

## **FAUST PARK**

### **PARK HISTORY**

Faust County Park is located on a tract of land that once belonged to the second governor of Missouri, Frederick Bates. Bates acquired 900 acres on the southern bank of the Missouri River between 1808 and 1810. At that time, Bates was the Secretary for the Upper Louisiana Territory and Recorder of Titles. Bates became Governor in 1824, succeeding Alexander McNair who had served since Missouri's admission to the Union in 1821.

Frederick Bates' mother, three sisters, and a brother moved from his birthplace in Virginia to St. Louis, prompting him to build his Virginia-style "Plantation". The house was built around 1817-1819. Bates named his estate Thornhill in 1818. On March 4, 1819 Bates married the 17 year old Nancy Opie Ball.

Although Bates talked a great deal about farming, he found little time to practice it due to political duties and lack of a labor force. Bates owned 10 slaves, but only two were men, not enough to plant and harvest any large crops. His letters indicate that he cultivated peach trees to make peach brandy as a cash crop, and an orchard of old varieties of peach trees has been planted in the park in memory of Frederick Z. Stith. Governor Bates died in 1825 at the age of 48 and is buried at Thornhill with his wife, who died in 1877. Two of his children are buried next to them. Two other people whose connection to the estate is unknown are also buried in the family cemetery. The Thornhill complex, including the main house, the two barns, granary, and other outbuildings, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1974. The smokehouse and icehouse have been reconstructed, and one of the log outbuildings was renovated as a distillery in 1988.

The first 98.5 acres of the park were donated by Leicester Busch Faust and his wife Mary in 1968, and the park was dedicated and opened to the public in April 1973. In the spring and summer of 1979, archaeological excavations took place on the Thornhill estate. The bluff on which Thornhill is located was more or less continuously used by the pre-historic populations between 8000 BC and 1000 AD. Animal remains found there include the armadillo, mountain lion, timber wolf, American bison, American elk, and bear.

Restoration of Thornhill proceeded over several phases in the 1980s. In 1986, County voters passed a Bond Issue that included \$725,000 for park improvements. These funds aided in the completion of the Thornhill restoration in 1990, construction of the Carousel Building and initial development of the historical village.

The St. Louis Carousel was created by the Gustav Dentzel Company of Philadelphia about 1920 and opened at the Forest Park, Highlands Amusement Park in 1929. It has 65 hand carved animals and 2 chariots. This carousel was acquired by Howard Ohlendorf and donated to St. Louis County in 1963. Following a complete restoration, the Carousel opened at Faust Park on May 9, 1987, an event celebrated by the first St. Louis performance of Circus Flora. The circus continued to perform at the park for several years.

The historic village development has increased to 4 residences and 8 other buildings since its creation in 1986. The homes were all original to the Chesterfield area and moved to their present location. Other structures came from present day Town and Country, Ellisville, Ballwin and Jennings, Missouri. Reconstruction and restoration have been carried out by park staff under the direction of Faust Park Curator, Jesse Francis.

Through the bequest of Mary Plant Faust, the park doubled in size following her death in 1996 at the age of 95. Included in the newer acquisition are the main house, a secondary residence, and a dovecot designed in Pueblo Revival Style by St. Louis Tom P. Barnett and built in 1919. The house was enlarged and the present maintenance building erected in 1935-1936 to designs of Maritz, Young & Dusard. Also included on this property are an iron and glass greenhouse fabricated by Lord & Burnham and a barn built in 1925 using the lamella truss structural system. This was the first building in the St. Louis area to use this system. All of these buildings have been nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The residence is currently under lease to the Webster University Community Music School.

The Sophia M. Sachs Butterfly House and Education Center opened on September 18, 1998 on about 1.5 acres leased from the park. The building was designed by Christner, Inc. Originally owned by an independent non-profit organization, the Butterfly House became a division of the Missouri Botanical Garden, effective July 2, 2001. The site includes an outdoor butterfly garden and two large sculptures by St. Louis sculptor Robert Cassilly.

### **LEICESTER BUSCH FAUST AND MARY PLANT FAUST**

Leicester B. Faust was grandson to Adolphus Busch and restaurateur Tony Faust. During his lifetime he was an executive at Anheuser-Busch Inc., involved in Red Cross fund-raising activities, and in his retirement was an active board member of Shaw's Garden. He made several major donations of artwork to the St. Louis Art Museum and Washington University. He died in September of 1979 at age 81. His wife, Mary Plant Faust, was an active civic leader and philanthropist who served on the boards of numerous civic groups. She chaired the women's committee of the St.

Louis Symphony Orchestra and was a past president of the St. Louis Garden Club.  
She died in 1996 at the age of 95.