

March 10, 1941

Mr. Fred Rivers;  
1950 Webster St.,  
Oakland, Calif.,

Dear Mr. Rivers:

I am in receipt of yours of March 5 and regret that I could not get a reply in the mail to you earlier. I hope this may reach you by Tuesday but if not it is my understanding that you are to have future meetings.

The Corporation does not give fee simple title to any of its land since to do so would remove such land from any control of the Corporation and would relieve the owner of any enforceable obligation to pay the economic rent to the community.

Leases are for terms of 99 years but are transferrable subject to the rules of the Corporation and approval by its Executive Council. I enclose a copy of the lease and application.

Land availability is the only limitation on the amount of land one may lease, but the obligation to pay the economic rent to the Corporation makes it unprofitable to take more land than one can profitably use. The growth of the community with the accompanying increase in economic rent automatically changes small orchards and chicken ranches into building lots, and has changed the town proper from a small settlement of subsistence homesteads into a compact urban community.

No legal provision can be made for a renewable 99 yr. lease but each time the title to the improvements pass either through sale or inheritance the old lease is cancelled and a new 99 yr. lease is issued in the name of the transferee.

Leases may be abrogated only for non-payment of rent, but the lease contract (paragraph 2) provides that the land may not be used for any purpose physically or morally offensive to a majority of the resident members. The community of Fairhope now is governed by a municipal government which has the regulatory powers with which such bodies are endowed by law. Of course lessees as well as others in the community are subject to municipal ordinances.

Children of lessees have no advantages over any who may this day set foot on Fairhope land for the first time, nor have I, the son of the founding leader. All sites unleased as of this date are available on equal terms to all, subject to the approval of the Executive Council, and provided they are legally competent.

Neither the community nor the Corporation has any productive enterprise under its management other than the municipally owned and operated water and electric utilities. All industrial and commercial enterprises are privately owned and con-

trolled. I am enclosing a clipping of an editorial recently published in the Fairhope Courier concerning co-operative activities. In addition to the early cooperative activities of the colonists groups have been formed here in later years to operate a creamery, a store etc. but none now survive. The more normal competition in Fairhope where natural opportunity is not subject to monopolization insures fair prices and fair treatment.

I sometimes wonder how all the people in Fairhope earn their living. A number are employed in commercial establishments which serve a considerable territory, Fairhope having the best stores in the county; others are engaged in the professions, doctors, teachers, lawyers, dentists, etc., some are employed in our two saw mills and a toy factory; we have a theatre, amusement casinos that serve the local people and many visitors from the surrounding country and Mobile, now readily reached by motor via causeway ~~at~~ the head of the bay and a new tunnel under the Mobile river; others own property they rent to Fairhope's large transient population; and quite a few earned their money elsewhere and have come here to retire; some are traveling salesmen domiciled here and some are employed in the expanding industries located at Mobile.

Fairhope now has a population of 1,849 (1940 census), though there are always considerable more than that living here but with permanent residence elsewhere. Since its founding it has grown more rapidly than any community in the county which is still an agricultural county. And by the way I did not mention agricultural occupation. We have some 4000 acres of country lands and they are largely in use by resident lessees. In Fairhope town, while the Corporation owns a little less than one-fourth the land I believe approximately three-fourths of the population is on the Corporation's land.

Under separate cover I am sending you a copy of the Courier containing my annual report to the membership which I believe you will find interesting and informative,; also additional printed material. I need not assure you that I shall be glad to give your group all informative aid I can and shall be particularly glad to hear further from you. We feel that it is becoming yearly more evident that Fairhope's existence is justified.

Very truly yours,

---

Secretary.

1950 Webster St., Oakland, Calif.,  
March 5, 1941.

Fairhope Community,  
Fairhope, Ala.

Friends:

It has been quite a time since I wrote to you, but this has in no way indicated that I haven't thought of you - "many times and often." For I have. The latest date was or is last Tuesday evening. Borsodi of N.Y. was recently here and made a talk rather well attended by many of the younger people who are beginning to get awake to conditions. The result has been that some of these have called regular meetings to discuss what may be possible for them to do along similar lines. I have been present at these meetings and have called their special attention to Fairhope and what this community stands for. They asked me some questions last Tuesday that I think it best to have you answer, covering your latest ideas on these points. They are:

1. Do you now give full legal title to any of your lots or lands?
2. If you limit the use of such property to leases, for what terms?
3. And for what amounts; and how terminated?
4. Are renewals permitted, either to the original lessee or to his heirs, or assigns?
5. Are there any rules or regulations that must be followed, or the lease is abrogated?
6. What about children of lessees who grow up in the community; do they have to follow the same routine to get a site for a home? *At what age?*
7. Are there any avenues for employment of residents by the Community or in various forms of activity conducted by groups of lessees?
8. What are the principal activities of residents by which they earn a living?

I ought to know all these answers, for I have visited you more than once. But that was long ago and I have not had much correspondence with your community in these later years. But the answers to these questions will help our local group to decide whether or not they want to build any community they may decide to go into on similar lines. They and I will very greatly appreciate your co-operation here. If you still publish the Courier or a like paper, may I ask that you send a copy or two? I enclose an Airmail Stamp to get a reply as soon as possible; by next Tuesday, if you can make it in that time, so we can use the information at our next meeting. Wishing you continued and even greater success than you have yet had, I remain,

Quite sincerely yours,

*Fred Rivers*

An Old Henry George Follower, *aged 75 years*

Aug. 23, 1940

Mr. Fred Rivers;  
1950 Webster St.,  
Oakland, Calif.;

Dear Mr. Rivers:

I have just returned from a vacation trip today to find your letter which should have had prompt attention and I very much regret that you should have been kept waiting.

I am enclosing herewith a brief history of Fairhope written by my father some years ago but which contained the answers to many of the questions you ask; also additional printed matter that I hope will be of help to you.

The 1910 census was the first after Fairhope had become a legally constituted municipality with defined boundaries and the population definitely known. The figures for that and succeeding years are as follows: 1910 - 506; 1920 - 853; 1930 - 1,549; 1940 - 1,839 (preliminary release). It will be seen here that the greatest growth was between 1920 and 1930 and I attribute this to be due to the boom during which time many northern people who believed their acquired fortunes would be adequate for the remainder of their lives came here to retire. The crash caught them, their fortunes vanished and they had to go back to the industrial centers to try again.

Fairhope having no direct connection with rail or deep water transportation and having no deposits of mineral or oil or gas nor any water power is not well suited for industrial development. Its individual characteristics have made it most practical to recreational development and while there are other locations in this section better suited for such development Fairhope has surpassed them all and has, in fact grown more rapidly than has any town in the county and since 1930 has been the county's largest town. With the growing development of truck transportation it may be that the development of small industry will take place.

Various cooperatives (stores, creamery, laundry), have started here but none are active now. Many different conclusions might be arrived at as to the reason why these have not been successful enough to insure their continued operation. Our people are friendly to the idea and I do not recall any dishonesty or even gross inefficiency in management, but they did not prove to be the boon their organizers had anticipated. I feel that the higher degree of efficiency attained under individual initiative where no special privilege obtains and competition is free and fair and the industrious are not burdened with taxes in proportion to their industry

tend to greatly reduce the advantages commonly attributed to cooperatives. As stated before this is just a personal opinion and I appreciate that it is not based on sufficient experience to be at all conclusive.

During the booming twenties there was some speculation in leaseholds and while the requirement to pay rent would have eventually enforced the return of unused land to the corporation it did have the uneconomic effect of tying up purchasing power in really valueless lease titles, admitted of fraud on ununderstanding and uninformed persons and tended to discredit the corporation. For these reasons, even though it resulted in a decrease of revenue for the corporation, measures were taken to prevent it. These measures you will find in the application for land and the lease contract, copies of which I enclose.

As to the future of Fairhope, I believe that the present conditions justify as great a faith as my father expresses in the closing paragraphs of his history. My father died a couple of years past and now there are very few of the original founders, none of the very first, yet I believe the fundamental principles upon which Fairhope was founded and which have been so successful here never had as many sympathetic and interested citizen friends as they have today.

Again let me express ~~my~~ my regret for the delay and to assure you that it will be my pleasure to be of any further service I can render.

Very truly yours,

---

Secretary.

1950 Webster St., Oakland, Calif.,  
August 8, 1940.

The Fairhope Association,  
Fairhope, Alabama.

Friends:

I have been asked by the editor of the Epic News to write a two-column article on my recollections of Communities of special type with which I have been associated or which I recollect through visiting at sometime in the past. I want to include in this an account of the Fairhope community, which I once knew and with which, up to a few years ago, I have been in contact, principally through the editor of the Courier. If the Courier has the same editor, or if this gentleman is still alive and there now, kindly pass this inquiry on to him for reply; otherwise, I would appreciate reply through another source; and please send this to me as soon as possible by Airmail, postage for which I enclose. As much may have happened since my last communication with Fairhope, I address this letter to the Association rather than to the gentleman named. If you cannot get your answers on the form enclosed, may I ask you to use additional paper? I would like to have my recollections confirmed and any additional information sent that would be appropriate for an article such as I shall write, so I shall not be checked up as in error in some particular matter.

Wishing you increased success in your enterprise there and in the effort to put over the idea of the Land Value tax, I remain,

Very sincerely yours,

*J. Fred Rivers*

1950 Webster St., Oakland, Calif.,  
August 21, 1940.

Postmaster,  
Fairhope, Alabama.

Dear Sir:

On August 8th I sent a letter to the Fairhope Association, asking some questions regarding the Fairhope Community, with which I was once quite familiar, but my correspondence in the last few years has lapsed. I sent this letter by air and enclosed two airmail stamps for a reply. This matter I needed for an article I was asked to write on the general subject: "Communities I Have Known" (Colonies). I am in the position that I either must depend entirely upon memory of Fairhope or else get some reply from you there. May I ask you to check up and see, first, if the letter reached you and was delivered to the Secretary of the Association; second, why, if so, it was not answered; third, if it failed to get there or was not delivered to the addressee, may I ask that you call the attention of the people (right people) there to the matter? Give them this letter, if it has not yet been delivered. Your kind attention will very greatly oblige.

Sincerely yours,

*Fred Rivers.*

FAIRHOPE, Alabama

-0-

1. Settled by a Group from Des Moines, Iowa. How many? How much land? When?  
.....
2. How was the land-plot arranged? .....
3. Lease costs, at first; how arranged? .....
4. What changes have been made since then? .....
5. Any additional land? Basis and form of changes? .....
6. Years of most growth in numbers and development? .....
7. Present population? What, if any, industries: .....
8. Any Co-operatives? Kind and function? What support do they get from  
the residents?  
.....
9. Any speculation in leasing? Present lease-values? What of the  
Future for Fairhope? Land extension or affiliated communities else-  
where? Additional remarks: .....