

Ferguson Has A History Museum

Ferguson, indeed, does have a Historical Society and a History Museum and we are moving forward with the help of our readers of the past weeks. We encourage any of you reading this article to join in the conversation. Contact information is at the bottom of this article.

Good news this month – some updates and a few new things. As you can see to the right, there is progress for the cabooses. The roof has been tarped and ready for reroofing, new fascia boards are in place and the new metal security windows are in place. Hope for a Spring opening *springs* eternal. Second,



while driving around Ferguson I came across this wonderful mural. It's along Florissant Road south of Darst Rd. You cannot see it if

you are north bound, only southbound. Slow down or park in the lot and check this out.



Finally – and this is not necessarily “good” news, but it is news. Vogt School was the subject of our FHS48 – (*September '25*) article. Ferguson Florissant R2 School District has put the building up for sale. If you are planning to start a new school, the building is ready for use.

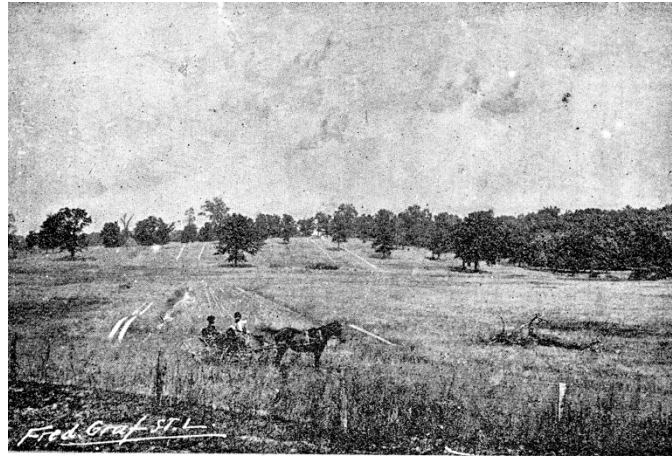


The real focus of this month’s article goes way back to the 1890’s. It is a fascinating little 4 x 6 advertising booklet, produced in



1891, designed to get people to move to the Ferguson area. It was published by E. S. Guignon & Bro. (*I assume a reality company*). Remember that 1891 is just shortly before Ferguson became a formally recognized city (1894). The title is “*Suburban Homes – Darst Place*”. In this and next month’s articles we are going to explore what this booklet has to say, and also what it tells us about the Ferguson area

in the early 1890s – still in the days of horse-and-buggy transportation, kerosene lighting, water from wells, outdoor toilets, and coal fired heating. This was also true of the City of Saint Louis – but multiplied a thousand-fold. Homes only feet apart, the commercial horse-and-buggy traffic with the attending waste, in winter the massive amount of coal smoke (*usually Illinois soft coal*) along with the noise of daily commerce. The picture of Darst Place (*inside cover*) shows a pastoral Ferguson field. On page 3 of the booklet, it gives the whole story:



VIEW ON DARST PLACE.

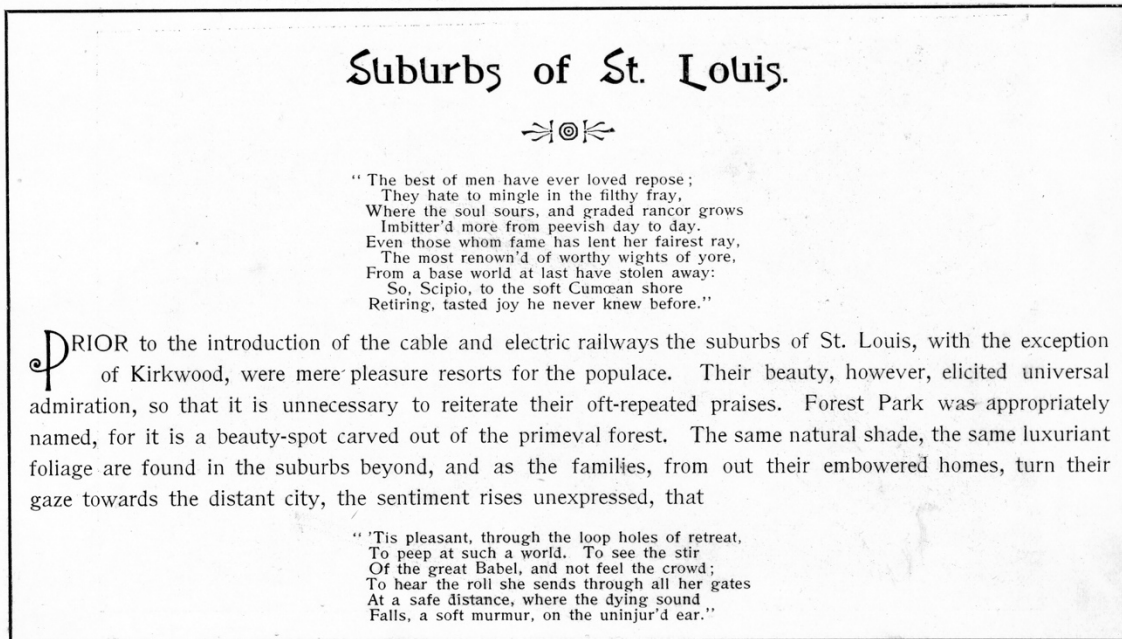
“The suburban home, as now understood, is a comparatively recent innovation, the result of the introduction of the cable and electric railways. The country seat and the summer residence by the sea or in the mountains have always been the concomitants of wealth, but the suburban home is an entirely novel feature of social life. The country furnishes the ideal of home. The city, with its office and workshop, its forge and factory, its never-ending noise and rattle, its sleepless toilers and restless travelers, can never yield the repose associated with home. The suburbs are the natural retreat to which men flee from the cares of business. They suggest quietude, peace, repose, rest; and the pure, fragrant atmosphere of the fields is a stimulant and feast for the weary body and exhausted brain. All our natural association of ideas leads up to locate the ideal home beyond the limits of the noisy, bustling city.” (the booklet goes on for another page about the poetic benefits of a move to the suburbs)



So, Darst Place in Ferguson is the place to be. Where is Darst Place? It is actually six streets – Forest, Millman, part of Darst, Barat, Hartnett and Centre. The area is shown on a more modern map to the left. I grew up on North Barat and the County records show it as part of “Darst Place”. I grew up there from 1944 and still live in Ferguson. When I recently drove these streets, I did not notice any homes which could date back to the 1890s. From my observations and limited knowledge of architecture, most homes there date back to the early 1910’s thru the 1950’s. This does not speak to the success of the booklet. People were moving into the Ferguson area since the end of the Civil War, but not necessarily to this specific area. It would take much deeper research to realize the success of the booklet.

From things we will discuss later, it is apparent that this booklet was not designed for citizens of lesser resources than the upper-middle and upper-class citizens of Saint Louis. As you will see in the page displayed below, poetry figured into

the picture the booklet tried to plant in the minds of people with resources. It is also aimed at the men of the family – as they are obviously the ones who must mainly put up with the toils of the city as opposed to the “*stay-at-home*” lives of the women who were keeping the home and raising the family. That also tells you something about family life in the 1890’s as opposed to family life today.



When addressing the City of Ferguson, the booklet begins with:

“No noise, no care, no vanity, no strife;
Men, woods and fields, all breathe untroubled life.”

As has frequently been alleged by the daily papers of St. Louis, the tendency of the population is to the North and West. There are many good reasons for this, but the principal are the facilities for transportation to and from the business centre, and the delightful character of the avenues leading to the suburbs in the direction mentioned. . . . Ferguson lies to the north and west of Forest Park, three miles distant from the city limits, and is reached through the park by the Wabash Railroad, the trip from Union Depot consuming only **half an hour**, as can be seen by consulting any of the printed time tables of the Wabash Railroad. It is also reached, in the same time, from the Franklin Avenue depot by the Wabash Belt road.”

In future pages, the booklet talks more of Ferguson, the Citizens of Ferguson, the Water Supply of Ferguson (*a matter of major concern during this period of time – remember that the City of Saint Louis had a major water problem which needed to be cleared up in time for the World’s Fair of 1904*), and finally a description of Darst Place.

If you refer to the photo of Darst Place in the middle of this article, this brief text from the booklet will give you an idea of the area:

“Darst Place is an old Ferguson homestead which had to surrender to the demand for homes in the suburbs. It is delightfully situated, and is dotted with the forest Oak and other shade trees. It comprises about eighty acres of undulating land, which have been divided into home sites of a size to accord with the general desire for a lawn and shrubbery. The frontage of these sites is, in no instance, less than 100 feet, and the depth varies from 150 to 350 feet. Sidewalks have been laid and the undulating character of the land will protect the streets from any accumulations of mud or water.”

We will go more into Darst Place as the booklet has much more to tell us about Ferguson in the 1890’s. The booklet’s final paragraph tells why people needed to move to Darst Place.

“The terms upon which home sites in Darst Place are offered to the public are only Ten Dollars cash, and the balance in small monthly or weekly payments. But if you really want a home in this lovely suburb call and see us. E.S. Guignon and Bro. St. Louis, MO.” (*The \$10.00 in 1890 would translate into about \$250.00 in today’s money.*)

One last thing - **A Very Big Thing** - all are invited to a “Book Talk” with Ferguson Police Departments Public Information Officer, Patricia Washington. See below for info.

THE FERGUSON HISTORICAL SOCIETY PRESENTS
From Sundown Town to “Burn It Down”
A Book Talk with Author Patricia Washington

**Thursday,
February 19, 2026**

Doors Open at 6:00pm
Light Refreshments
Presentation is at 6:30pm
Followed by Q&A

Ferguson Community Center
1050 Smith Ave.
Ferguson, MO 63135

If you have any suggestions, questions, or items to donate to the Ferguson Historical Society, please contact **Jerry Benner** at fjbenner@mindspring.com. If you wish to become a member or make a money donation, you can send it to Ferguson Historical Society at 716. N. Elizabeth Ave, Ferguson, MO 63135. You are also welcome to visit the History Museum. Please email me at the address to set a date and time to visit. Board meetings are on the third Wednesday at 6:30 PM. Interested people are invited to attend the meetings. We have capabilities to do oral histories and would love to add to our collection on any Ferguson or North County subject. ***“The Ferguson Historical Society is dedicated to preserving and promoting the history of Ferguson Missouri. Membership is open to all sharing our interest.”***