

**Architectural Survey of the  
Southern Portion of the O'Fallon Neighborhood  
St. Louis, Missouri**

**Submitted to the  
State Historic Preservation Office**

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**Prepared by**



## Executive Summary

The Preservation Research Office conducted an intensive architectural survey of the southern portion of the O'Fallon neighborhood completed in August 2013. The final survey evaluated 593 primary resources (as well as secondary resources) on all or part of 19 city blocks with rough boundaries of Lee Avenue on the north, Fair Avenue on the east, Natural Bridge Road on the south and Newstead Avenue on the west. The survey re-evaluated an area surveyed through reconnaissance in 2012. This architectural survey concludes that within the survey area is a historic district eligible for listing under Criterion A for Community Planning and Development. The survey report is accompanied by resource inventory forms and a base map.

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## Methodology

In January 2011, the Acts Partnership, a community development corporation operating in north St. Louis, contracted with the Preservation Research Office for the development of a National Register of Historic Places nomination for the O'Fallon neighborhood. The contract required reconnaissance survey of all primary and secondary resources within the neighborhood, which included 1,596 primary buildings. After review of the area, the Preservation Research Office recommended that the client divide the project into two survey areas with Lee Avenue as the boundary, since there were clear historic development differences and little streetscape integrity on Lee Avenue.

The Acts Partnership agreed to division of the areas, but decided to pay only for nomination phases for each area. Without budgets for architectural survey, and with no requirement from the Cultural Resources Office or State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) to precede district nominations with survey, Preservation Research Office proceeded. The first step was photography of each primary resource in March and April 2011, followed soon by evaluations of all secondary structures. Each primary building was researched to determine date of construction, builder and architect. The Preservation Research Office prepared narrative descriptions for all resources, the developed boundaries for the two districts based on integrity and historic development patterns.

In May 2012, Preservation Research Office submitted a draft National Register nomination for the northern portion of the O'Fallon neighborhood. The Missouri Advisory Council on Historic preservation approved the nomination of the O'Fallon Park Historic District in August 2012, but the nomination was returned by the National Park Service in September 2013 for substantive revisions.

Originally, the preparers surveyed a larger area that was bounded by Newstead, Lee, Clay, Kossuth, Fair and Natural Bridge Avenues. This reconnaissance-level survey allowed the preparers to eliminate blocks that lacked sufficient integrity to be included in a potential area from the district nomination. The criterion used for elimination of blocks was the ratio of buildings that possessed integrity to those that did not plus vacant lots (counted together). That led to elimination of blocks east of Fair Avenue and north of the alley line north of Kossuth Avenue, all of the block halves facing Natural Bridge Avenue and many blocks west of Clarence Avenue. The Preservation Research Office submitted a second nomination for the southern portion, named the Fairground Park Historic District, in October 2012. The State Historic Preservation Office found the Section 8 narrative deficient and did not place the nomination on the next agenda of the Advisory Council.

In May 2013, the Preservation Research Office inquired with the SHPO on resubmission of the Fairground Park Historic District nomination. Michelle Diedrich, Survey and National Register Coordinator, stated that resubmission would have to adhere to SHPO standards promulgated in February 2013 that required all district nominations to be preceded by architectural surveys.

In July 2013, Preservation Research Office began a new survey of the southern portion of the area that had been nominated as the Fairground Park Historic District. Michael R. Allen, survey coordinator, decided to limit survey activities to a boundary reduced from both the 2011 reconnaissance survey and the 2012 historic district nomination, based on correspondence about the likely concentration of eligible resources with SHPO in 2012. Allen and Kathryn

Vangilder, intern, photographed each resource and checked the base map for discrepancies since 2011. Vangilder prepared inventory forms for each surveyed resource, and Allen and Vangilder completed this survey report based on the 2012 National Register of Historic Places nomination and expanded research into the demographic history of the area.

## Description of Survey Area

The surveyed area is part of the O'Fallon neighborhood of St. Louis, Missouri. The architectural survey area is an urban historic area located on all or part of 19 city blocks to the immediate west and north of Fairground Park in St. Louis, Missouri. Within the boundaries are 593 primary resources. The area's resources largely are single and multiple dwellings, although on the south and west ends of the neighborhood are commercial blocks. Three religious buildings are included in the area; the former Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church complex includes a sanctuary, parish school and support buildings on an entire block.

The area's extant buildings were constructed between c 1890 and 1972, with construction largely completed by 1940 (most later construction involved building on the sites of earlier buildings). The secondary resources are largely automobile garages, with some open automobile ports present as well. The architectural character of the area is defined by a wide date range of construction consistent with its long-term development pattern, but most buildings were built in the early twentieth century using pressed brick, limestone and other common local building materials, as well as common building forms and consistent setbacks. The building's housing stock is divided between single dwellings built for working and middle class residents alike and multiple dwellings including two-family and four-family flats, walkups and even multi-unit single-entrance apartment buildings.

Stylistically, the area's resources mostly convey various traits of the Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century American Movements, with a distinct Craftsman influence apparent in many buildings built between 1900 and 1935. Additionally, earlier frame and masonry buildings built in the Late Victorian style can be found in the northern and western edges of the area, showing what the built environment was like before subsequent replatting and the 1897 relocation of the city fire line. There also is the presence of a Roman Catholic parish complex on the westernmost block in the area, anchored by the English Gothic stone sanctuary of Holy Rosary Church, built in 1922 and designed by William P. McMahan. Vacant lots are scattered throughout the area, marking demolition sites, and are all non-contributing. Overall, the area retains the character that defines it as a middle-class suburb fashioned through two major waves of development.

### Setting

The area is located approximately 4.5 miles northwest from the Mississippi River at downtown St. Louis. The area is the southern portion of the city's O'Fallon neighborhood. Just south of the area is the Greater Ville neighborhood, west is the Penrose neighborhood and east is the Fairgrounds neighborhood. The vicinity of the area is laid out in a grid pattern with streets running somewhat perpendicular to the river. Within the area, the east-west streets run slightly northwest-southeast, which the north-south streets run slightly northeast-southwest. To the west and south, the grid pattern of the city is very similar. To the north, the street grid between Lee and Penrose Avenues shifts to very long blocks, and then north of Penrose Avenue blocks have their long dimensions on the north-south rather than the east-west axis. To the east of Fair Avenue and south of Kossuth Avenue is the 131.46 acre land mass of Fairground Park, a public park that contains lawns, trees, a swimming pool, lake, playgrounds and other amenities. The contour of the area slopes very slightly to the east.

Part of the western boundary of the Area is North Newstead Avenue, a north-south street that runs as far south as Vandeventer Avenue. The southern boundary is Natural Bridge Avenue, an arterial street that runs from North Florissant Avenue at the east past the city limits on the west,

extending all the way to Lambert International Airport. Kossuth and Lee Avenues run through the Penrose neighborhood to the west and to Grand Avenue to the east. The other streets in the neighborhood are continued through adjacent subdivision developments. The surrounding city neighborhoods share the nominated Area's moderate to high density, its largely residential building stock and its general period of construction. Most streets in adjacent neighborhoods are lined with one-story single-family dwellings and two-story multiple-family dwellings. Natural Bridge Avenue, located a half-block south of the Area boundary, is a major commercial thoroughfare with fragments of walking neighborhood business areas present alongside more recent commercial development that makes use of large surface parking lots.

To the north of Lee Avenue, the northern part of the O'Fallon neighborhood is included within the boundary of the nominated O'Fallon Park Historic Area (listing pending contingent upon revisions). To the west of North Newstead Avenue, the Penrose neighborhood is included in the Penrose Park Historic Area nomination (listing pending). These are both nominations to the National Register of Historic Places.

### **Architectural Character**

The area's street plan consists of a grid consisting of largely standard block dimensions south of Kossuth Avenue. Harris Avenue does not extend north of Margaretta Avenue for two blocks, creating long blocks between that street and Kossuth Avenue. At Kossuth Avenue, the blocks are wide and tall, and Harris Avenue runs west from the southern alignment. Alleys in the blocks south of Kossuth mostly run in a simple east-west pattern, with some secondary alleys parallel to Fair Avenue. Between Kossuth and Lee avenues and between North Newstead and Fair avenues, the alleys are on "H" plans. Inside of the block bounded by Harris, Lee, Fair and Kossuth, the alley plan creates a large open space at the center of the block that historically has never been developed.

Throughout the area, streets are lined with sidewalks separated from the curbs by tree laws. Largely, the tree lawns are planted with street trees, many of which are in maturity. On Natural Bridge, earlier commercial buildings sit on the sidewalk lines while later ones sit back with parking lots in front. Throughout the rest of the neighborhood, residential buildings largely have deep and consistent setbacks of ten to fifteen feet, while commercial and some residential buildings have shallow setbacks of five to ten feet. Some parcels back up onto streets, including those on the north face of Farlin Avenue west of Clarence Avenue and Athlone Avenue between Kossuth and Lee avenues. The backs of these parcels are configured similar to alley-facing parcel ends, with parking pads, garages and fences.

Two large churches provide architectural anchors in the neighborhood. The largest of these is the former Holy Rosary Roman Catholic Church, a large white limestone Gothic Revival building located at the southwest corner of Margaretta and Clarence avenues. Adjacent to the sanctuary at west is the two-story parish school, designed in the Craftsman style. The other large church building in the neighborhood is the former Independent Evangelical Church at the northwest corner of Fair and Margaretta avenues, a dark brick Gothic Revival edifice that makes use of terra cotta ornament. A smaller church building in the area is a gabled brick building located at 4279 W. Sacramento Avenue.

Generally, the blocks of the area on Kossuth, Margaretta, San Francisco and Sacramento avenues east of Red Bud Avenue are lined with two-family multiple dwellings that are two stories, flat-roofed brick buildings in a consistent vein of American Movements, Craftsman and

some revival styles. In this area are also single-family dwellings that are almost all one or one-and-a-half story in the Craftsman/Bungalow and Tudor Revival styles. There is a large three-story apartment building, with units sporting private balconies, at the northwest corner of Fair and Sacramento avenues. The row of single dwellings on Kossuth Avenue between Fair and Clay avenues is built out in bungalows in the Craftsman style. West of Red Bud Avenue, the streetscapes are more diverse in forms, styles and eras. Some mid-century modern ranch-style homes are even present, alongside multiple and single dwellings. Rows of bungalow-style houses and two-family multiple dwellings are common. Toward the northwest area of the area, on Farlin and Margareta, are even located residential buildings from the 1890s that pre-date other buildings. Most buildings in the area of the area south of Kossuth Avenue date to between 1890 and 1935, and few date to before 1900.

North of Kossuth Avenue, the architectural character is diverse as well. Many single dwellings are single-story, shaped parapet buildings, and some multiple dwellings are single-entrance apartment buildings. Lee Avenue has some two-part commercial buildings and a range of residential buildings built between 1890 and 1930. Four contemporary buildings, three single dwellings and a multiple dwelling with an address on Kossuth, can be found on Fair avenue north of Kossuth. Two-part commercial blocks remain at two corners on Natural Bridge, as well as at several other intersections (Fair and Kossuth, North Newstead and Farlin, Margareta and Turner). These buildings have wide storefront windows on the first floor and typical masonry detailing above. Other commercial buildings on Natural Bridge Avenue are one-story and occupy sites built around automobile traffic, either through parking or service.

Within the Area are 197 secondary resources, of which most are garages. The large number of garages demonstrates the efforts to fashion the area into a middle-class suburb after the advent of the automobile. Garages make use of brick or concrete masonry, frame construction clad in wooden or applied siding, gabled roofs or flat roofs. Some face private driveways accessed by streets instead of alleys. Unfortunately many have been altered and no longer convey historic character, but their forms maintain the general formal character of the alleys.

Most buildings in the Area use comparable materials that reinforce the architectural consistency even with stylistic differences are present. Buildings make use of limestone foundations, red machine-pressed brick walls, weatherboard-clad framed walls, wooden double-hung windows, wooden doors, clay tile roofing.

## Historical Narrative

### Summary

Over the course of roughly 40 years, the area west of Fairground Park transitioned from a semi-rural enclave occupied by both white families and African Americans to a fully urbanized and almost completely white neighborhood. The physical fabric of the rebuilt neighborhood reflects the systems and policies that drove out black residents during St. Louis' most segregated period. This may be the city's only pre-Urban Renewal example of a neighborhood in which black residents were displaced when the neighborhood became attractive to the white majority. Study of the forces behind redevelopment of the neighborhood also reveals trends and practices that typify urban development in St. Louis in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### Early History

The nominated district is located near the northwest corner of the original city's Grand Prairie common fields. The fields were laid out in long parallel strips between present-day Grand and Newstead. The narrow ends of the fields were oriented toward the original city, resulting in fields which ran along a southeast/northwest orientation. These lines were followed as the land was subsequently surveyed and divided.<sup>1</sup> Several east-west streets in the area follow the lines that divided those original fields.

Early landholders in the area included Captain J. M. White, whose farm was subdivided in 1858. The White Place subdivision comprises roughly half of the nominated area (see figure 1). Although most of the streets were not actually constructed until decades later, the pattern platted established the basic lines of the street grid for most of the district. Other sections to the north and west of White Place were divided as Anderson & Deaderick's subdivision of the White Farm. Also dating from 1858, this plat created parcels but only established a few new streets in the area. Within the district, the area between Margaretta and Kossuth avenues was part of this subdivision. Most of these parcels belonged to John Anderson at the time of platting.

Elizabeth Hull's estate along the northern boundary of the district was divided among her heirs and subdivided a block or two at a time. The long parcel was divided into square and rectangular sections which were too deep for a single block with an alley but not deep enough for two blocks and their alleys. The resulting subdivisions between Kossuth and Lee Avenues have a deviating pattern of streets and alleys and do not maintain the pattern of the grid to the south.

The early White Farm plats established a legal framework for smaller property transfers in the area from 1858 forward, but did not immediately affect the landscape. Half a mile to the east, though, big changes were underway. The first St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Fair was held in 1856. The new fairgrounds were on 50 acres, west of the Grand Blvd. between Natural Bridge Ave. and Kossuth Ave.

The Agricultural and Mechanical Association had been formed the year before. Starting with great expectations, the organizers built an amphitheater that was said to be the largest in the country, seating some 12,000 visitors and standing another 24,000. The annual fair was a

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this section, cardinal directions will be used to reference street directions although the streets are about 30 degrees off true north-south and east-west.

success from its first year, and every year's profits were dedicated to improvement of the grounds. When war broke out a few years later, the Fair Grounds had been improved with a Ladies' cottage, Gallinarium (also known as the "Chicken Palace"),<sup>2</sup> and many other amenities.

The Fair was suspended for the duration of the Civil War. The Fair Grounds and adjacent property were transformed into an enormous United States military installation, Benton Barracks, where up to 23,000 troops from western states were trained.<sup>3</sup> The amphitheater was converted to a hospital, and new wood buildings were constructed. In 1863, four African American regiments were mustered at Benton Barracks. The Barracks also hosted a "contraband camp," a term used to describe an encampment of refugees from slavery. Charles van Ravenswaay describes "a cluster of saloons, restaurants, and little photograph galleries" catering to soldiers nearby.<sup>4</sup> It is tempting to imagine a connection between the black soldiers and former slaves at Benton Barracks and the fact that a small population of African American families was reported nearby in the 1880 census. At this time, however, no definitive connection links Benton Barracks to the scattered black families to the north and west of the camp some 15 years after the war's end.<sup>5</sup>

The Fair rebuilt after the war, and Fair Week resumed in 1870. While racing exhibitions had always been a feature of the Fair, the formation of the elite St. Louis Jockey Club in 1877 heralded the dawn of a new age at the Fair Grounds. The character of the Fair changed dramatically in the 1880s. A new Exposition Hall constructed downtown handled many of the product exhibits that had once been exclusive to the Fair, and expansion of the Fair Grounds allowed a large new race track and a handsome club house for the Jockey Club. For the first time St. Louis held "modern" races as existed in the east – "five races to the program, sprints rather than the old four-mile events, six to ten horses in a race."<sup>6</sup>

The final expansion of the Fair Grounds extended the grounds west to the eastern boundary of White Place and the White Farm subdivision, which were beginning to be built out in the 1880s. A boosterish publication of 1891 described the view from the stands:

...the smoothly rolled mile of track, the inner grounds between the track circle, rich in blue grass, the long line of handsomely built stables beyond, the architecturally beautiful row of houses built by the different agricultural implement firms along the west side and the far-stretching display of well-built suburban residences, make a picture that would well repay the visitor.<sup>7</sup>

With the expansion of the racing component of the Fair, new stables were needed. In 1884, the Agricultural and Mechanical Association purchased four city blocks out of the White Farm subdivision (only a small part of which had been laid out as residential lots to date). Known by 1885 as "the enclosure,"<sup>8</sup> this superblock would house not only the horses but also many of the trainers and handlers who accompanied them. Several pages in the 1900 census list boarding houses within the enclosure full of hostlers, trainers, horse rubbers, a few jockeys, and a very few owners. Mostly but not completely segregated by race, different boarding houses catered

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<sup>2</sup> "Big Thursday, *Missouri Historical Society Bulletin* 12.1, pp 53 – 60. pp 45-52.

<sup>3</sup> James Neal Primm, *Lion of the Valley*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. St. Louis: Missouri Historical Society Press, 1998. 242.

<sup>4</sup> Charles van Ravenswaay, *St. Louis: an informal history*. St. Louis: Missouri History Museum, 1991. (p. 499)

<sup>5</sup> 1880 census, ED 157.

<sup>6</sup> William Allen, "Let's Go To the Races," *Missouri Historical Society* 12.1. p. 53.

<sup>7</sup> *Commercial and Architectural St. Louis*, Dumont Jones & Co. Publishers, 1891, p.17.

<sup>8</sup> "THE GREAT FAIR.: Exhibits in Position and Ready For the Opening," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 3 October 1885.

to black and white patrons. Everyone living within the small seasonal city at the enclosure was male.

### Into the 1890s

Outside of the walls of the enclosure, further subdivisions did not occur for more than thirty years after the White Place and White Farm plats. By the early 1890s, horse car lines to the Fair Grounds were being replaced by electric lines, some of which would continue west past the Fair Grounds. By 1903, electric streetcars ran along borders of the district on Lee, Natural Bridge, Fair, and Newstead. Several property owners took advantage of the improved access by platting small subdivisions over the larger parcels established on the Hull and White properties.

On the White Farm between Margaretta and Kossuth, the first and largest of these was Mary Burson's subdivision (1889), which laid out lots and established Farlin Avenue between Clarence and Red Bud. She also owned and platted a section of the next block east on Margaretta, which seems to be in conflict with published descriptions of the Fair Grounds enclosure. In the Elizabeth Hull estate, the largest of the new subdivisions was Rosenberg & Berry's First Subdivision (1893), which stretched between Kossuth and Lee from Newstead to Rush Place. The Northern Central subdivision (1892) created the two blocks to the east, both with H-shaped alleys to accommodate the depth of the lot.

Frame construction typified the earliest generation of houses in this remote extension of the urban grid. The first iteration of the Whipple fire insurance map (an 1895 base map with undated updates c. 1905) shows that many of the blocks in the district are being filled in, while others have little or no construction. Census schedules from June 1900 show a working-class neighborhood with more renters than owners. Because the census was taken during the racing season, trainers and grooms were found boarding in houses around the neighborhood.

By the 1890s there appears to be a small African American community filling in the blocks south of the enclosure. The *Post-Dispatch* references a "colored church" at 4214 Margaretta in 1888.<sup>9</sup> Another black church, Pilgrim Baptist, built on Kossuth in 1895. The new church was located at 4215 Kossuth, facing the enclosure from the north.<sup>10</sup> By 1900, most of the houses on this block and in the blocks south of the enclosure were rented by African-Americans. No sources have been located to document the relations between black and white neighbors or to offer anything but the most inferential insights into the community. It is possible, however, that an African American presence could have been tolerated by the white majority because of its location. No matter how well-tended, the number of animals in close proximity within the stable enclosure would have produced a tremendous amount of waste. In 1904, the *Post-Dispatch* ran a photo of an "immense heap of stable refuse" with Pilgrim Baptist Church in the background. True to the standards of that time, the newspaper printed a diagram of nearby houses with white owners and ran a photograph of a white girl who live a block away (at Margaretta and Turner) who was claimed to have been made sick. The church was shown on the diagram, but none of the black neighbors directly across from the stables were listed (see figure 2).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> "The Pastor Vindicated," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 12 September 1888, p.3. No other information about this unnamed church has been located.

<sup>10</sup> See "Negro Republicans May Turn to Filley," *St. Louis Republic*, 1 April 1901, p.1. Pilgrim Baptist's pastor, Rev. C. R. McDowell, was apparently politically active. He was quoted as threatening to remove black support from the Republican party in an upcoming mayoral election.

<sup>11</sup> "Unightly Heap of Stale Refuse in North St. Louis, Diagram of Property Affected and Little Girl Made Sick by It," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 8 November 1904, p. 11.

Despite the heavy African American concentration in the southeast part of the district, the 1900 census shows no black residents in the area west of Turner Avenue. The other end of the district was exclusively white in that year. The Archdiocese established Most Holy Rosary Parish at the east end of the district in 1891. Located at the corner of Newstead and Margaretta Avenues, the new parish served Irish Americans and other English-speaking Catholics in the area. Archbishop Peter Kenrick entrusted the Irish-born Reverend Daniel J. Lavery to lead the new parish, building a modest \$15,000 brick church followed by a \$4,500 brick parsonage in 1892 and a \$6,000 parish hall in 1895.<sup>12</sup> All faced west along Newstead between Margaretta and San Francisco Avenues.<sup>13</sup> Father Lavery slowly grew his fledging church, which numbered roughly 500 mostly-Irish families by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>14</sup>

By 1895, the neighborhood had developed enough to have three dry goods merchants among the original members of the North St. Louis Early Closing Association. This group, which organized store owners to close early on Wednesday and Thursday nights, evolved into the North St. Louis Business Men's Association. The North St. Louis Business Men's Association would grow into a major political force with Progressive leanings, and was supportive of efforts to improve O'Fallon Park to the north, purchase the Fair Grounds for a public park and adopt the city's first Comprehensive Plan. Prominent members, including politician and developer John Gundlach, also supported the development of racially-restrictive subdivision covenants in the early twentieth century. Formally, the Association would be an early advocate for the city to adopt a racial segregation ordinance for housing.

The last Fair was held in 1902, but the track remained in use for several more years. At the beginning of 1905, the Missouri legislature passed a bill prohibiting bookmaking, effectively making horse racing unprofitable for promoters. In January 1906, the *Post-Dispatch* reported that members of the First Ward Improvement Association planned another complaint to the Health Department. "The nuisance," the paper delicately reported, "had been in the process of compilation for more than a year."<sup>15</sup>

### **From Nuisance to Neighborhood**

In 1908 the City acquired the former Fair Grounds, and in 1909 the tract was dedicated as Fairground Park. Civic groups such as the North St. Louis Business Men's Association had appealed to the City to purchase the grounds:

Here were 131 acres of wooded parkland in the most accessible location in St. Louis. Aside from a few tennis courts and baseball fields in O'Fallon, Carondelet and Forest Parks, the City had no playground, i.e. of outstanding character. It was further an historic tract, going back two generations. As an exposition grounds its fame extended countrywide. No similar tract for park or playground purposes of approximate size and availability was to be had. There were roads, sewers, buildings....<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Building permits; "Holy Rosary Parish Has Been Wealthy In Number of Its Religious Vocations," *St. Louis Review*, 2 February 1946, 1.

<sup>13</sup> Sanborn Maps, 1909.

<sup>14</sup> "Holy Rosary Noting 100 Years of Faith And Service," *St. Louis Review*, 13 September 1991, p. 10.

<sup>15</sup> "Ward Insists Upon Removal of Deadly 'Y,'" *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 23 January 1906, p.11.

<sup>16</sup> John H. Gundlach, "Fairground Park" in *Who's Who in North St. Luis*, St. Louis: North St. Louis Business Men's Association, 1925. 36.

At the same time, the Agricultural and Mechanical Association sold its enclosure to a real estate company, which quickly turned it around to a developer. Other signs had already indicated that urban growth was overtaking the neighborhood. In 1897, the new building code included the district within the "fire line" (the boundaries of the settled part of the city within which most buildings had to be constructed of noncombustible materials). The new fire line set the urban frontier at Newstead, the western edge of the district. Frame dwellings of the previous decades were grandfathered in, but all new construction after 1897 had to be brick or stone.

At the beginning of 1910 the neighborhood was poised to become a desirable residential enclave, conveniently located and adjacent to a new city park (opened to the public in 1911) and convenient to many different transit lines.

### **The Fairground District as a Product of Restrictive Tools**

As the Fairground Park district evolved, the built environment grew to reveal the restrictive practices of the period. To understand the climate surrounding development in the second decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it is helpful to understand the terrible race fear that white St. Louisans, especially those involved with real estate, began to experience at the beginning of the Great Migration. The practice and policies of racial segregation in St. Louis are well documented in the MPDF *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Ville, St. Louis, Missouri* and particularly the context statement "Context III: The Ville as the Product of Residential Segregation Policies, 1910-1950."<sup>17</sup> The Ville neighborhood is located immediately south of Natural Bridge Road, with the core area included in the MPDF located five blocks away from the Fairground Park district.

Many cities, particularly those of the upper South, had experimented with legal enforcement of racial segregation. In response to the fear of "negro invasion," the St. Louis Real Estate Exchange created the United Welfare Association.<sup>18</sup> The United Welfare Association was created to enhance support for a racial zoning ordinance and to allow for a voter initiative petition process (ordinances created by the passage of the 1914 City Charter). In 1915 the necessary signatures were obtained, and the measure went to the ballot at the end of February 1916.

As written, the segregation ordinance applied evenly to both black and white citizens, preventing members of either race from moving to blocks that were more than 75% occupied by the other. Despite public opposition from most of the city's political leaders, the *Post-Dispatch*, and other media outlets, the segregation ordinance passed overwhelmingly. White voters supported it by a margin of roughly 5 to 1. At the time the ordinance was passed, the *Post-Dispatch* published a map showing the districts in St. Louis that met the 75% threshold.<sup>19</sup> Four of the districts were pulled out and shown in detailed insets. Two were large and are well-studied: the Mill Creek Valley neighborhood (showing all or part of more than 90 blocks) and the area in and around the Ville (all or part of 35 blocks).<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Betsy Bradley et. al, *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Ville, St. Louis, Missouri* MPDF. Accepted by National Register of Historic Places, 2012.

<sup>18</sup> Colin Gordon, *Mapping Decline: St. Louis and the Fate of the American City*. Philadelphia, University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008. 70.

<sup>19</sup> The *Post* article seems to have misinterpreted the ordinance, asserting that black citizens could only move to blocks that were already 75% black.

<sup>20</sup> The Mill Creek Valley neighborhood was demolished almost in its entirety as an urban renewal project. The most central part of The Ville is well-documented in the MPDF referenced above.

The third of these, much smaller than the first two, showed four full blocks and four partial blocks, all within the boundaries of the nominated district except for two half-blocks south of Natural Bridge. The final district shown included five partial blocks in the far western section of the city, west of Arlington between Cote Brilliante and Ashland. The newspaper also listed concentrations of black citizens by street. The overall impression of the article and map is that other than the Ville and Mill Creek Valley, the Fairground district was one of the largest (if not the largest) areas that was more than 75% African American.

The significance of the neighborhood comes from the displacement of the African-American community manifested through restrictions. While most restrictions were well known, in some neighborhoods or blocks, especially on the North side, restrictive agreements that were signed by original homeowners were never filed with the City. As a result, it could take years for local homeowners to begin to enforce these restrictions. Even though the Fairground Park district had a well-established African-American occupancy, residents, as with residents in other neighborhoods and blocks in North St. Louis, were suddenly forced to vacate their homes.<sup>21</sup> The district as it was rebuilt and as it exists today is a manifestation of the forces which made it difficult for African Americans to own and retain property in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>22</sup> Three tools were used to turn a formerly black neighborhood into a predominantly white suburban neighborhood.

### Deed Restrictions

In 1910, the Lindell Fair Grounds Realty and Investment Co. platted the former Fair Grounds enclosure as Fairground Place. By that July, a promo in the newspaper boasted:

Improvements such as bituminous streets, granitoid sidewalks, gutters and curbs, sewers, water and gas mains are now being completed.... It is located only 30 minutes from the business district and is convenient to four car lines. After the west end of Fairground Park is completed and the fence around removed this will be one of the best medium-priced restricted subdivisions in St. Louis."<sup>23</sup>

The lots were sold with a list of restrictions that echoed those found throughout the city in the new developments of the aspiring middle class. Construction was limited to masonry residences of at least two stories and costing at least \$3000. There was a 15' setback line and a limit of one dwelling per property. Dairies, saloons, livery stables, and other nonresidential uses were prohibited.

The final stipulation in the deed was that "the property hereby conveyed shall never be sold conveyed, leased or rented to or occupied by negroes."<sup>24</sup> This provision was put in place despite the fact that in 1910, the two block faces across the street from Fairground Place were

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<sup>21</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, p. 77.

<sup>22</sup> Restrictive covenants were common in new developments, so it is not surprising that there were restrictions in the newly constructed Fairground Park district.

<sup>23</sup> "Special Sale Sunday at West Fairgrounds Park.," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 3 July 1910, p. A9.

<sup>24</sup> City of St. Louis Recorder of Deeds, book 2353 page 226.

overwhelmingly black already.<sup>25</sup> The resulting streetscapes consist of brick buildings constructed over a fifteen year period, exhibiting a consistent setback and massing.

Similar tools were used in Lucille's Fairground Addition, where 1912 restrictions included a \$4000 minimum cost, 40 foot building line, minimum height of 1 ½ stories, and proscribed Negro owners or residents. In this instrument, the lots were subject to forfeiture if the conditions were not observed. The single dwellings on Kossuth Avenue facing Fairground Park built in Lucille's Fairground Addition were built as bungalows with heavy Craftsman stylistic identifications. The harmony of material, style and form on this block could be directly attributed to the use of deed restrictions.

Restrictive covenants became the only means to enforce residential segregation in the wake of several court decisions that invalidated municipal segregation ordinances. In 1917, the United States Supreme Court ruled in *Buchanan v. Warley* that Louisville's segregation ordinance prohibiting the sale of certain real estate to African-Americans violated the Fourteenth Amendment of the Constitution. At the same time, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) successfully obtained a court order suspending the St. Louis ordinance, which was not enforced after 1917.

### **Restrictive Covenants and the Real Estate Exchange**

Colin Gordon writes that "in the wake of *Buchanan* and the war, developers routinely imposed covenants on new subdivisions, and homeowners associations (often at the prodding of realtors) cobbled them together in established neighborhoods. The view, routinely expressed in the latter, was that such neighborhoods were facing "invasion" and that property values would plummet as soon as blocks were 'turned over to them.'"<sup>26</sup>

Gordon's map of restrictive covenants in effect in 1945 indicates that they covered all of the district south of Kossuth. The author notes that the legal instruments are difficult to locate except when lawsuits specifically reference them. To date only one has been located; filed in 1937 it extends the original 25-year restrictions of Lucille's Fairground Park Addition by common consent of the 17 property owners.

With or without covenants, it can be inferred that as the value of the neighborhood grew (with the addition of the park, the subtraction of the enclosure, and the overall urbanization of the area), blocks that had been full of frame houses rented to African Americans soon became undesirable in the eyes of property owners. The frame houses rented by African Americans were replaced by more modern brick construction, and the new houses were sold exclusively to whites. This piecemeal process is reflected on the map, as owners redeveloped the African American section of the neighborhood just a few lots at a time. On the southwest blocks of the district, blocks which had previously been undeveloped were built out with neat rows of bungalows.

In addition to any covenants that may have been in effect, the 1920s saw the development of a powerful new tool for exclusion. The St. Louis Real Estate Exchange, the organization of white realtors, mapped the areas of the city where members could sell property to black residents.

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<sup>25</sup> The 4100 and 4200 blocks of Margaretta and Kossuth are mostly occupied by black and mulatto families in the 1910 census.

<sup>26</sup> Gordon, *Mapping Decline*, p. 73.

The members of the Exchange adopted the map in a 1923 vote, and thereafter agreed to enforce the boundaries through their brokerage practices. The "unrestricted zones" included the central city (downtown and the areas immediately north, south, and west), the Ville, and a section south of the Ville. In the historically black section west of Fairground Park, white realtors were no longer allowed to sell property to African Americans.

### **Physical Evidence of Change**

Between the rebuilding of black blocks and the restrictions on sales of the new buildings, the effect on the neighborhood was dramatic. The US census of 1910 shows that several blocks in the area bounded by Margareta, Fair, Natural Bridge Road, and Turner were primarily occupied by black residents, as was the northeastern side of Kossuth (see figure 4). However, at this time, the census lists a few white residents in the area, but most blocks included only a few white families, if any, and with the exception of Lee Avenue, the highest number of white-occupied properties on a single block was six.

The 1920 census shows an explosion of white population in the area of and around Fairground Place (see figure 5). By this time, the blocks surrounding Kossuth and Farlin were entirely white with the exception of a few black households along Harris. South of Margareta, the census lists fewer black families than in 1910, and shows a growth in white-occupied property on Sacramento between Turner and Clarence.

By 1930, the change is even more dramatic. According to the census of that year, the entire district was occupied by white residents with the exception of a few properties on Fair, two properties on the southwestern side of San Francisco, and the southwestern half of a block between San Francisco and Sacramento (see figure 6). Finally, the 1940 census shows the near-complete transformation of the district into an all-white community. Of all the properties listed in the census, there were only nine which were occupied by black residents. These included five properties on Harris, one on Kossuth, one on Fair, one on San Francisco, and one on Sacramento.

In addition, the comparison of census records with the construction dates of extant properties in the district indicates that very few buildings from the original black community exist today. A vast majority of the buildings on properties that were once occupied by black residents were constructed only after the property became a "white" property. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from 1909 indicate that the earlier buildings included frame as well as brick buildings, while several older frame and brick buildings in the area around Fairground Place and towards the north and northwestern edges of the district where black families were less dominant still stand today.

## Recommendation

The survey supports the National Register of Historic Places eligibility of one district within the survey area:

- The Fairground Park Historic District, with a boundary marked on the accompanying map.

### The Fairground Park Historic District

The Fairground Park Historic District meets Criterion A for National Register of Historic Places eligibility in the area of Community Planning and Development. The resources that remain in the area are artifacts of cultural displacement of African-Americans and mark a disturbing but significant development pattern. The potential district is likely the city's only area where systematic removal of African-American population coincided with coordinated subdivision development, and where the resulting architectural landscape is intact. Few of the landscapes associated with the settlement of African-Americans in the city retain architectural integrity, making this one more remarkable despite the story that it tells. The period of significance seems to begin in 1889, the date of the first modern subdivision, and continues through 1937, the date of the last of the contributing residences.

The resource count would be as follows:

	Primary Resources	Secondary Resources	Sites	Totals
Contributing	376	63	0	439
Non-Contributing	25	127	72	224
Totals	401	190	72	663

To assess the integrity of both the area and individual resources, the preparers applied the standards for assessing integrity established in National Register Bulletin 16A, *How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*. The seven aspects of integrity established in the bulletin are location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The Fairground Park Historic Area retains all seven aspects and thus clearly conveys its historic integrity as an architecturally diverse middle class suburb built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The boundary line drawn around the potential district very deliberately excludes blocks that share development history but have lost integrity of streetscapes.

The wide period of significance allows for architecturally disparate buildings to be considered part of the historic streetscapes of the area. Many pre-1900 frame buildings in the area are non-contributing due to the application of modern cladding materials in place of or over original siding. Those that retain original fenestration, forms, and unaltered window and door openings have been evaluated as contributing unless inappropriate additions or porches can be seen from the street. The frame buildings generally demonstrate reversible alterations, and could be reevaluated if modern siding were removed to reveal historic cladding, or if historic cladding could be replicated. Masonry buildings in the area show few signs of major alteration, and almost all are contributing.

Secondary resources are a significant part of the area's ability to convey its setting as a middle class suburb, and were evaluated with err toward contributing status. The evaluation found only 33.5% of the garages to be contributing, with the rest either being built since the period of significance or greatly altered. Also, vacant property has a significant impact on the character of this densely-built area, and none of the vacant lots in the area, inventoried as Sites, is considered contributing. None of the blocks that have notable groups of vacant lots has more vacant lots than contributing buildings, making the character of the blocks identifiable as that of a historic neighborhood.

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## Figures



Figure 1. Subdivisions

- 1858: White Place
- 1889: Mary Burson's Subdivision
- 1892 (left): Northern Central Subdivision
- 1892 (right): J. H. Gerhard's Subdivision
- 1893: Rosenberg & Berry's 1st Subdivision
- 1910: Fairground Place
- 1912: Lucille's Fairground Subdivision

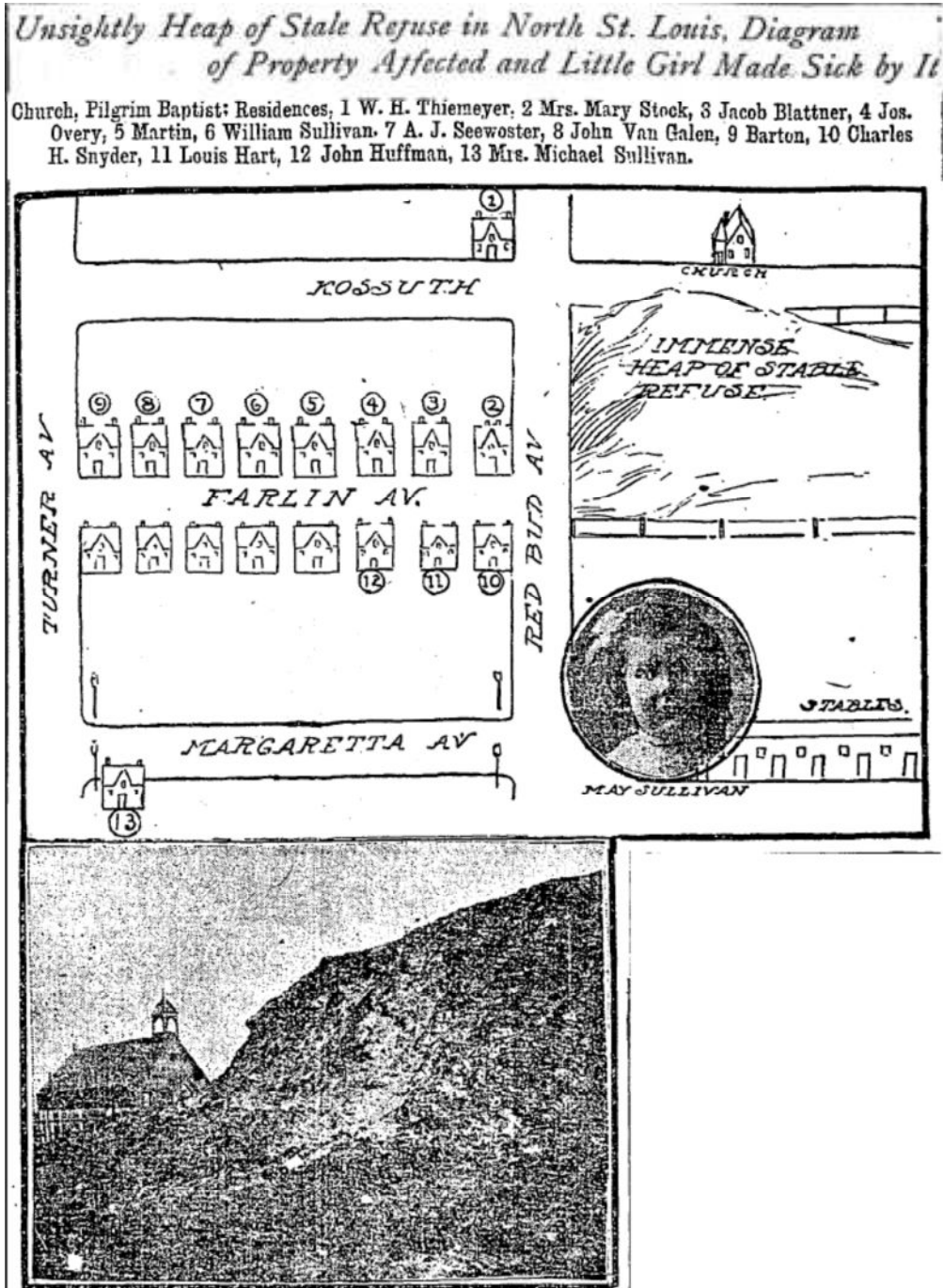


Figure 2. Source: *St. Louis Post Dispatch*, 8 November 1904.

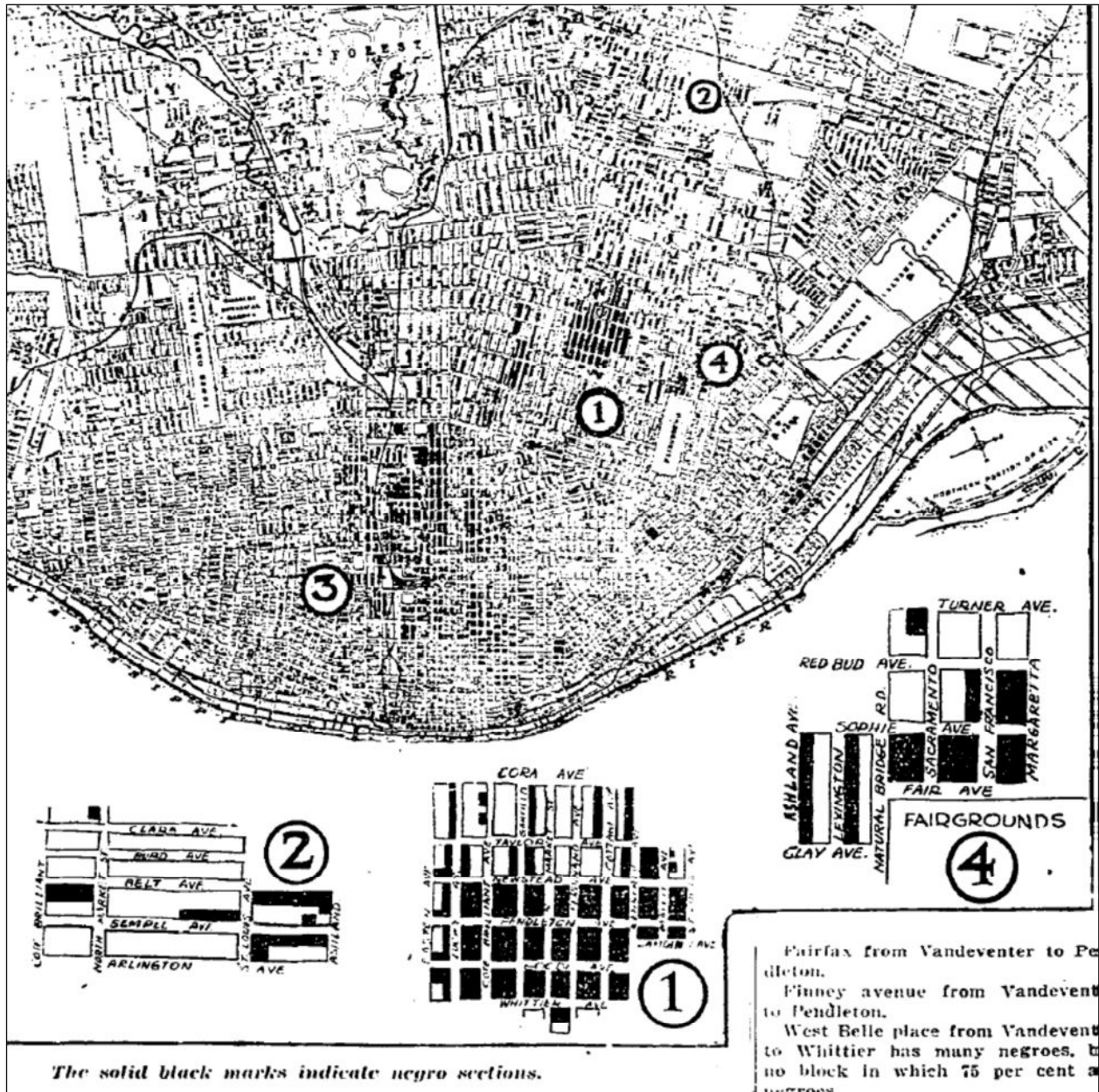


Figure 3. Black sections of St. Louis in 1916. Source: "Blocks in Which Negroes May Hereafter Take up Residence as Provided in New City Ordinance," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, 3/2/1916.



Figure 4: Survey map coded to show distribution of population in 1910 Census. Yellow denotes Caucasian household, green denotes African-American household and blue denotes addresses that were not recorded (buildings not yet built).



Figure 5: Survey map coded to show distribution of population in 1920 Census. Yellow denotes Caucasian household, green denotes African-American household and blue denotes addresses that were not recorded (buildings not yet built).

