

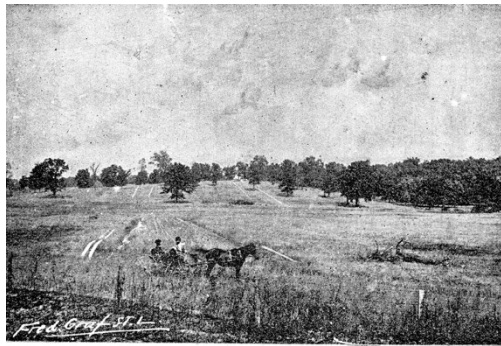
Ferguson Has A History Museum

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.

The focus of this month's article is to continue last month's article on Darst Place. Darst Place was (actually still is) a "subdivision which 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.. Remember that 1891 is just shortly before Ferguson became a formally recognized city (1894). The title is "*Suburban Homes – Darst Place*". In this month's article we are continuing



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 there 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 along with the noise of



VIEW ON DARST PLACE.

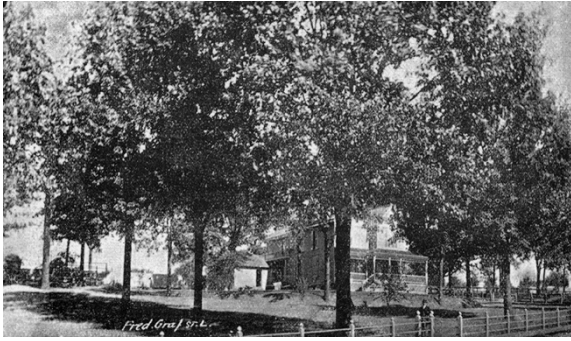
daily commerce. The picture of Darst Place shows a pastoral Ferguson field. On page 3 of the booklet, it gives the whole story: "The suburban home, as now understood, is a comparatively recent innovation, the result of the introduction of the cable and electric railways. The country seat and the summer 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."

A quick review of where Darst Place is in current

Ferguson. It is actually six current streets – Forest, Millman, part of Darst, Barat, Hartnett and Centre. The area is shown on a more modern map to the right. Currently these streets are full of nice, usually brick, middle-class homes built between 1900 and the 1960's. If you check St. Louis County record's they will indicate that these homes are part of the Darst Place Subdivision.

As mentioned last month, this booklet does not appear to appeal to lower ranking families. Ferguson at the end of the 19th Century was an appealing place to move your family. The booklet goes on to list a number of the "successful" people who currently lived in Ferguson – you needed to know you were in good company. I went down that list and compared that list with the Ferguson Landmarks Commission's list of Century Homes. I came up with four homes that are still in Ferguson (and looking good).

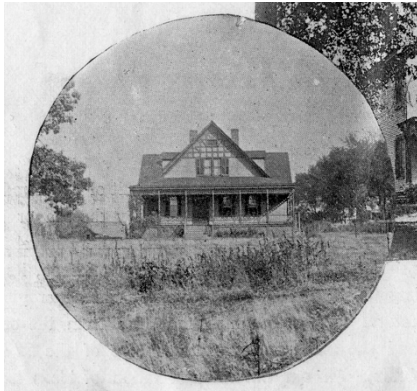




The home above is the Horace P & Laura A, Coulter Home located on South Clay.



Above is the Home of James & Ida Waters, located on North Elizabeth



To the left is the Home of Lawrence W. Day, located on Hereford. Below is the home of Dr. George Case, located on Wesley.



Some of the names of these people include the names of several of Ferguson's streets: Col. Thomas Thoroughman (Attorney), Edward Tiffin (Wabash RR), T. H. Coppenger (Attorney) and C. A. Cunningham (an elevator company) to name a few.

The booklet pushed more than "successful" neighbors. Ferguson also had many community assets to provide for the family. A quality education was a necessity for any family moving into an area. Ferguson had had an education system since 1867. In 1880 Ferguson had a brand-new K-10th grade school – Central School. Ferguson also had churches, including the Presbyterian Church (not pictured) and the two churches below: Catholic & Episcopal.



And what about water? Here is what the Darst Place booklet says:

"The supply of water for domestic uses should be very carefully considered in determining the availability of any locality for a home. It will not do to buy a home site first and afterwards discover that no water can be had. All suburbs of St. Louis are not equally blessed in this particular, and none in the same degree as Ferguson. There are some localities, not very remote from the city, where, it is said, water has been sold at a premium over beer"

Part of the beauty of Ferguson is that water was readily available – the reason the North Missouri Railroad (later Wabash) located in Ferguson was the availability of January's Pond (Wabash Lake). Most residents had a well – and you did not have to drill that deep to get "sweet" water. Most homes had either cisterns or wells or both.

Darst Place would have lots no less than 100' frontage and 150-350' deep. Sidewalks and roads free "from any accumulations of mud and water". Darst Place was planning for its own railroad depot – the Wabash had promised (We haven't seen that yet) and had 32 trains running daily in Ferguson. The company was also predicting the extension of an electric railroad soon (streetcars – and they did come).

Finally, the booklet states:

Ferguson will soon centralize public attention as the most select suburb of St. Louis, and home sites on Darst Place are desirable not only because of the special advantages and merits of the place, but because they can never depreciate in value. The city is being built westward and prices of real estate must necessarily increase with the growth of population.” “The terms upon which home sites in Darst Place are offered to the public are only Ten Dollars cash, the the balance in small monthly or weekly payments. If you really want a home in this lovely suburb call and see us”

As we noted last month, that \$10.00 would amount to around \$250.00 in today’s money. Still, not a bad down payment. Next month we will offer a summary of Patricia Washington’s presentation of “From Sundown Town to “Burn It Down”. We will also look into Ferguson’s relationship with “the Mother Road” – historic Route 66, which turns 100 years old in 2026.

Look for the opening of our new website, Fergusonhistoricalsociety.com.

If you have any suggestions, questions, or items to donate to the Ferguson Historical Society, please contact **Jerry Benner** at jbenner@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.”***