

Aug: 9, 1946

Miss Alice Davis
% Henry George News
50 East 69th St.,
New York 21, N. Y.

Miss Alice Davis

Dear Miss Davis:

Your letter of June 24, addressed to Mrs. Frances Gaston Crawford was handed me for reply. I regret my delay in giving it the attention it deserves. I am the associate editorial writer for the Fairhope Courier and it is my task to give attention to such communications as yours.

It was the ambition of Fairhope's founders to provide a demonstration that would give physical proof of the soundness of the Henry George principles. It was not their desire, but a necessity of their poverty that caused them to start with what was expected to be merely a subsistence homestead community. They too saw, as did many of the single tax associates of your friend's father, that it would be more desirable and more effective to have the demonstration conducted in an industrial community.

At the time of Fairhope's founding (1894-95) this section was reckoned by many to be submarginal land, and there are some who still hold that the low income and backwardness of the South is due to the submarginal character of the land, or a large part of it. The site available to our colonists lay between developed sections both above and below, here on the Eastern Shore of Mobile Bay, a fact that would seem to testify to its inferior character. The land was cheap though, and undaunted the colonists went to work, cleared land for homes, gardens and kitchen orchards, and laid out their town site.

The crudity of pioneer life in the early days was too much for several of the half dozen families who shared in that first effort and they quickly moved on, but others who had learned of the prospect while it was in contemplation were tempted to join us. Some stayed but many of these too were unwilling to undergo the hardships and either returned whence they came or went to more developed sections, deciding to continue their work for the cause in more pleasant surroundings.

My father, E. B. Gaston had been elected secretary of the organization, The Fairhope Industrial Association, when the Association was formed in Des Moines, Iowa, early in 1894 and our family came south with the first to arrive and ours was the first house to be built on the newly purchased land. We stayed and our

father continued as executive secretary of the corporation almost continuously until his resignation in 1936 at which time I was - elected to the position, which I still hold, having been reelected each year without opposition.

Fairhope has now become the largest town in Baldwin x County, a fact that I am sure can be accounted for only by the fundamental soundness of the economic principles the colonists placed and have maintained in operation here for more than fifty years. While we are well pleased with Fairhope's physical location we cannot but admit that the sites of other communities in the county have economic advantages by reason of their location that cannot be available to us. However, the fact that Fairhope has outstripped them all and has maintained the most rapid rate of growth as shown by U. S. census figures, but gives further weight to the evidence of value of our plan.

While the Fairhope Single Tax Corporation owns only about one-fifth of the land now within the corporate limits of the municipality of Fairhope its lands comprise probably 70% of the total developed area with the corporation and its lessees paying a proportionate amount of the tax revenue received by the municipal government. The central business section is entirely on lands leased from the corporation.

Some might attribute the greater growth of Fairhope to the higher intelligence of its citizenry since people who have the mental capacity to delve into and arrive at a solution of complex economic problems are generally rated above the average. I believe it to be true however, that many such ~~are~~ suffer a handicap rather than an advantage by reason of their comprehension. Also it is my observation that by far the greatest number of those who have been attracted to Fairhope and who have been responsible for its physical growth, were attracted by the economic opportunity it offered. Most of them, I would say, did not and do not analyze the vital factors that made such opportunity more freely available at Fairhope than elsewhere.

I believe that Fairhope is now reaching the capacity to be of the service its founders hoped it might eventually perform. That hope was that our application of the fundamental principles propounded by Henry George would enable Fairhope to offer so great a contrast to surrounding communities that did not enjoy the beneficent influence of those principles as to make it of value as a practical demonstration for you and the many others. Indeed I sometimes think that if more of those who had accepted the theory at the time of Fairhope's founding, had engaged in the establishment of demonstration units, the present day value might exceed that of their accomplishment in other directions.

Under separate cover I am sending additional printed material. I want to assure you of our appreciation of your interest and our desire to give you all possible assistance.

Very truly yours,

Secretary