunion Day Festival Turns 50 Years Old!"**

Cool. Well, here's some history...



It's 1972, and times they are a-changin'. The United States is at war in Southeast Asia. Anti-establishment protests are rocking the world. Nixon is President. Fourteen, unarmed Irish civil rights marchers are killed during Bloody Sunday (good song, Bono). Stone Mountain's sculptures commemorating the

Confederacy are completed (more or less). Burundian Genocide begins and over 500,000 Hutus die. Michelangelo's Pietà is attacked by a man with a hammer claiming to be Jesus Christ. U.S. health officials reveal that African-Americans were used as guinea pigs in the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male (damn, just read that name!). Eleven Israeli athletes are murdered at the 1972 Summer Olympics in Munich. Jane Fonda tours Vietnam. George Carlin gets arrested for his "Seven Words You Can Never Say on Television" schtick (go George!). A rugby team resorts to cannibalism to survive a plane crash in the Andes (great book, though). Jackie Robinson dies. Truman dies. Motown moves from Detroit to L.A. (blasphemy).

It's a year of multiple deadly bombings, hijackings, plane crashes, nightclub fires, floods, hurricanes, earthquakes, train wrecks, coups... plus, Watergate. And the ultimate disaster: the Cowboys win the Super Bowl (Falcons fans begin a lifetime of grieving).

**But not everything sucked.** Women were finally allowed to participate (officially) in the Boston Marathon, attend Dartmouth College full time, and even join the FBI (Scully!). The Magnavox Odyssey was demoed, paving the way for today's video games. Apollo 17 successfully landed astronauts on the moon – the last time humans have set foot on Earth's space rock. Okinawa was returned to Japan, after 27 years of U.S. occupation. Icelanders were allowed to worship the Norse gods (thank Odin!). The Leap Second was added to the calendar (thank the Time Lords!). *M\*A\*S\*H* aired on CBS. The Godfather premiered (as did children's favorite *Fritz the Cat*). And **Burt Reynolds** posed nude for *Cosmopolitan Magazine* (a smoking-hot Bandit!).

So, now that *Wikipedia* and I have provided context (what, you actually thought I knew all this crap???), we can discuss why 1972's goings-on make The Reunion even more special. Truly, The Reunion is a testament to the resilient "can-do spirit" of the Cabbagetown Originals.

Living in a mill town, especially during the 1970s, had its ups and downs. Take a moment to chat with an Original, and you'll hear stories filled with a bushel of feelings.

**Life could be hard.** For mill workers, days were long and pay was low, plus conditions were downright dangerous (Joyce Brookshire's mother died from Byssinosis aka "Brown Lung"). The textile industry was faltering (by 1974, there was a global recession, from which our Mill – like many others – never recovered). There was alcohol abuse. Kids were having a hard time staying focused on school. Money was tight (it was getting hard to pay for things like home repairs). And good friends were starting to pick up and move elsewhere.

**But at the same time, a LOT was good.** Neighbors looked out for each other. They took care of one another. No one went hungry, because those in want were given what they needed. Doors were never locked, and neighbors could always come to others for help. The sense of community was strong. And people were proud of who they were and of Cabbagetown. "No one tried to keep up with the Joneses, cuz there were no Joneses."

Thus, while the rest of the world was busy a-changin' (and, for the most part, ripping itself a new one), the people of Cabbagetown opted instead to celebrate the things that would never change: love for each other and love for Cabbagetown. Rather than focusing on the bad things in life, the Originals created an occasion where they could appreciate what they had.

So, in 1972, the idea of a reunion was born. It would be a day of joy, music, friends, and family; a get-together that would recognize what really matters: being happy. A couple of years later, in 1974, **Esther Peachey Lefever** (note the correct spelling) helped put an "official" stamp on the annual gathering, when **The Patch Inc.** began to sponsor the event. (Hey, we can have another 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion in two years! Woot!).

Finally, in 1985, the Honorable Joe Frank Harris went so far as to proclaim: "Each year on the first Saturday of June, the residents, former residents and mill workers, and friends of Cabbagetown come together for a reunion festival... I, Joe Frank Harris, as the Governor of the State of Georgia, do hereby proclaim the day of June 1, 1985, as 'CABBAGETOWN REUNION DAY' in Georgia in honor of this event, and do further wish all the families and friends of Cabbagetown a most enjoyable homecoming celebration." (And yet ANOTHER 50<sup>th</sup> Reunion... when...? In 2034???)

**Saturday June 5<sup>th</sup>. Cabbagetown Park. 10a to 5p. Heed Joe's words. And come experience a neighborhood tradition that turns 50 at least two more times...**