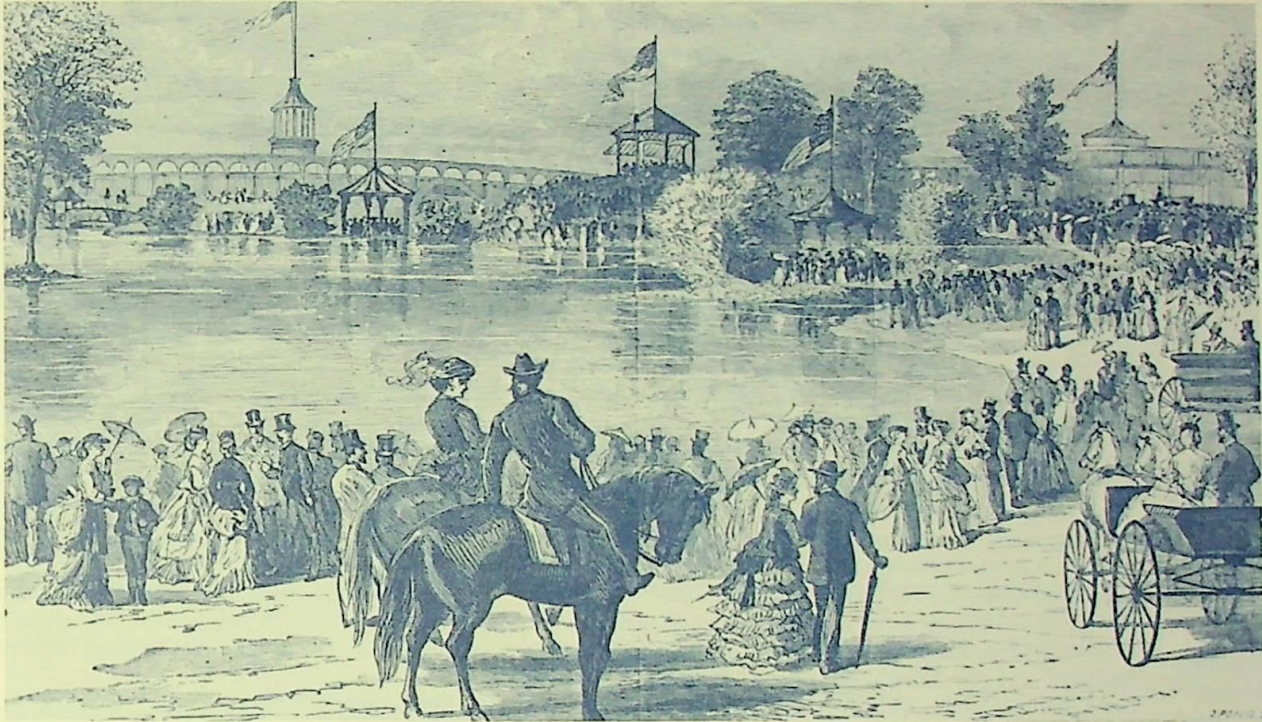




# Fairgrounds- O'Fallon Park



*View of the grounds at the St. Louis Fair. This annual, week-long event was the high point of St. Louis social life from 1856 until 1902. Tens of thousands of visitors came to the fair every year, including the Prince of Wales, later King Edward VII, who visited here in 1860. Engraving by J.P. Davis, Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.*

The North St. Louis neighborhoods that lie beside Fairgrounds and O'Fallon Parks have a unique place in the cultural and recreational life of St. Louis. Since the mid-19th century, the area that extends from the corner of Grand Boulevard and St. Louis Avenue west to Fair Avenue and north to Broadway has been home to some of the city's most important public spaces. Here, at what was once the edge of town, St. Louisans came to relax and to play. Whether attending the annual fair, going to a Cardinals game, or taking a scenic drive, their trip began with a ride north on Grand Boulevard.

St. Louisans today think of Grand as the street that neatly cuts through the middle of the city. In the 1760s, however, this route marked the eastern edge of the Grand Prairie common field, a set of narrow, east-west strips laid out in the colonial period for agricultural use. The Grand Prairie was so far from the village of St. Louis that huts were built there for overnight stays. The common field area (which extended from St. Louis Avenue on the south, to

Carter Avenue on the north, and from Grand west to Newstead and Marcus avenues), is what we know today as the Fairgrounds neighborhood. Its location, for so long at the periphery of the city, helped to determine the kinds of institutions that gave the neighborhood its original character.

In 1855, the extension of St. Louis' boundaries put the city limits just west of Grand. Within a few years horse-drawn omnibuses carried passengers from the central city out to the fairgrounds, on the edge of Grand. Development in the area began in 1856, when the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association purchased a 50-acre site at the northwest corner of Grand and the Natural Bridge Plank Road. The association, a private group dedicated to boosting St. Louis commerce, bought the land from one of its members, Colonel John O'Fallon, who had extensive holdings in the area. The site became the home of the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Fair, an annual week-

*(Essay continued on back cover)*

## 1. Grand Boulevard

While surveying the Grand Prairie common field in the early 1850s, real estate agent Hiram Leffingwell envisioned a broad boulevard that would extend the length of the city, from the riverfront on the north to the riverfront on the south. Leffingwell believed that the city limits would be extended westward and a grand avenue should mark the site of St. Louis' boundary. The new street was realized and in 1855 the city limits were indeed pushed westward, to a point just beyond it. The open space along Grand Avenue, far from the congested center of the city, made the location ideal for playing fields and fairgrounds. Transportation routes, first in the form of horse-drawn omnibuses, and later, electric trolleys, ensured that people from any part of the city would have access to the attractions along Grand.

## 2. Herbert Hoover Boys' Club (formerly site of Sportsman's Park) 2901 Grand at Dodier

Five months before the Cardinals played their last game at Sportsman's Park in May 1966, August A. Busch, Jr. donated the site of the seven-acre ball park for a new boys' club, still in its planning stages. Named for President Herbert Hoover, longtime Chairman of the Board of Boys' Clubs of America, the club opened in June 1967. The boys' club serves youths ages 6 to 18, most of whom live in the neighborhood. It offers a wide range of programs designed to enhance self-esteem and promote academic, physical and social development. Members receive homework assistance, attend theatrical events, and participate in arts and crafts programs. The boys' club offers team sports including baseball, basketball and football, as well as individual sports such as karate and aquatics. For more information call 652-8300.

**Top, left:** *The Lindell Theatre, one of two theaters on Grand near Palm in the 1910s, featured both movies and live performances. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.*

**Bottom, left:** *This Herbert Hoover Boys' Club baseball team is joined by former Cardinal Lou Brock at their ball diamond on the former site of Sportsman's Park. Herbert Hoover Boys' Club.*

**Top, right:** *An arts and crafts program is one of the many activities available to members of the Herbert Hoover Boys' Club. Herbert Hoover Boys' Club.*

**Bottom, right:** *Sportsman's Park, at Grand and Dodier, was the home of the St. Louis Cardinals from 1920 until 1966. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.*

## Sportsman's Park

### Formerly at Grand and Dodier

The site of the Herbert Hoover Boys' Club has been used as a place to play since the first baseball diamond, known as the Grand Avenue Ball Grounds, was laid out here in 1866. It was renamed Sportsman's Park in 1876, when it became the home of the St. Louis Browns. Chris von der Ahe bought the team in 1881 and as the "boss president" of the Browns he guided them to four pennants from 1885 through 1888.

The Cardinals joined the Browns at Sportsman's Park in 1920. The 1934 Cardinals, known as the Gashouse Gang, and led by Frank Frisch, Leo Durocher, Pepper Martin and Dizzy Dean, earned the National League pennant with their gritty and aggressive play. Ten years later, the Cardinals defeated the Browns in St. Louis' first and only streetcar series. In 1953, August A. Busch, Jr. bought the Cardinals and Sportsman's Park, which he renamed Busch Stadium. The last game was played at the stadium in May 1966, 100 years after the first ball diamond had been laid out on the site.

## 3. Carter Carburetor

### 2840 North Spring

For many years this was the site of Carter Carburetor's main plant, where workers manufactured carburetors, fuel pumps, oil filters and other car parts. During World War II, when automobile production was curtailed, Carter partially converted to manufacture shell fuses for the War Department. Like numerous other local war industries, Carter Carburetor was the site of labor protests. In August 1942, several hundred men and women marched from Tandy Park in the Ville neighborhood to



the Carter plant, protesting the company's reluctance to hire African American employees.

In the early 1980s Carter Carburetor became Carter Automotive Company, Inc. Today its 58 employees produce fuel pumps for the Chrysler Corporation.

## 4. Palm Street

Before its development as a residential street, Palm, between Glasgow and Grand, was the site of the Lindell Amusement Park, a private recreational ground rented to organizations for outings from the early 1870s until it closed in the 1890s. In the late 1910s, a predominantly German-American population lived in the large, single- and two-family homes on Palm, reflecting the population of much of the neighborhood at that time. Today Palm Street is a cul de sac. This change was intended to reduce through traffic on the street and help residents maintain control over their section of the neighborhood.

## 5. Central Visual and Performing Arts High School (formerly Yeatman High School) 3616 North Garrison

Upon its opening in 1904, Yeatman was the only high school in North St. Louis. Named for St. Louis philanthropist James E. Yeatman, it was rechristened Central High School in 1927 after Central's building was destroyed by a tornado. In 1988 the school became the Central Visual and Performing Arts High School, a magnet school offering its students programs in drama, vocal and instrumental music, visual arts, dance and fashion.



## 6. Fairgrounds Hotel Natural Bridge and Spring

Built in 1927, the eight-story Fairgrounds Hotel served as quarters for members of the Cardinals and the Browns, who played at Sportsman's Park, just four blocks away. Stan Musial and his family lived at the hotel during his first few seasons with the Cardinals in the 1940s. After the demolition of Sportsman's Park, the hotel was converted into Fairgrounds Manor, a 400-bed extended care nursing home. In 1983 the building was renovated and reopened as Drew Towers, with 65 apartments for senior citizens and the disabled.

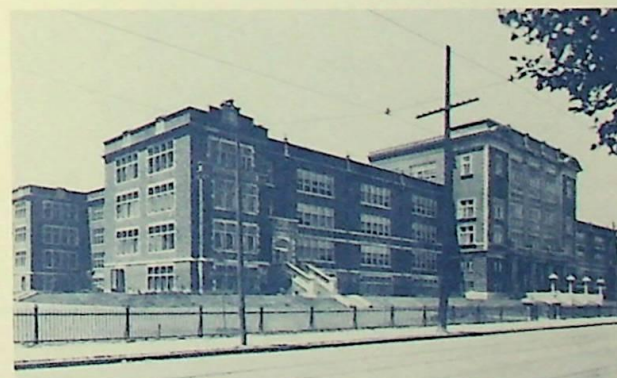
## 7. Beaumont High School 3836 Natural Bridge

Named for early St. Louis surgeon William Beaumont, Beaumont High School stands on the former site of National League Park, where the St. Louis Cardinals played from 1899 until their move to Sportsman's Park on Grand Boulevard in 1920. The city bought the ballpark in 1920 and, six years later, built the largest school in St. Louis. The faculty and students of Yeatman High School moved from their old building to the larger Beaumont High in 1926. The school, which serves 1400 students, recently reopened following a complete renovation. Beaumont High School has received local, state and national awards for its science programs.

## 8. Fairgrounds Park Bounded by Natural Bridge, Fair, Kossuth, and Grand

In 1855 a group of St. Louis businessmen formed the St. Louis Agricultural and Mechanical Association, for the purpose of offering an annual trade fair. The first St. Louis Fair opened on

(Tour continued on page 6)



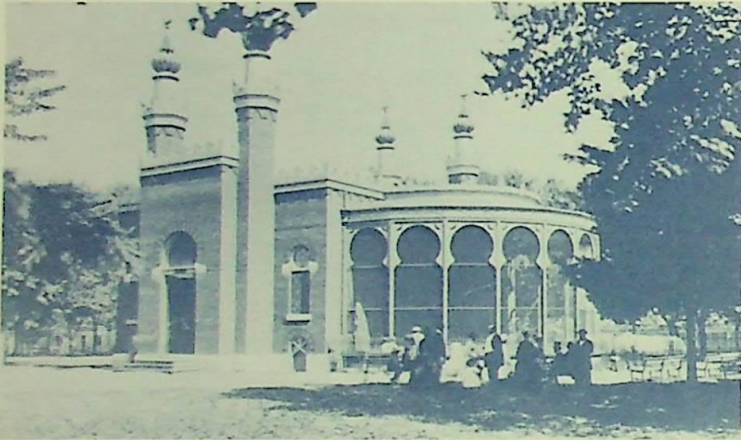
**Top, left:** These marchers in a protest parade to Carter Carburetor questioned the company's refusal to hire African American employees to work on its defense contracts. Western Historical Manuscript Collection, University of Missouri—St. Louis.

**Bottom, left:** Lindell Amusement Park, a 15-acre private park west of Glasgow, was a popular spot for clubs to hold parties and picnics. Lithograph by Joseph Keppler, Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

**Top, right:** Yeatman High School, built in 1904, was the first high school in North St. Louis. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

**Bottom, right:** Beaumont High School, on Natural Bridge near Vandeventer, was served by six streetcar lines when it opened in 1926. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

# WHERE WE LIVE

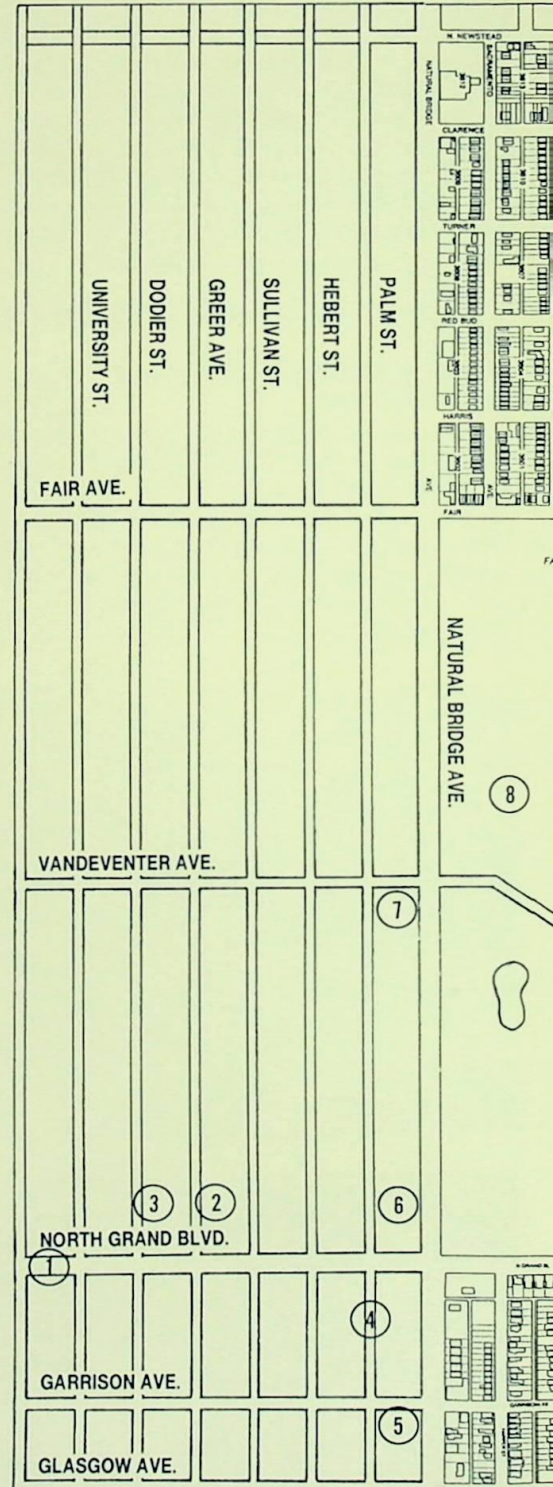


A zoological garden was added to the fairgrounds in 1876. Its buildings, like the monkey house seen here, were modeled after European zoological buildings. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.



The castle-like bear pits, on the right in this picture, are all that remain from the St. Louis Fair. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

Map courtesy of Community Development Agency.



# Fairgrounds - O'Fallon Park

## TOUR MAP



October 13, 1856 and ran for one week. Manufacturers displayed their latest inventions, and farmers from outstate brought their best livestock and produce, competing for huge premiums. Outside the fair's entrance gates were sideshow tents featuring such curiosities as the Snake Charmer and the Educated Pig.

Fifteen to 25 thousand people a day flocked to the fairgrounds during fair week, most of them by way of the horse-drawn omnibus line on Grand. St. Louis schools and businesses closed on "Big Thursday" of every fair week, so that everyone might attend.

Over the years, 300 buildings were constructed for the fair, including a 12,000-seat amphitheatre, a mechanics' building, a floral hall and livestock halls. In the 1870s a zoo was constructed in the southeast corner of the fairgrounds. The bear pit structure, dating to 1876, is the only building remaining from the fair.

In 1884 the fairgrounds received a blow from the opening of the Exposition Hall downtown, which was built expressly for the purpose of displaying machinery and manufactured products. With the upcoming 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition, interest in the annual St. Louis Fair dwindled, and the last fair at the fairgrounds took place in 1902.

The city purchased the abandoned fairgrounds in 1908, and, after removing the Fair's structures, reopened the site as Fairgrounds Park in 1909. In the 1910s, the former location of the amphitheatre was rebuilt into a five-acre swimming pool. When African American children challenged their exclusion from the pool in 1949, sporadic rioting took place in the Fairgrounds neighborhood. The following year, 2,000 St. Louisans rioted over the Park Department's decision to allow African American children to use the pool.

Today, Fairgrounds Park continues to be a focal point for the neighborhood. The Fairgrounds Community Development Organization has plans for a skating rink in the park, and a bicycle path around the park's perimeter.

## 9. West Florissant Road

Florissant Road has long been a vital thoroughfare in the O'Fallon Park community. The road linking St. Louis with Florissant, a major grain supplier, grew to be an important commercial street. In the 1910s, neighborhood residents could board a streetcar to visit the district's doctors, dentists, tailors, grocers, butchers, barbers, shoe stores, bakeries, and dry goods stores.

## 10. O'Fallon Park

**Bounded by West Florissant, Harris, Algernon, Adelaide, Interstate 70 and East Taylor**

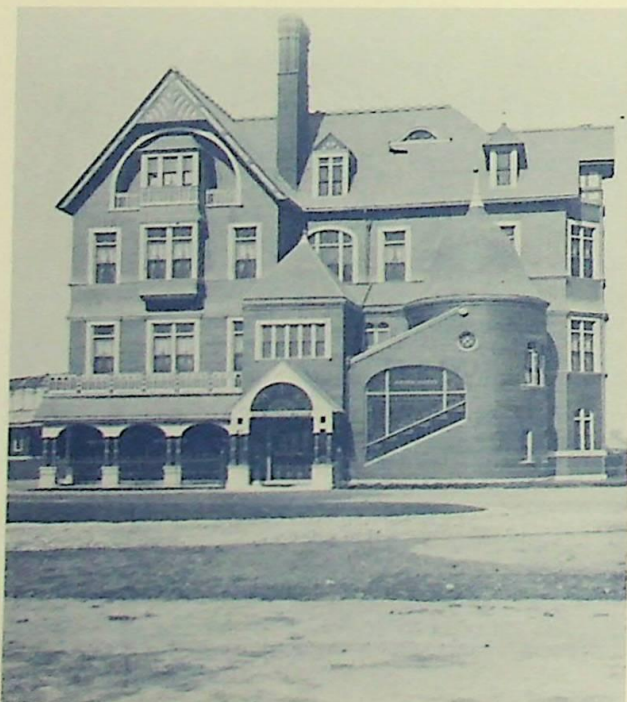
Unlike Fairgrounds and Sportsman's parks, O'Fallon Park did not begin as a private venture. The City of St. Louis created it from the estate of John O'Fallon, who owned over 600 acres of land in this area. In the 1850s, O'Fallon built a country house, named Athlone after his ancestral home in Ireland, overlooking the Mississippi River. In 1875, ten years after O'Fallon's death, the city purchased 166 acres of the estate from his heirs for use as a park. North and south St. Louisans resented the long buggy ride to Forest Park, then under development, so O'Fallon and Carondelet parks were created as a compromise. O'Fallon became a popular park for scenic drives and picnics. The lake, added in the 1890s, gave rise to boating.

In the 1960s, the park's uninterrupted view of the Mississippi was blocked when the Missouri Highway

**Left:** Membership in the St. Louis Jockey Club, formed in 1877, was a mark of social distinction. Wealthy members built this elaborate club house at the fairgrounds for its guests and members. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

**Top, right:** Huge crowds filled the grandstand at the fairgrounds in the 1890s, when the site became the hub of the southwestern horse racing circuit. St. Louis hosted the National Derby in 1896. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

**Bottom, right:** The five-acre pool at Fairgrounds Park was a popular summer spot for some neighborhood children. Photograph by W. C. Persons, Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.



Department routed Interstate 70 through the park, paving over 40 acres of athletic fields. Today efforts are underway to revitalize O'Fallon Park. The O'Fallon Community Development Organization has worked to clean up the park and designate one-way streets to cut down on the amount of through traffic. Plans are in the works to renovate the boathouse and bring back boating and other lake activities.

### 11. Kulage House 1904 College Avenue

In the 1830s, Saint Louis University acquired the area roughly bounded by Warne, Carter, Linton and Broadway with the intention of building a new campus there. For over 40 years the land served as the College farm until the University subdivided it and moved to its present site at Lindell and Grand. Joseph and Maria Kulage purchased land from the University and established a brick manufacturing business there in the 1880s. Their home, built in 1906, is distinctive for its unusual stone-faced organ tower, which houses a church-sized organ with nearly 1700 pipes.

### 12. Mount Grace Chapel of Perpetual Adoration 1438 East Warne

Established in 1928 through an endowment from Maria Kulage, the convent is the home of the Holy Spirit Adoration Sisters, also known as the Pink Sisters, for the color of the habits they wear. Part of a contemplative order, the Pink

Sisters rarely go beyond the walls of the convent. Most of their day is spent in prayer; there is round-the-clock prayer in the chapel.

Additional information is available at the Missouri Historical Society Library and Collections Center, 225 S. Skinker Blvd. Of particular interest see:

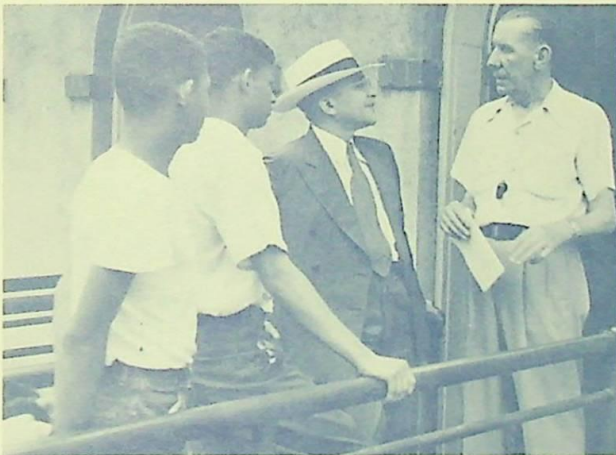
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Wayman, Norbury. *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Fairground*. St. Louis Community Development Agency, St. Louis, 1978.

Wayman, Norbury. *History of St. Louis Neighborhoods: Hyde Park and Bissell-College Hill*. St. Louis Community Development Agency, 1980.

Special thanks to James Williams, Lewis Collins, Mary Taylor, Debra Burtis, Herbert Hoover Boys' Club, Wendy Krom and residents of the Fairgrounds and O'Fallon Park neighborhoods who helped in the preparation of this brochure.

*Where We Live: Fairgrounds-O'Fallon Park*, researched and written by Dina M. Young and Daniel P. Horgan, designed by Julie Harding, and production by Lauri Kramer.



**Top, left:** Until 1950, African American children were denied the right to use the pool at Fairgrounds Park. Here, a father asks the pool superintendent to admit his sons. The boys were refused entry. Photograph by Ed Meyer, Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

**Bottom, left:** Boating on O'Fallon Park lake was a popular pastime in the early 1900s. Current plans are aimed at reviving the sport. Photograph by E. Boehl, Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.

**Right:** A 40-foot observation tower in O'Fallon Park once provided a dramatic view of the Mississippi. Missouri Historical Society Photograph and Print Collection.



# Fairgrounds- O'Fallon Park

*(Essay continued from front cover)*

long event that drew thousands of visitors from the city and rural outstate Missouri as well. Manufacturers exhibited and sold their latest inventions and farmers vied over whose livestock would be chosen the fair's best. For entertainment, fairgoers visited the floral hall, fine arts hall and sideshow tents.

Like the fair, Sportsman's Park, established in 1866 at the northwest corner of Grand and St. Louis Avenue, was also a private enterprise. Chris von der Ahe, a German-born grocer and saloonkeeper, bought the park in 1881, hoping that baseball games would draw patrons to his nearby establishment. As the "boss president" of the St. Louis Browns, von der Ahe dictated how the team should be run, and added to his profits by scheduling games on Sundays and selling liquor in the ballpark.

O'Fallon Park, in contrast to these private institutions, was a public space. Opened in 1876 as part of the city park system, O'Fallon Park offered visitors winding roadways for scenic drives, a picturesque lake and an observation tower with a dramatic view of the Mississippi River. Unlike the fair or Sportsman's Park, O'Fallon Park was created

for passive recreation; it was a place designed more for contemplation than competition.

The community's popular attractions and easy access to streetcar facilities encouraged early residential development. Subdivisions sprang up near the eastern edge of the fairgrounds in the 1860s, and the area continued to develop into the early 1900s. As the city developed other recreation areas, however, the Fairgrounds-O'Fallon Park community gradually lost its identity as an entertainment center. By the late 1960s, people drove their own cars downtown to the new Busch Stadium to cheer on the Cardinals instead of riding the streetcar up Grand.

Today, as Fairgrounds and O'Fallon Park struggle with the problems that face all urban neighborhoods, residents are organizing to preserve their community. Door-to-door petition drives led to the creation of a number of one-way streets in O'Fallon Park, a measure which reduces traffic on residential streets. Fittingly, the Fairgrounds and O'Fallon Park neighborhood organizations, both just a few years old, are focusing their efforts on revitalizing their parks as places for recreation. Vital public spaces gave the Fairgrounds-O'Fallon Park community its unique historic identity and may well prove essential to its future.

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This neighborhood brochure was prepared as part of the *Where We Live* program, coordinated by the Missouri Historical Society with media sponsorship from KMOX Radio, the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* and KMOV-TV.

We hope that you will use this brochure and map to explore Fairgrounds-O'Fallon Park. For additional information about the neighborhood please visit the Missouri Historical Society's Library and Collections Center at 225 S. Skinker Blvd., St. Louis, Missouri.

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