

# Imagination

May 11, 2022

Kansas City, Missouri

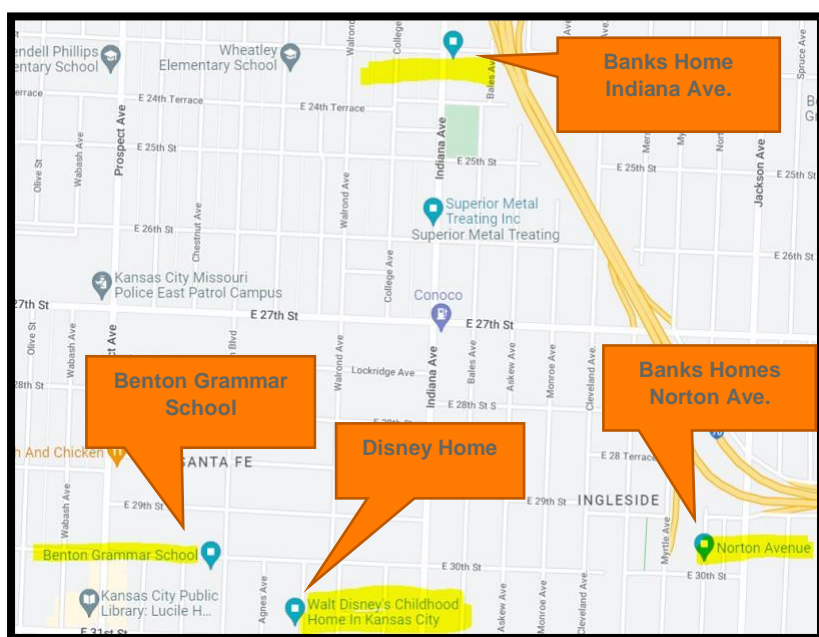
*“I’m just a farm boy from Missouri who hides behind a mouse and a duck”.* – Walt Disney

Grandma Helen told Bear that she went to school with a young fellow in Kansas City named Walter, who was constantly distracted and doodling in his notebooks. Helen later learned that her classmate was probably Walt Disney.

Today, we set out to see what evidence we could find to corroborate Grandma’s story.

Helen Banks and Walt Disney were close to the same age – born December 1899 and December 1901, respectively. They both lived in Kansas City in their teens.

Walt Disney attended Benton Grammar School from 1911 to 1917. Helen attended school from 1906 to 1915. Helen and Disney’s school years overlapped in about grades 7 - 10.

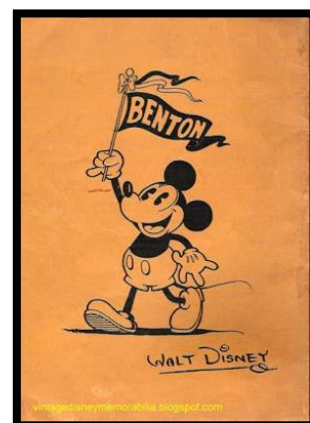


The Disney family lived at 3028 Bellefontaine Ave, just east of Benton School.

The Banks family lived at 2403 Indiana Avenue, and at two locations on Norton Avenue, straight east of Benton Grammar School.

We don’t have any tangible evidence, like a class roster, but there is a high degree of possibility that the shy Missouri farm boy and Grandma Helen shared some classes.

**Walt Disney drew this cartoon for the *Benton Grammar School Reunion Newsletter*, in 1931.**



Walt Disney and his brother Roy had a paper route, delivering *The Kansas City Star* in their neighbourhood. The brothers would rise at 4:30am and distribute the morning paper before school. Then in the afternoon, they would deliver the evening edition. We have no idea if Bear's great grandparents subscribed to the *Star* but, if they did, Walt Disney may have delivered it.



While Grandma Helen never knew Walt Disney well, there was something serendipitous about her brush with the entertainment mogul. Two generations later, Helen's Grandson Brian Ferguson became an animator at *Walt Disney Studio* in Hollywood.

*Timon*, the meerkat in *The Lion King*, and many other beloved Disney characters were created by Brian, at the direction of Helen's Paperboy.

One of our missions in Kansas City was to try to determine if Bear's Grandma Helen is among the students in this class picture.

Walt Disney is the handsome young fellow on the bottom row, fourth from the left.



Our research concluded that the photo was taken at Park School in Marceline, Missouri, before the Disney's moved to Kansas City, so Helen isn't in the class photograph.

Fortunately, thanks to Walt Disney and the wonderful world of fantasy he created, we are not constrained by reality. Bear and I have decided to place Helen in the photo, all we have to do is apply a little ...

... Imagination.



Bear, at the Disney Barn in Marceline, Missouri, where Walt's imagination first ran wild.

Hi Walt - Your old classmate, Helen Sparks Terri + Russ Patton