



## The Gensicke Farms, Linn County, Iowa

*In 1903, F.H. (Henry<sup>1</sup>) and Hannah Gensicke and their family moved to a farm in Linn County. The Gensickes would go on to acquire three more farms and a number of in-town lots in and around Cedar Rapids, although by the end of the Great Depression only one of the farms remained in Gensicke hands.*

In 1903, F.H. “Henry<sup>1</sup>” and Hannah Gensicke and their family moved to a recently acquired farm in Linn County, Iowa. Henry<sup>1</sup> immediately began acquiring more farmland. By the time he died in 1929, the Gensickes owned four sizeable farms, with his sons Henry<sup>2</sup>, Eldred and Everett managing three of them.

The Gensickes didn’t just buy farms, however. They bought and sold a number of lots scattered around the growing city of Cedar Rapids. This started before they moved to Linn County, although there were more such transactions after Henry<sup>1</sup> retired from day-to-day farming.

They also platted an area of 46 housing lots using 100 acres of land taken from one of their farms. However, this effort was only marginally successful, as several of the lots remained unsold when Henry<sup>1</sup> died.

In December 1929, Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke committed suicide. In family lore, it had been suggested that he had gotten himself into financial trouble at the start of what became the Great Depression. But in spite of some threatened tax sales because of overdue taxes, the Gensickes held onto much of this land through most of the 1930s.

However, by the late 1930s, only son Henry<sup>2</sup> was still farming in the area, having taken ownership of his farm several years earlier. Both Eldred and Everett left the county, the bank sold off the last of the farmland that Hannah had owned, and the last two housing lots she is known to have owned were sold in 1939.

## Research Notes

My primary sources for information about the Gensickes' land holdings in Linn County are historical plat maps (1895, 1914, 1921, 1930, 1938) and news reporting of real estate transactions found in the Cedar Rapids Gazette Archives.

The news coverage is somewhat incomplete when it comes to the transactions. Where it is complete, spelling errors and errors in indexing can trip up the archives' search engine.

A number of the transactions appear to suggest that a property was bought or sold for "\$1 and valuable considerations". The transaction reporting actually covers deed transfers, and this is standard legal language. A land transfer contract actually requires that there was something valuable traded in exchange for the land, or it is not a valid contract.

The transaction details are actually captured in the purchase agreements, which are not generally available here. Typically, the "valuable consideration" is money, i.e., most real estate is bought or sold in exchange for money. However, other things may be used in addition to or instead of money, such as a land trade. Transfers of land as gifts of course rarely involve money.

Townships are generally six-mile by six-mile squares and are identified by rows and columns, called tiers and ranges that are numbered from some baseline point. These townships are divided into one-square-mile sections numbered from 1 to 36. Each of these sections includes 640 acres. Section land was often sold in  $\frac{1}{4}$  and  $\frac{1}{2}$  sub-sections or sub-sections of sub-sections, although it wasn't limited to these fractions.

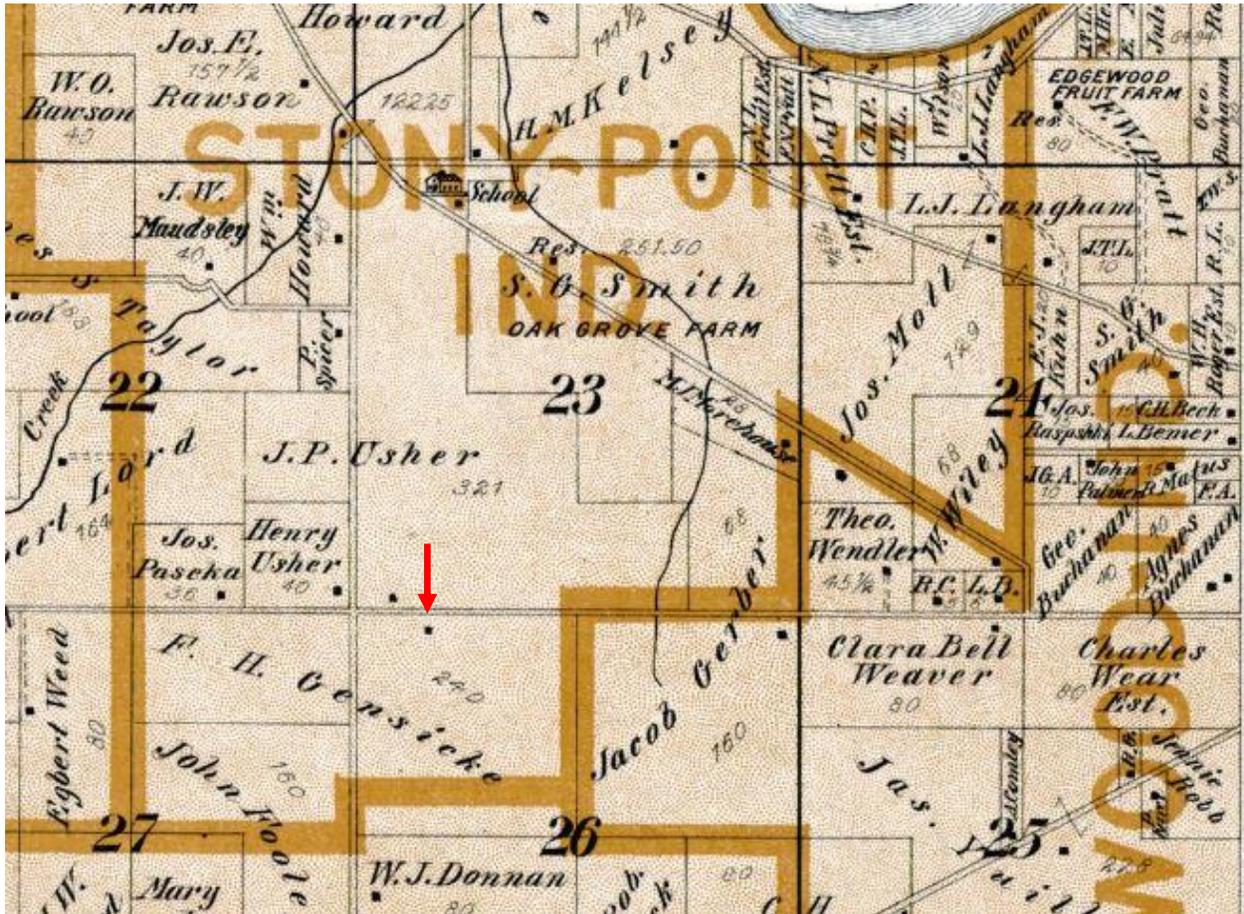
Townships as governing units are generally named. Their boundaries might vary from the standard square shape, often to conform to natural boundaries such as the Cedar River or to account for a city's annexation of adjacent lands, as often happened around the growing city of Cedar Rapids. As a result, a piece of land may end up in different townships at different times, although tier and range numbers stayed the same.

When land is annexed into a city, it becomes a named addition, and it is eventually platted, i.e., divided into one or more lots. Lots are typically numbered from 1 to the number of lots. Some plats include more than one block, and lots in this case are typically numbered by block number and then by lot number on that block. Lots and combinations of lots may be re-platted, i.e., new lot boundaries are drawn, and blocks and lots are renumbered.

Part of the Gensickes' Fairfield Farm over time was included in three different townships. After it was annexed into Cedar Rapids and platted, parts of it have been re-platted. This complicates the task of tracking the history of a particular farm.

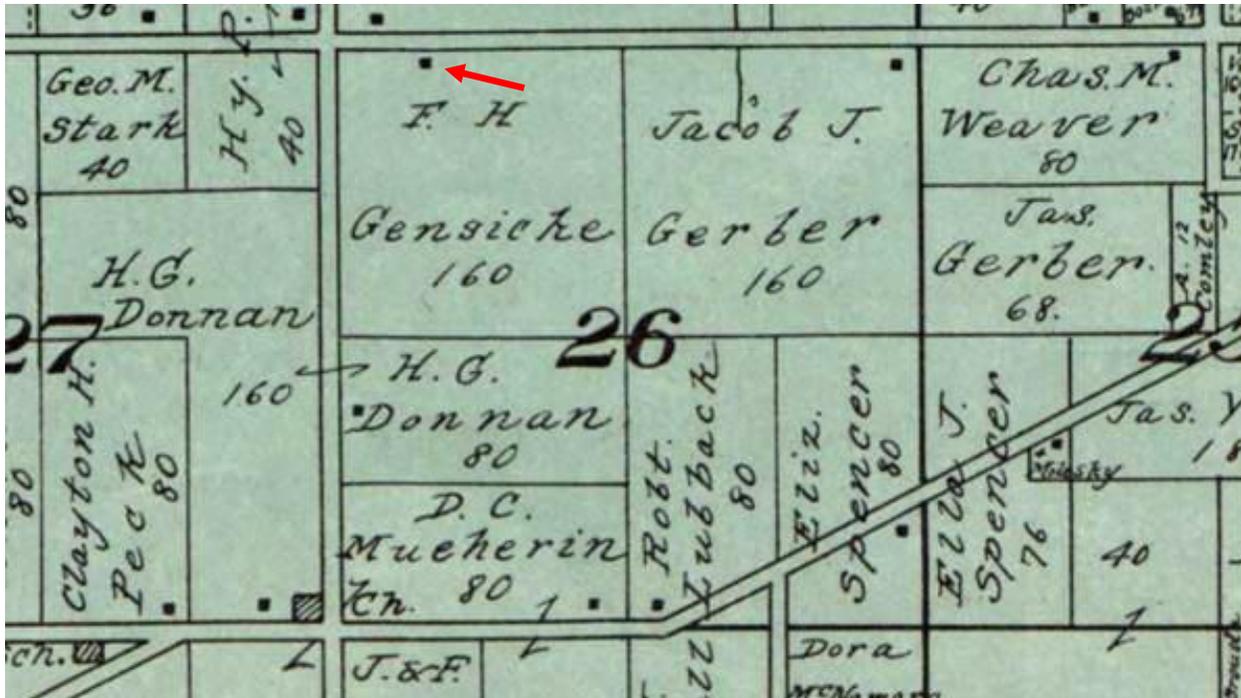
## Sunny Dale Farm

In 1903, the Gensickes bought a farm just west of Cedar Rapids in Linn County, Iowa, and took possession in March. By 1907, the farm included 160 acres in Clinton Township Section 26 and 80 adjacent acres in Section 27. It appears that they bought the Section 26 land from Adelbert and Hattie Smith, but transaction details are unknown.



*The Gensickes bought a farm just west of Cedar Rapids in 1903. By 1907 it consisted of 240 acres in Sections 26 and 27 of Clinton Township, Linn County, Iowa along the road known then as the Atkins Road, later the Red Ball Road and Vinton Road, and today's E Ave NW.*

This was the origin of what became known as Sunny Dale Farm. In December 1907, the Gensickes sold 40 acres in Section 27 to Joseph Shenka and his wife for \$4,550. In March 1920, they sold the remaining 40 acres in Section 27 to neighbor Henry Usher for \$14,000. The remaining quarter section in Section 26 continued intact as Sunny Dale Farm until after grandson Robert Gensicke retired from the dairy business after a 1955 fire.



*The 160-acre Gensicke Sunny Dale Farm after 1920.*



*The farm, on E Avenue NW, was named Sunny Dale Farm. Sunny Dale Farm in winter (right).*

Even as the Gensickes were settling into life on this farm, Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke started buying land that would become part of a second farm. In 1908, Henry<sup>1</sup>, Hannah and their three youngest children – Eldred, Esther and Everett – moved to the second farm. Nineteen-year-old son Henry<sup>2</sup> and seventeen-year-old daughter Carrie were left at Sunny Dale to work the land. Oldest child Edna left the farm that year when she married Charles Henry Stark. Farm equipment was pooled between the two farms.

Carrie married James Wiley and left the farm to move to Blairstown. This effectively became Henry<sup>2</sup>'s farm at this point, although his father owned the farm into the early 1920s. Henry<sup>2</sup> was identified as the owner in a 1922 news article. Henry<sup>2</sup> married Lillian Armstrong in 1916, and Lillian moved onto the farm. The farm was in Lillian Gensicke's name on the 1930 plat map.

*Comment: Transferring land ownership into the wife's name was sometimes done to protect both the wife and the land from the husband's debts.*

**SUNNYDALE, WHERE THE GUERNSEY THRIVES IN BARN AS CLEAN AND SANITARY AS KITCHENS**

Sunnydale farm, two miles west on the Red Ball road is the home of grade A Guernsey milk. Henry Gensicke and family, owners, with one of the pure bred Guernseys, is shown in the picture.

Intelligent breeding and feeding account for the high production of the Sunnydale herd of Guernseys and businesslike attention to marketing is responsible for the success Gensicke has achieved in the dairy business.

**Milked Scrubs.**  
Five years ago Henry was milking a herd of common red cows. At that time he thought they were good cows but now he says he knows they were scrubs. He bought a pure bred Guernsey bull and heifer. With this modest start he built up his present herd which comprises ten pure bred cattle and fourteen high grade Guernseys that look and milk almost like purebreds.

A cow test association helped Gensicke to cull out the unprofitable cows and now some of his cows produce 300 pounds of butterfat in six months. With the yearly average for the state about 150 pounds it is easy to see how a pure bred Guernsey bull has improved his herd.

Sunnydale farm is equipped to handle grade A milk in first class shape. The milk is drawn with a milking machine and immediately removed to the spring house where it is cooled and handled in a sanitary way. The barn is so clean that the chickens do not go in it because they think it is a kitchen.

**Is Active Man.**  
With the labor saving devices on the farm Gensicke finds time for outside activities. He is president of the Linn County Guernsey Breeders' association, member of the Linn County Milk Producers' association and a member of the Linn County



Henry and Mrs. Gensicke of Sunnydale Farm. Hugo is helping his dad hold the Guernsey heifer. Bob used to claim the calf but it grew faster than he did so now he wants a "little" one to feed. Mr. and Mrs. Gensicke didn't know until now that this picture was to be used on the Farm Page.

Farm bureau. He is also studying to become a member of a fraternal lodge. He says he thinks a farmer should read The Gazette, some good agricultural magazine, and belong to some live organization.

This week Gensicke has given his time to organizing a pure bred Guernsey calf club. He says that if any one wants to start right in the dairy business they should get into this club. It will not be necessary for the club members to buy a bull because the breeders will let the club members use their herd bulls without charge. He has a good sized club organized and he says

that it is his aim to make Linn county noted as a Guernsey county. It is his contention that the Guernsey is the most popular breed of dairy cattle today but he says that any pure bred herd of any breed is more profitable than a common scrub herd.

The Sunnydale herd is tuberculin tested and is under federal supervision. Mrs. Gensicke acts as book-keeper and takes care of all the records and pedigrees. As is usual on all farms where purebred stock is kept, the entire family is interested in livestock and are partners in the business.

*Henry<sup>2</sup> and Lillian Gensicke's dairy operation, Cedar Rapids Gazette, August 31, 1922*

Henry<sup>2</sup> began focusing the farm as a dairy operation, and specifically focused on Guernsey cattle. Between the breed and his approach to raising cattle, he was routinely cited as having some of the most productive dairy cattle in the county.

Henry<sup>2</sup> and Lillian had five kids, all of whom were involved in the operations. Sons Robert and Hugo joined their father as H.F. Gensicke & Sons. Hugo was drafted into the Army in 1941. Robert remained at home during World War II and became the dairy operation's manager.

After graduating from herdsman courses at Iowa State College, Robert started Sunny Dale Dairy in 1938 when he was 21. He married Jesselyn Gumprecht in 1947. They soon moved into a house in town on Johnson Avenue, although he continued to manage the dairy. His father retired from farm work in 1949.

In early December 1955, a short in electrical wiring resulted in a fire that destroyed the dairy's small, one-story building used as its milk-bottling plant. The dairy barn and other buildings on the farm were untouched, but this apparently was enough to bring an end to Sunny Dale Dairy at a time when industry changes were making it harder for small dairy operations to complete.

In 1956, Robert was working as a realtor for Dishong & Clymer Realtors where he specialized in farm sales.



*Sunny Dale Farm milk bottle*

## Towboat Channel

Special to The Gazette.

McGREGOR—Two Mississippi river towboats passed McGregor Monday morning on their way south. One was towing eight barges, the other four.

The boats and their tows were traveling in a channel cut by a coast guard icebreaker as the river is frozen over. Some difficulty was experienced in opening the drawbridge at Marquette for the boats to pass through, also because of the ice.

## Fire Destroys Sunny Dale Dairy Building

Fire caused by a short in electrical wiring early Monday destroyed a small, one-story stone building used as a milk-bottling plant by the Sunny Dale dairy, two miles west of Cedar Rapids on E avenue.

Dairy Operator Robert Gensicke could not be reached Monday morning for an estimate of the extent of damage. However, the roof of the building was destroyed as were all or most of the contents.

The fire was discovered about

12:30 a.m. Monday. A fire truck from company No. 2 made a courtesy call to the out-of-city scene, but arrived too late to attempt to fight the blaze effectively, a fire captain said.

The milk house—a separate building from the farm's dairy barn—is on property of Henry Gensicke.

## \$10.08 Reported Taken At Breakin on Sunday

Detectives Monday were investigating a service station breakin of early Sunday in which \$10.08 in cash was taken.

Officers said entry was gained at Blin's service station, 5528 Center Point road NE, by breaking a grease house window, crawling through, and then breaking the glass in the office door. The money was taken from the cash register.

store hours 9:30 to 5:30



*Fire destroys Sunny Dale Dairy milk-bottling plant, Cedar Rapids Gazette, December 5, 1955*

Henry<sup>2</sup> and Lillian continued to live in their home on the farm, but after the fire, parts of the farm were sold off to become part of Cedar Hills, a new subdivision that Del Webb Construction began building in the area in 1956. Ninety acres of the farm were annexed into Cedar Rapids in 1959 to facilitate its inclusion in the Cedar Hills development.

Weather---  
Considerable cloudiness  
through Friday; low tonight  
23; high Friday 58.

# The Cedar Rapids Gazette

CITY FINAL  
5 CENTS

VOLUME 74—NUMBER 73

CEDAR RAPIDS, IOWA, THURSDAY, MARCH 22, 1956.

ASSOCIATED PRESS, UNITED PRESS, INTERNATIONAL NEWS

# 500-LOUSE PROJECT FOR C.R.

## Estes Foes Scan Dark Horse Field

### Stop-Kefauver Drive Is Hinted if Stevenson Fails To Rally.

By Raymond LaBr.

WASHINGTON (UP)—Anti-Kefauver Democrats began surveying the field of dark horses and favorite sons Thursday for a presidential candidate.

There was a feeling among these Democrats who dominate the party organization that Adlai Stevenson had suffered a serious

#### TALLY BY CANOE

MINNEAPOLIS (UP)—Rebuke from the Minnesota primary were still incomplete Thursday because some of them must be brought by caucus from north woods precincts.

Senator Kefauver has been assured of at least 25 of 30 two-fight convention votes.

and perhaps fatal defeat in Tuesday's presidential primary in Minnesota. He lost to the underdog, Senator Kefauver (Tenn.).

## Queen Asked: All This High Living Vital?

LONDON (AP)—The Daily Mirror let fly Thursday with something unusual in the British press—a sharp lecture to the royal family on economy.

The tabloid claims the world's biggest week-day circulation, more than four and one-half million. It calls itself independent, but generally favors the Labor party.

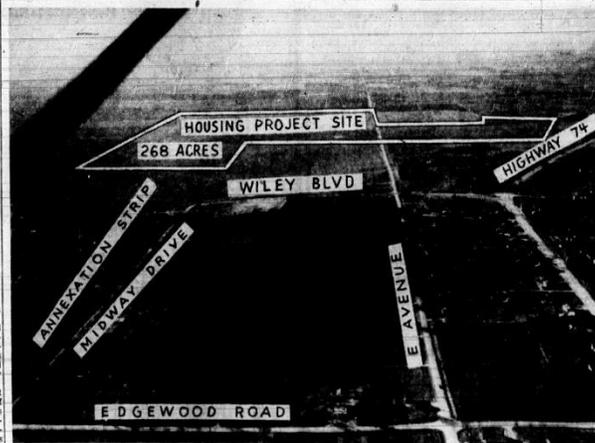
Mirror Columnist "Cassandra" said far too much money is going for royal sea, air and rail comfort at a time when the government is trying to cut inflationary spending. He said the outlay for royal transport is getting "ludicrously more expensive," and gave this list:

#### Royal Yacht.

1. "The royal yacht Britannia cost 2,300,000 pounds (\$6,160,000) to build. It has been renovated several times. The bill was 100,000 pounds (\$280,000). The Britannia needs over 2,500 pounds (\$7,000) a day to run and is used for less than a month a year by the royal family.

2. "There is a new move afoot to replace the four Vikings of the queen's flight—50,000 pounds (\$140,000) each—either by a Viscount of Viscounts at an expenditure of at least 400,000 pounds (\$1,120,000) each. A better idea is to buy a Britannia, which, although it would make for uniformity in names in the clouds and the waves, would cost 1,000,000 pounds (\$2,800,000).

3. "With regard to the touchdown and takeoff point in the royal lounge at London airport, the Duke of Edinburgh has personally protested that the comforts of the commandant's lounge are not good enough. The result more acceptable than Kefauver of this regal beef is that the VIP But they also were asking 'if not room at London, where to be built



**HOUSING PROJECT AREA**—This aerial view, looking west from Cedar Rapids' present city limits, shows the 268-acre area proposed Thursday as the site of a 500-unit, \$6-million housing development. It abuts territory slated for annexation by last fall's public vote. Johnson avenue and Hoover school lie just out of sight at left of this picture. The tract labeled "annexation strip" would be taken in before territory to the north and south through a petition procedure so the entire project can be part of Cedar Rapids proper. All 268 acres already lie within the Cedar Rapids school district. Sewer, water and street development work will start immediately upon plat approval, the developers said. The housing site, with space for an ultimate goal of 1,100 units, has been tentatively designated "Cedar Hills addition."

## Huge Potential Is Outlined by C.R. Officials

By Rena Wiley.

Cedar Rapids in five years: Possibly 10,000 new jobs... Population of perhaps 100,000... Utilities expanded into vital areas that promise rapid development... A potential of 12 more square miles to the city's boundaries... New houses galore...

The men who will build and equip a good share of these houses Wednesday night were given a first-hand report on how the city's anticipation stacks up at the moment.

More than 100 members of the Cedar Rapids Home Builders Association had the city's future possibilities spelled out for them by the city council and other city officials at a dinner-meeting at Elmeret Country club.

**Blue Chip Industries.** To the question "What will Cedar Rapids be like five years from now?" came these answers in a two-hour session:

City Attorney C. W. Garber reported a statement from other city officials that "three blue chip industries are concerned with the prospect of housing on or near the Milwaukee Land Company property east of Center Point road, north of Fifth street and south of the Milwaukee tracks in northeast Cedar Rapids."

If the plans materialize, "they would produce possibly 10,000 new jobs in the next three years. They would also bring a need for many more people to service them."

"So conservatively, we can count on a population growth of 20,000 to 50,000 from these three developments alone. Bear

## Northwest Side Area Is Chosen

### Developers Are Yankees' Owner Del Webb and Harold Becker.

By Art Heusinkveld.

Disclosure of plans for a \$5-million, 500-unit housing development on the northwest side Thursday gave another new push to Cedar Rapids' snowballing growth.

The proposal was announced as a joint project of the Del E. Webb Construction Company of Phoenix in association with H. M. Becker and Associates of Cedar Rapids.

It would cover 268 acres in an area earmarked for annexation beyond the present west city limits, north of Johnson avenue and divided by E avenue NW.

The tract contains room for an ultimate goal of 1,100 houses, spokesmen said. The first 500 units all reportedly would be built this year, starting in June.

Developers said the project is closely related to recent prospects for big, new but unannounced industrial expansion.

**Joint Announcement.** The subdivision news broke

Cedar Hills development is announced, Cedar Rapids Gazette, March 22, 1956



Aerial view of what was the 240-acre Gensicke farm in 1907 (approximate, red lines); the Gensicke house and farmstead buildings still stand in 2023 (red arrow); a park, a church and a number of suburban houses fill the rest of the land, Google Satellite, 2023

Henry<sup>2</sup> and Lillian moved to 1403 Ellis Blvd, although they continued to own what was left of Sunny Dale Farm. After celebrating their 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a family reunion at Sunny Dale Farm in early 1966, the Gensicke's apparently sold the remainder of the farm.

What survives of Sunny Dale Farm today stands at 6001 E Ave NW.



*Sunny Dale Farm, 1993*



Sunny Dale Farm, 1993



*Sunny Dale Farm, 2015*



*Sunny Dale Farm, 2010; the white fence surrounds land sold off after 1993*



*Sunny Dale Farm, 2010*



*The farm was covered with scattered granite stones when the Gensickes moved here; Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke located, blasted and collected the rock into piles. Some of these were used to construct and decorate buildings on the farm. Others were sold and used in projects around Cedar Rapids including a fountain built in Greene Square in 1910.*

Related news from the Cedar Rapids Gazette Archives:

- 1907-12-11: F.H. Gensicke sells 83-8 Section 27, w ½ n ½ ne ¼ to Joseph Shenka and his wife for \$4,550
- 1920-3-6: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell 83-8 Section 27, ne ¼ ne ¼ to Henry Usher for \$14,000.
- 1937-5-30: H.J. Cousins transferred 83-8 Section 26 nw ¼ to Henry<sup>2</sup> and Lillian Gensicke for a mortgage of \$10,000. This land is the 160 acres heart of Sunny Dale Farm. It was not clear from the article whether the Gensickes simply took out a new mortgage on the land, but Sunny Dale Dairy was started in 1938, so I suspect that this was to raise money to support the new business venture.

#### Research Notes

Both the family and the newspaper are inconsistent as to whether it was “Sunny Dale” or “Sunnydale”. I use “Sunny Dale” because it appears most often.





*The Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah Gensicke home from 1908 to 1917 on Fairfield Farm. When the Gensickes moved into their retirement residence, son Eldred continued to live here with his own family while he managed Fairfield Farm.*



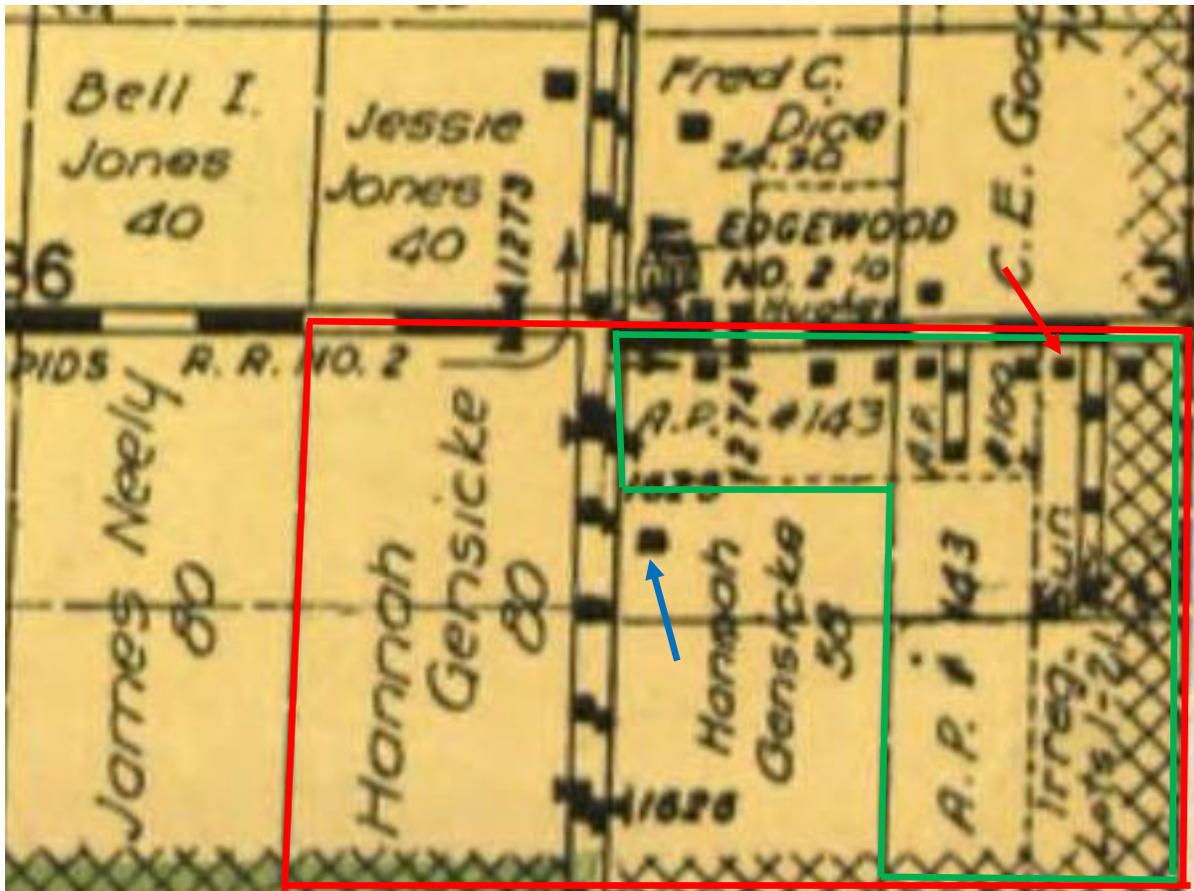
*Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke and his son Eldred plow a field at the Fairfield Farm, with the house, barns and outbuildings in the background, as seen looking southwesterly from near 23<sup>rd</sup> (Wilson) Avenue.*



*Everett Gensicke plows a field at Fairfield Farm with his team of horses, Goldie and Queen.*

As son Eldred reached the age where he could manage Fairfield Farm, Henry<sup>1</sup> retired from farming and focused more on real estate trading. He also began platting what would eventually be 100 acres of Fairfield Farm east of today's Edgewood Road into 46 lots, what he called Fairfield Gardens. This would reduce Fairfield Farm to 140 acres – 80 acres west of today's Edgewood Road and 60 acres east of the road. Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah built a retirement residence for themselves on one of the Fairfield Gardens lots, and moved into that house in 1917.

In late 1929, Henry<sup>1</sup> transferred ownership of Fairfield Farm east of today's Edgewood Road and a number of unsold Fairfield Gardens lots to wife Hannah. (The 1930 plat map and subsequent news articles suggest that he also transferred ownership of Fairfield Farm west of today's Edgewood Road to Hannah.) Henry<sup>1</sup> committed suicide a couple weeks later.



*The original Fairfield Farm included 240 acres (red line). By 1930, 100 acres had been platted into 46 lots called Fairfield Gardens (green line), leaving Fairfield Farm with 140 acres, now in Hannah Gensicke's name. The Gensickes' retirement residence was built on Fairfield Gardens lot 21 (red arrow). Son Eldred Gensicke and his family were living in the family home on Fairfield Farm (blue arrow). The road across the middle is today's Wilson Avenue. The road up the middle is today's Edgewood Road.*

Eldred apparently rented the 140-acre Fairfield Farm from his mother until he decided to retire from farming in 1935. After selling off his livestock, equipment and grain, he moved into town that year to work as a salesman, and then moved to California by 1937. In 1936, Hannah sold what had been the Bungler 80 to Wencil and Tillie Trachta, reducing the Gensicke-owned Fairfield Farm to just 60 acres.

# PUBLIC SALE

Having decided to quit farming, I will hold a closing out sale at my place of residence three miles southwest of Cedar Rapids, and six miles northeast of Fairfax, at 11 o'clock a.m.,

## Tues., Feb. 19th

—The following property—

**4 HEAD OF HORSES.**

**19 HIGH GRADE AND PURE BRED GUERNSEYS**—11 cows, 7 heifers, 1 yearling Guernsey bull.

**15 HEAD OF SHEEP.**

10 bred ewes to lamb soon—5 lambs.

**FULL LINE OF A-1 FARM MACHINERY AND SOME CORN AND SEED CORN.**

Lunch on Grounds—Usual Terms.

## E. W. GENSICKE

Tony Schmitz, Auctioneer.  
J. L. Krall, Fairfax State Savings Bank,  
Clerk.

*Eldred Gensicke quits farming, Cedar Rapids Gazette, February 17, 1935*

Hannah Gensicke to Wencil and Tillie Trachta, hus and wf with the full right of the surv of either of them to take the whole title and right of prop of both in fee simple and absolutely as joint tenants and not as tenants in common. WD pt E $\frac{1}{2}$  SE sec 36-83-8. \$1 and val con. 6-15-36.

*Hannah Gensicke sells the old Bunger 80 part of Fairfield Farm, Cedar Rapids Gazette, July 25, 1936*

Although the county threatened to sell Fairfield Farm a couple times during the Depression due to unpaid taxes, the remainder of Fairfield Farm remained in Gensicke hands until the family put it up for sale. At this point, the farm was advertised as having 90 acres. Twelve unsold Fairfield Gardens lots (lots 27-38) totaling 30 acres had been combined with the 60-acre farm resulting in a 90-acre farm. It appears that People Savings Bank ended up with the farm, however, as it was the bank that sold the farm in early 1939.

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;"><b>Farms, Acreages—Sale (F)</b></p> <p><b>GOOD 90-ACRE</b> farm adjoining city of Cedar Rapids on the southwest, on gravel road, half mile to two main paved highways, 40 rods to Edgewood No. 2 school, 9-room house with bath and electric light, Dairy barn stanchioned for 17 cows, 5,000 bushel crib with elevator, cement silo, chicken house, milk house, and double garage, machine shed, deep well. Land all tiled. Adjoins Fairfield Gardens, a highly improved acreage. H. F. Gensicke, Cedar Rapids, Route 1. Dial 3-2474.</p> | <p style="text-align: center;"><b>90-ACRE FARM IS<br/>SOLD FOR \$10,500</b></p> <p>Tait and Wagner, Cedar Rapids realtors, Friday reported the sale for the Peoples Savings bank of the 90-acre Gensicke farm southwest of Cedar Rapids to Frank Bellon of Fairfax for \$10,500 cash, approximately \$118 an acre.</p> <p>The Cedar Rapids real estate firm also has sold the unimproved Etta Z. Lefebure farm southeast of Fairfax to Charles C. Lefebure of Chicago for \$2,610, or \$90 an acre.</p> |
|---|---|

*The Gensickes put the remaining 90 acres of Fairfield Farm up for sale, Cedar Rapids Gazette, November 24, 1938 (left); Peoples Savings Bank sells the remaining 90 acres of Fairfield Farm, Cedar Rapids Gazette, February 3, 1939*

*Comment: At the time her husband transferred ownership of Fairfield Farm to Hannah, she owned the farm free and clear, and she would have benefited from the 1936 sale of part of the farm. So how did the bank end up selling the farm in 1939? Between taxes and general living and maintenance expenses for Fairfield Farm and the need to keep up with taxes and mortgage payments for two other farms that were part of her husband's estate, and I suspect that Hannah at some point borrowed against Fairfield Farm.*

In the 1970s, what had been the Bunger 80 became home to Westdale Mall. What had been the old Baerthel Farm now features restaurants and retail across Edgewood Road from the mall and a residential neighborhood centered on Van Buren Elementary School and Van Buren Park.



*Aerial view of the lands that were once part of Fairfield Farm (approximate boundary in red), Google Satellite, 2023*

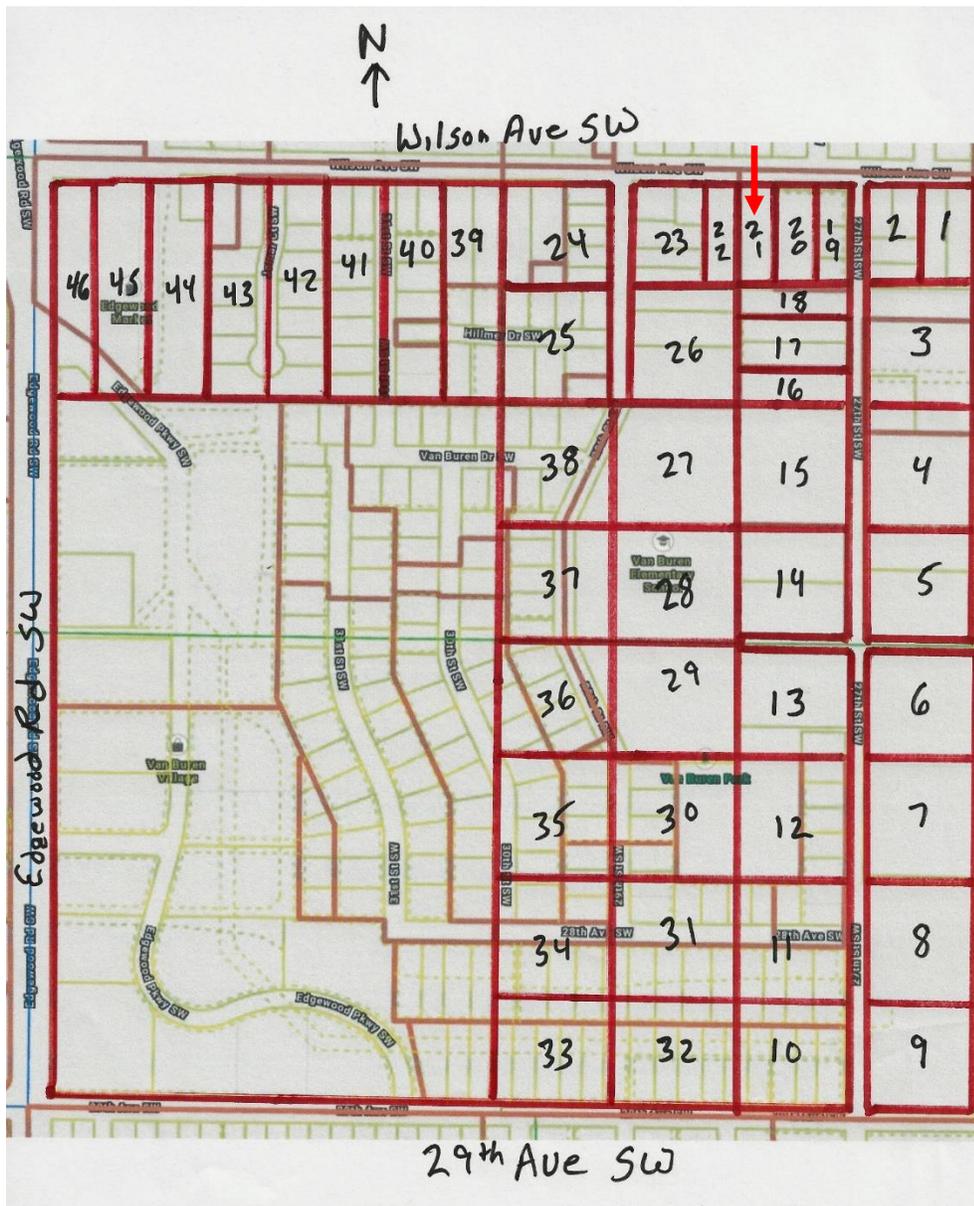
Related news from the Cedar Rapids Gazette Archives:

- 1903-07-02: F.H. Gensicke buys 83-8 Section 36, e  $\frac{1}{2}$  se  $\frac{1}{4}$ , a.k.a. the Bunger 80, from Eliza C. Hale Bunger for \$8,000, including a \$1,532.05 mortgage.
- 1903-11-07: F.H. Gensicke advertises the Bunger 80 for rent for the winter months.
- 1906-07-07: F.H. Gensicke advertises the Bunger 80 for rent.
- 1907-03-22: F.H. Gensicke buys 83-7 Section 31, sw  $\frac{1}{4}$  from Catharine Baerthel for \$20,480. The Bunger 80 and Baerthel Farm were then combined into a single farm, what the Gensickes called the Fairfield Farm.
- 1929-1-26: The taxes assessed on the 80 acres of Fairfield Farm west of today's Edgewood Road totaled \$63.81.
- 1929-1-26: The taxes assessed on the approximately 61 acres of Fairfield Farm east of today's Edgewood Road totaled \$51.81.

- 1929-12-3: F.H. Gensicke gifted to his wife Hannah the portion of Fairfield Farms east of today's Edgewood Road as part of a transaction that also included several Fairfield Gardens lots for \$1 and natural love and affection. This may have been done to protect Hannah from his debts, something that was litigated in Lacock vs. Gensicke in the 1930s.
- 1934-8-20: Hannah Gensicke sold less than three acres of the part of Fairfield Farm west of today's Edgewood Road to the Iowa State Highway Commission for \$850.
- 1934-12-22: The county threatened to sell the Fairfield Farm over \$418.59 in unpaid taxes.
- 1935-2-19: Eldred Gensicke decided to quit farming. He hosted a close-out auction at Fairfield Farm to sell his horses, cattle, sheep, farm machinery and some corn.
- 1936-6-15: Hannah Gensicke sells the part of Fairfield Farm west of today's Edgewood Road to Wencil and Tillie Trachta for \$1 and valuable consideration. This ended 33 years of Gensicke ownership of this land. In the 1970s, the Westdale Shopping Mall was developed primarily on this land.
- 1937-11-20: The county threatened to sell the remaining portion of Fairfield Farm (the part east of today's Edgewood Road) over \$72.73 in unpaid taxes.
- 1938-11-24: Henry<sup>2</sup> Gensicke placed an ad offering a 90-acre farm on today's Edgewood Road for sale. This included a 9-room house, dairy barn, corn crib, silo, chicken house, milk house, machine shed and double garage. The ad said that the farm adjoined Fairfield Gardens. This farm combined Hannah Gensicke's 60 acre share of Fairfield Farm and most of her unsold lots in Fairfield Gardens.
- 1939-2-3: Peoples Savings Bank sold what was described as the 90-acre Gensicke Farm to Frank Bellon for \$10,500. This was the part of Fairfield Farm that was east of today's Edgewood Road that Henry<sup>2</sup> Gensicke put up for sale a few months earlier. That it was the bank that sold the farm suggests that the Gensickes lost the farm to the bank.

### Fairfield Gardens and the Gensicke Retirement Residence

In 1915, Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke took 100 acres of the 160-acre quarter section of Fairfield Farm east of today's Edgewood Road and began platting it into 46 "garden farm" lots that ranged from about one to five (later two and one-half) acres each. He named this Fairfield Gardens. This left Fairfield Farm with about 140 acres, sixty in this quarter section and eighty on the west side of today's Edgewood Road. (Acres are approximate as some land was sold for road use.)



Fairfield Gardens lots boundaries (red) are imposed on a current plat map. Several of the original lots were combined and/or re-platted in the years since the Gensickes sold this land (boundary lines for lots 27-38 are educated guesses, but these lots added up to 30 acres). The Gensicke retirement residence was built on lot 21 (red arrow) where it still stands.

**Jackson Realty Company**

**Jackson Realty Co.**  
**FAIRFIELD GARDENS**

---

**Jackson Realty Company**

Located on Twenty-Third Avenue West.  
Less Than Ten Minutes Walk West of the  
Iowa City Interurban Railway.

**1 Acre to 5 Acre Gardens**

THESE LITTLE GARDENS WILL BE  
PLACED ON THE MARKET ON OR BE-  
FORE MAY 1ST.

You are too good a judge of SOIL, LOCA-  
TION AND LAND VALUES to buy before  
you look these over.

For Complete Information Ask Us.

**Jackson Realty Co.**

708 Security Bank Building. Tel. 2742

**Jackson Realty Co.**

*Advertising for Fairfield Garden lots was underway in early 1915 before they went on sale on May 1 of that year. Cedar Rapids Gazette, April 17, 1915*

Fairfield Gardens was heavily advertised through 1915, but apparently there were few sales. Advertising was pulled for much of 1916, returning late that year with a different realtor. As of January 1917, only four lots had been sold.

## **REAL ESTATE, FARMS AND GARDENS**

Advertisements in this column  
Only One Cent Per Word

### **FACTS ABOUT FAIRFIELD GARDENS.**

Fairfield farm, containing 252 acres, is the largest and best tract of black prairie soil around Cedar Rapids. Gardeners in this location, during past years, have produced and marketed more than \$600 worth of produce from a single acre.

This farm is located one-half mile west of the city limits on extension of 23rd ave. w. Less than three-fourths mile to interurban station; 5 cent fare to city.

#### **FORTY ACRES PLATTED.**

Forty acres of Fairfield farm is now platted into tracts of one to two and a half acres. Four of these tracts have been sold. You can buy your choice of unsold tracts on payment of twenty-five dollars down; easy payments for the balance. The price, \$360 to \$800 per acre, considering the **QUALITY** of the soil, location convenience to car line, school and market are the lowest of any choice tracts now offered for sale. These are undisputed facts. Call or phone Graham Realty Co., my authorized sales agent, who will furnish you plat, show you the land and furnish you full information free of charge. Special inducements will be made to buyers who wish to build this spring.

**F. H. GENSICKE,**  
Owner of Fairfield Farm.  
Phone White 2174.

*The easternmost 40 acres were initially platted into lots 1 through 21. Eventually, 100 acres were platted into 46 lots. Cedar Rapids Gazette, January 13, 1917*

In 1917, Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah Gensicke built their retirement home on lot 21, now 2721 Wilson Avenue SW.



*In 1917, the Gensickes built their “retirement residence” on 23<sup>rd</sup> Avenue, today’s Wilson Avenue, on lot 21 in Fairfield Gardens. The granite stones on the front of the house came from Sunny Dale Farm. Some Fairfield Farm land can be seen in the background. Although Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah Gensicke moved into the house on Bear Farm in the late 1920s, this house remained in the family into the 1930s. Hannah may have moved back here by 1932 as she was no longer shown as living with Everett on the Bear Farm.*



*Inside the Gensickes'  
23<sup>rd</sup> (Wilson) Avenue residence, 1918*



*The Gensicke retirement resident more recently, at 2721 Wilson Avenue SW.*

By the end of 1917, the Gensickes had sold 10 Fairfield Gardens lots, and theirs was one of two houses that had been built. Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke switched to a third realtor in 1923, but that was the last year Fairfield Gardens lots were advertised in the Cedar Rapids Gazette.

Some lots did sell over the rest of the decade, but by 1929 the Gensickes still owned 16 of the 46 lots, in addition to the one where their retirement residence stood.

In early December 1929, Henry<sup>1</sup> gave Hannah ownership of the 60 acres of Fairfield Farm in this quarter section along with lots 10, 11, and 27 to 38. It is possible that he did this to provide Hannah with assets that were protected from his debts, as he committed suicide less than two weeks later.

It took several years to settle his estate in no small part because of litigation over a real estate deal that Henry<sup>1</sup> had made less than two months before he died. In spite of threatened tax sales of some or all of these properties, Hannah held onto them until after the litigation was resolved.

The Hannah-owned farmland and undeveloped lots 27 to 38 were combined into a 90-acre farm and offered for sale in late 1938. But this may not have been done in time to avoid bank foreclosure on the land, as it was the Peoples Savings Bank that actually sold the farm in 1939.

Lots 10 and 11 were sold in 1939. As I have not found evidence that the Gensicke retirement residence was still in the family at this time, this sale apparently ended the Gensicke's ownership of lands that were once part of Fairfield Farm and Fairfield Gardens.

**H. F. Gensicke as admr with will annexed of the estate of Frederick H. Gensicke, deceased, to Mary Dedrick and John Dedrick, wife and husband, as joint tenants and not as tenants in common, admr's d, lots 10 and 11, irr sur sw sec 31-83-7, \$1,500. 7-13-39.**

*The F.H. Gensicke Estate sells the last of its Fairfield Gardens lots, Cedar Rapids Gazette, August 21, 1939*

In the years since then, much of the land in what was Fairfield Gardens has been re-platted into smaller properties and used to provide the land for Van Buren Elementary School and Van Buren Park.

The Gensicke retirement residence on lot 21 still stands, the last surviving visible evidence from when the Gensickes owned Fairfield Farm.

Related news from the Cedar Rapids Gazette Archives:

- 1917-1-13: During the winter of 1916-1917, Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke took 100 acres of the portion of Fairfield Farm east of today's Edgewood Road and platted them into 46 lots ranging from one to two and one-half acres. In the beginning of 1917, he began selling these as garden farms in Fairfield Gardens, with land selling for between \$360 and \$800 per acre. Over time, more of this portion of Fairfield Farm shifted into Fairfield Gardens and the Auditor's Plats 100 and 103, leaving the east portion of Fairfield Farm with about 60 acres more or less.
- 1917-01-13: Four lots in Fairfield Gardens have been sold.
- 1917-04-27: W. Bishop purchased lots 14 and 15 in Fairfield Gardens. Remaining lots are priced at \$600 to \$1,700 per lot.
- 1917-04-27: Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke announces plans to build a house this year on lot 21 in Fairfield Gardens. This would have been the Gensicke retirement residence, a.k.a. the Wilson Avenue house.

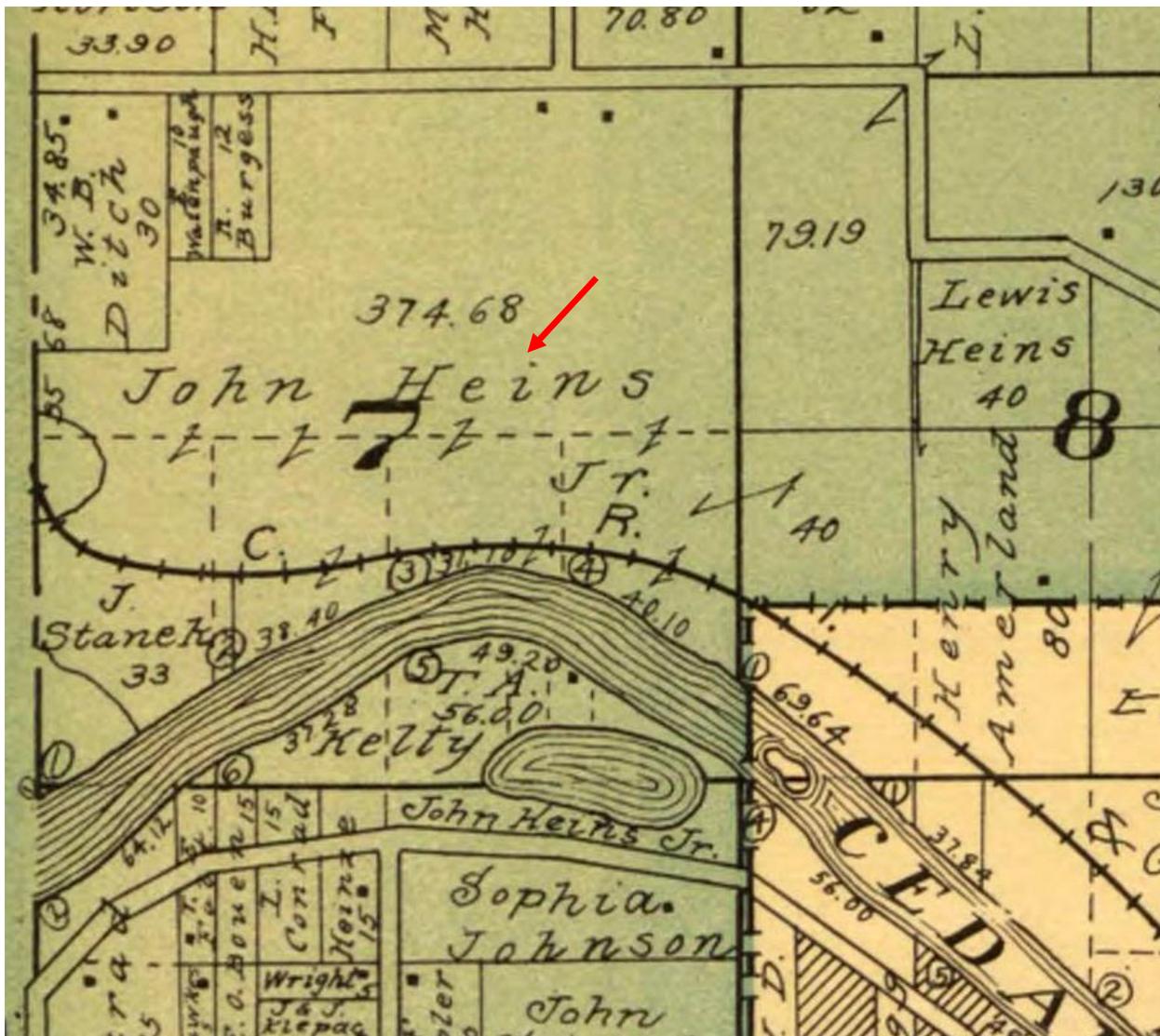
- 1917-12-24: Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah Gensicke sell 83-7 Section 31, lots 1 and 2, and n ½ of lot 3 irregularly surveyed in the sw ¼ of the section. (The Gensickes owned the sw quarter section of township 83-7.)
- 1918-02-28: 10 lots in Fairfield Gardens have been sold, and two homes have been built.
- 1919-6-2: Unsold lots at Fairfield Gardens are now priced at \$1,120 to \$1,875 per lot.
- 1919-9-17: Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah Gensicke sell Auditor's Plat 100, Lot 23 to C.S. Ogilvie for \$1 and valuable consideration. (Fairfield Gardens were eventually part of Auditor's Plat 100 and Auditor's Plat 143.)
- 1922-11-21: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell 83-7 ne ¼ sw ¼ Section 31, southern 250 feet of Lot 3 and all of Lot 4 to John and Mary Stechom for \$1 and valuable consideration.
- 1925-5-2: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell Auditor's Plat 143, Lot 40 to Hobson Kauffman for \$1 and valuable consideration.
- 1926-3-25: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell 83-7 Section 31, e ½ sw ¼ lots 12 and 13 to V.H. Payn for \$1 and valuable consideration.
- 1929-1-26: The taxes assessed on several undeveloped Fairfield Gardens lots totaled less than \$14, just \$0.77 to \$0.96 per lot. These lots included Lots 10, 11, 27, 28, 29 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 35, 36, 37 and 38.
- 1929-1-26: The taxes also assessed on more Fairfield Gardens lot, \$1.53 for the 2-acre Lot 44.
- 1929-9-30: Kingsley Construction Co. transferred the north 300 feet of lot 46 in Auditor's Plat 143 to F.H. Gensicke for \$1.
- 1929-12-3: F.H. Gensicke gifted to his wife Hannah several Fairfield Gardens lots for \$1 and natural love and affection. This included lots 10, 11 and 27 through 38. This was part of transaction that also included the portion of Fairfield Farms east of today's Edgewood Road. This may have been done to protect Hannah from his debts, something that was litigated in Lacock vs. Gensicke in the 1930s.
- 1931-11-28: The county threatened to sell the following Gensicke properties for \$7.62 in unpaid taxes: Fairfield Gardens lots 10 and 11.

- 1934-12-22: The county threatened to sell the following Gensicke properties for \$62.24 in unpaid taxes: Fairfield Gardens lots 27 through 38.
- 1937-11-20: The county threatened to sell the following Gensicke properties for \$42.50 in unpaid taxes: Fairfield Gardens lots 27 through 38.
- 1939-7-28: Henry<sup>2</sup> Gensicke as administrator of his father's estate sold Fairfield Gardens lots 10 and 11 to Mary and John Dedrick for \$1,500.

### John Heins Farm

A sizeable farm located where today's Edgewood Road bridge crosses a bend in the Cedar River was once owned by Lewis Hines and then by John Heins. It was often referred to as the Hines Farm or Heins Farm long after these men no longer owned the farm, although most commonly it was known as the John Heins Farm. This was the third farm that Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke acquired in Linn County.

John Heins died at the end of 1922. His son, John Heins, Jr., wasn't in farming. Rather, he sold radios in his store in downtown Cedar Rapids. John Heins' wife and son held a public sale in February 1923, offering livestock, corn, hay, farm equipment and all the household goods on the farm. They then put the farm up for sale.

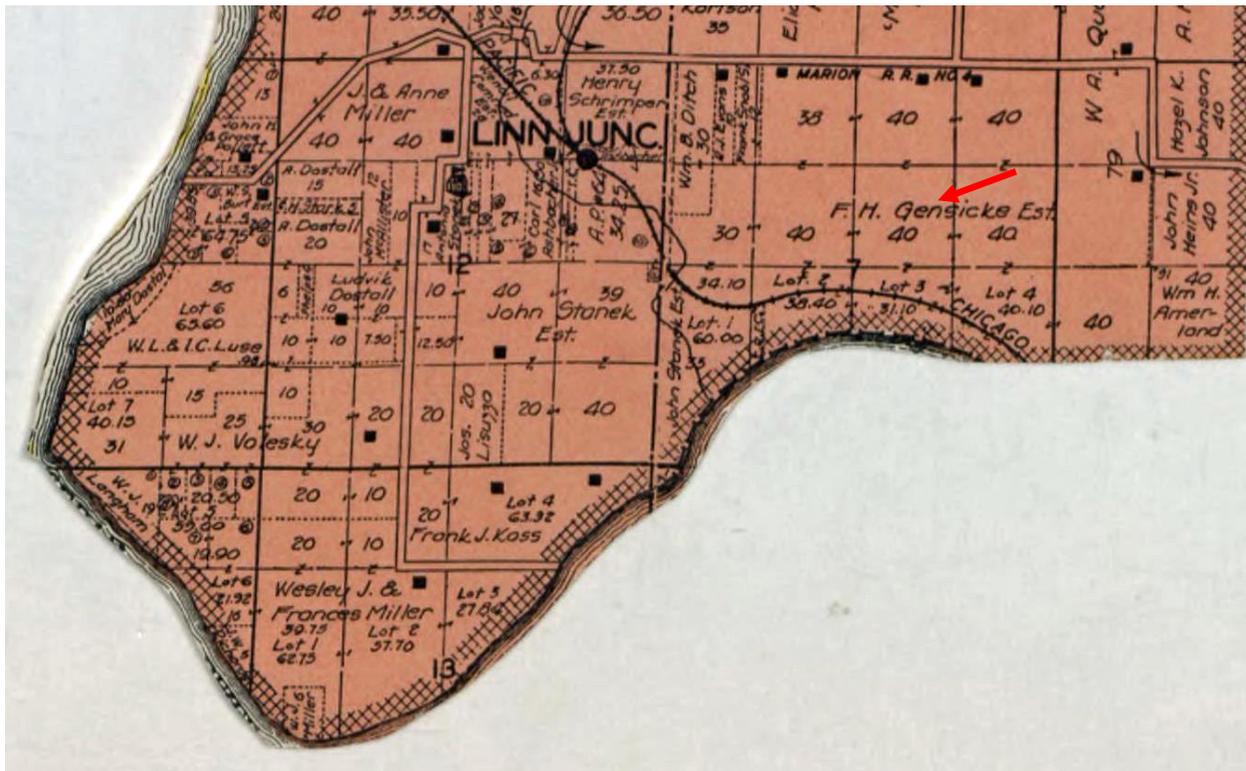


The John Heins Farm in 1921

In late February, the Gensickes sold five lots in Cedar Rapids to John Heins, Jr. Although the specifics of these transactions were not reported, it was about this same time that the Gensickes took possession of the John Heins Farm. I have not found anything that suggests that any Gensickes ever lived on this farm. Rather it appears that they rented out the farm during the years that they owned it.

Because of an error in a former deed, the Gensickes bought out Hazel Johnson's half-interest in 10 acres of the farm in 1927.

In 1928, the city of Cedar Rapids was considering building a set of boulevards to connect the city's major parks. Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke offered free to the city the right of way for a road 100 feet wide and 1 ½ miles long on the proposed route from Shaver Park to Ellis Park. This right of way would follow the railroad right of way that followed the Cedar River. In the end, the city did not take Henry<sup>1</sup> up on his offer.

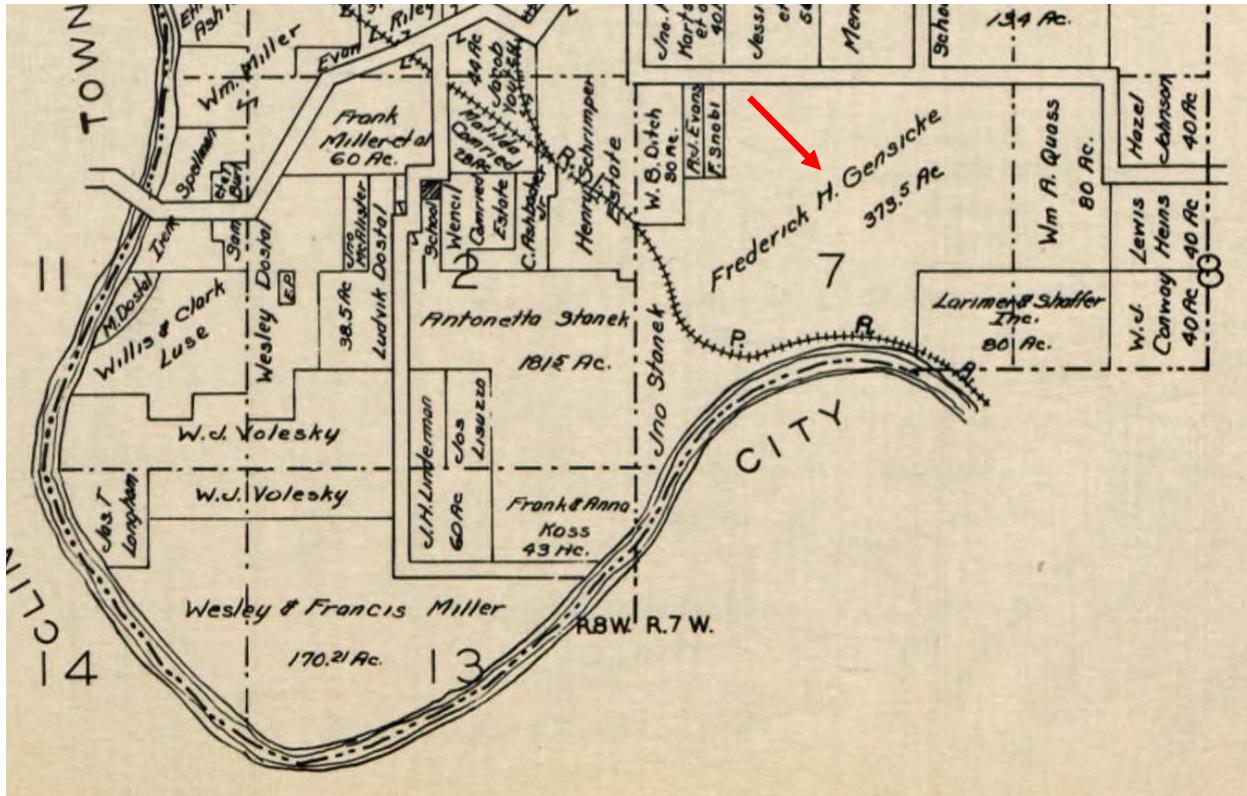


*The John Heins Farm in 1930. Traveling east along the road on the north side of this Gensicke farm, the part of the road where it says Marion RR No. 4 is today's 42<sup>nd</sup> Street. Then it turns south on today's Blue Jay Drive, and then heads east again on today's Glass Road.*

After Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke died in late 1929, the John Heins Farm became part of the F.H. Gensicke Estate. As administrators of their father's estate, in 1931 sons Henry<sup>2</sup> and Everett Gensicke sold

off about 80 acres at the southeast corner of the farm to Robert Larimer and Gustave Shaffer. Even with this sale, the John Heins Farm was a still-sizeable 356 acres.

The court ordered the sale of the farm in 1932, but the sale was delayed due to a hearing that Hannah Gensicke initiated, after which the sale did not happen. The estate finally put the farm up for sale in 1938. I have not found any information on when or how the farm was eventually sold, and nothing to suggest that the farm was lost to the bank.



The John Heins Farm in 1938

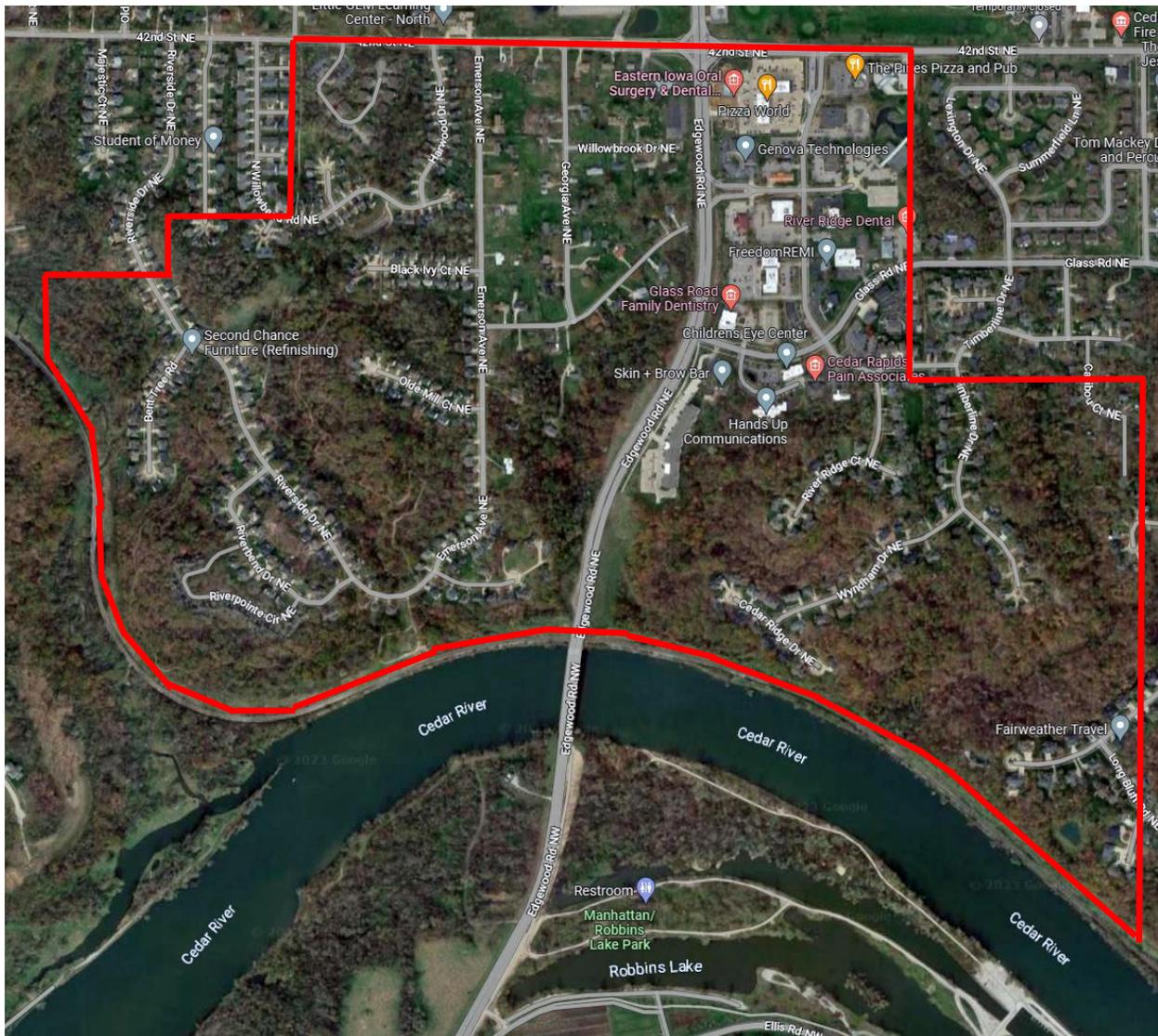
# FARM FOR SALE

To close an estate I am offering to sell the Heins Farm adjoining the City of Cedar Rapids on the north consisting of 356 acres more or less, located on the part gravel road leading to the city. This tract contains about 155 acres under cultivation, the balance in good young oak timber and blue grass pasture land. A full set of buildings with two houses and two springs are located on this farm which would make it a very good dairy or stock farm. Part of this farm can now be sold for \$100 per acre. If you take it at once the price for the entire farm is \$35 per acre.

If you are interested, telephone 3-2474 or address H. F. Gensicke, Administrator of the Frederick H. Gensicke Estate, Vinton Road NW, Cedar Rapids.

*The F.H. Gensicke Estate puts the John Heins Farm up for sale, Cedar Rapids Gazette, November 2, 1938*

*Comment: As this farm was part of Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke's estate, the proceeds of this sale would first have been used to pay off the mortgage, any debts and taxes owed on this farm. Any remaining proceeds would have been distributed according to the terms of his will, with one third going to Hannah and two thirds divided among their six children.*



*Aerial view of the boundaries of Gensicke-owned land that at various times was part of the John Heins Farm (approximate, red lines)*

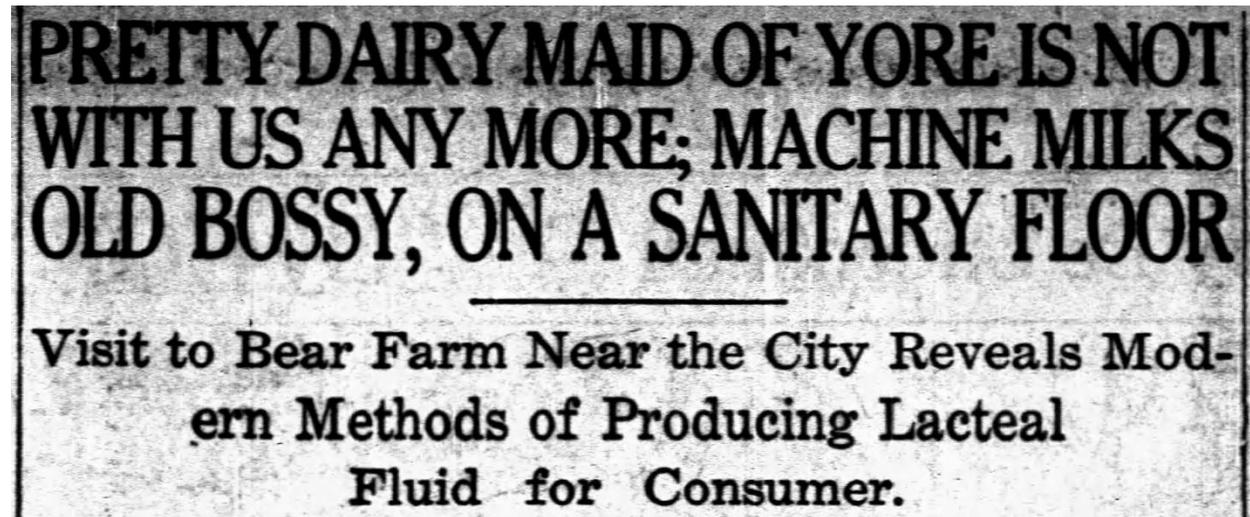
Related news from the Cedar Rapids Gazette Archives:

- 1922-12-31: John Heins, Sr. dies. His funeral was held on the Heins Farm three days later.
- 1923-2-23: John Heins' widow Elizabeth and son John Jr. hold a public sale, offering livestock, corn, hay, farm equipment and all household goods.
- 1923-9-22: J.C. Cunningham held a farm closing out sale on the John Heins farm, which he was apparently renting that year.

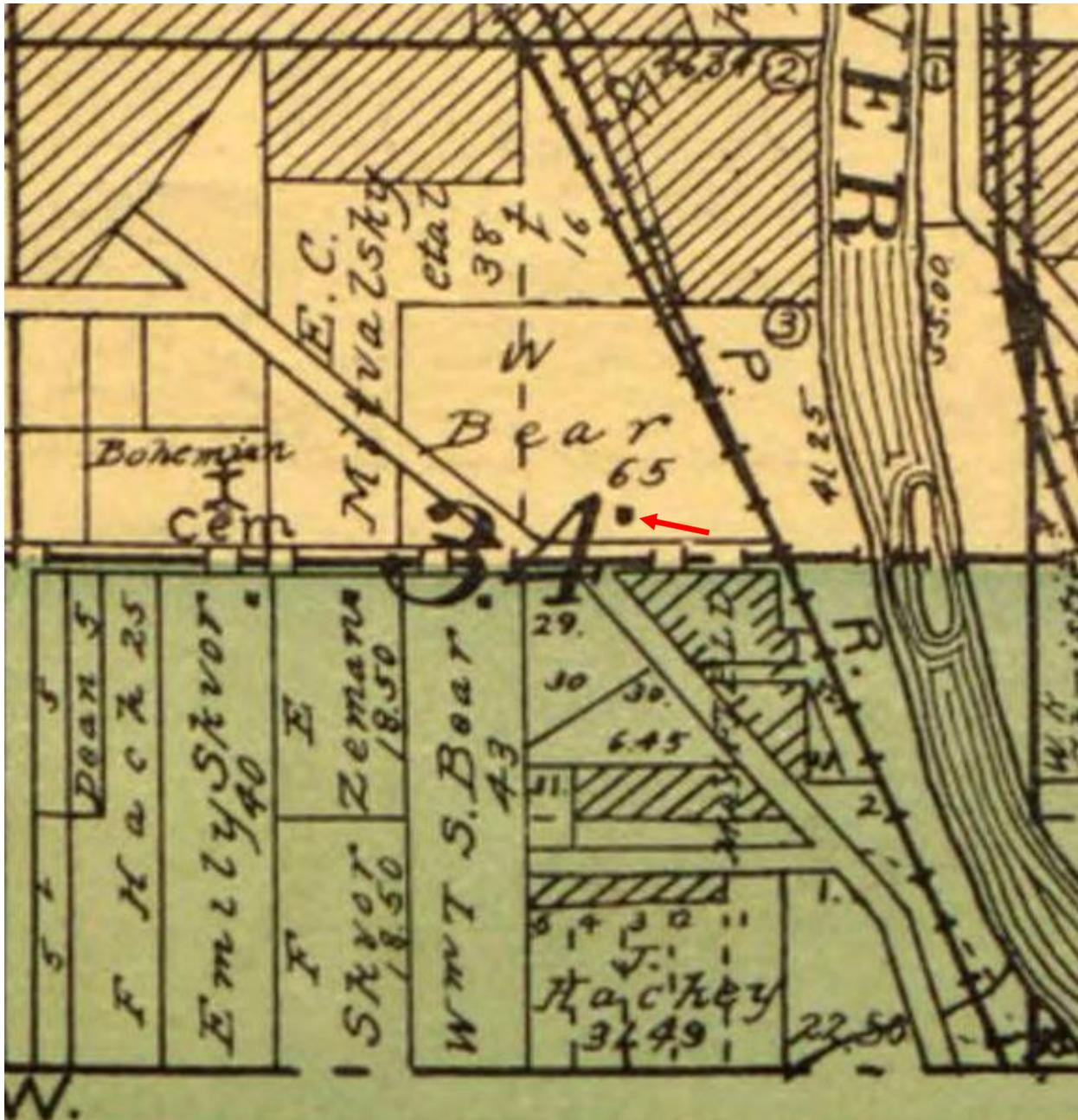
- 1927-2-16: Hazel Johnson sells her half interest in 83-7 Section 7, sw ¼ sw ¼ nw ¼ to F.H. Gensicke for \$1 and valuable considerations. This was done to correct a former deed.
- 1928-2-15: The city of Cedar Rapids had a proposal to create a set of boulevards that connected all the major parks in town. F.H. Gensicke offered free to the city right of way for a road 100 feet wide and 1 ½ miles long on the proposed route from Shaver Park to Ellis Park. The land lies along the Rock Island railroad right-of-way that follows the east side of the Cedar River in sections 7 and 8.
- 1929-2-21: H.K. Johnson and Charles and Frank Akers, dissolved their partnership, and auctioned off their cattle, hogs, sheep, hay, corn, oats and related items (although not farm machinery) for more than \$9,500. They had been renting part of the John Heins Farm from the Gensickes. Five days later, Harry Hindman held a public sale to close out his own operations on the portion of the farm that he was renting. Hindman was selling less livestock and crops, but his sale included a fair amount of farm equipment.
- 1931-6-15: Henry<sup>2</sup> and Everett Gensicke as administrators of their father's estate sell 83-7 Section 7 lot 4 and Section 8 lot 1 to Robert Larimer and Gustave Shaffer for \$1 and valuable consideration. This transaction covered the southeast 80 acres of the John Heins Farm.
- 1932-7-18: Henry<sup>2</sup> and Everett Gensicke as administrators of their father's estate published notice of a public auction of the 356-acre John Heins Farm scheduled for July 28. This was a court-ordered sale. The sale was put on hold when Hannah Gensicke went to court to ensure that she would be protected in the event that the sale did not raise enough money to cover the existing mortgage as the farm was not in her name.
- 1938-11-02: Henry<sup>2</sup> Gensicke as administrator of his father's estate put the 356-acre John Heins Farm in order to close out his father's estate.

## **Bear Farm**

William Bear's Bear Farm included about 62 acres that straddled C St SW on the north side of today's Wilson Avenue and another 43 acres that extended south of Wilson Avenue at its intersection with C Street. Here he established the Cedar Heights Dairy, well-known as a model dairy for its modern facilities and operations, including the introduction of milking machines.



*Headlines from a story about a Bear Farm open house, Cedar Rapids Gazette, June 26, 1915*



*The Bear Farm, 1921. The main house and dairy barn were located at the red arrow.*

In 1913, a windstorm blew down two new silos, and in 1916, fire destroyed most of the dairy operations buildings on the farm. But Bear rebuilt, and he continued his dairy operation until he sold the farm in 1923. The area south of today's Wilson Avenue was sold to an unknown party. Today, that part of the farm is now home to a small neighborhood along Fruitland Boulevard SW, just east of Jones Memorial Park.

The area that straddled C Street was sold to C.W. Biggs. Biggs turned around and sold his part of Bear Farm to George Barnoska, Sr. that same year. Barnoska held onto the farm for only a year

when he sold it to Home Realty Company, which proposed dividing it into residential lots. But in June 1926, Home Realty sold Bear Farm to Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke. Home Realty reportedly had purchased the farm in a deal worth \$60,000. It is not known what the total Gensicke deal was worth, but it included a mortgage of only \$4,000.

**DAIRY FARM  
FOR SALE**

---

**A Real Buy For Some One  
Location and Improve-  
ments the Best**

---

Having recently purchased the dairy farm formerly owned by William Bear, located on the Ely road, inside the city limits of Cedar Rapids, I will offer the same for sale as a whole or in part.

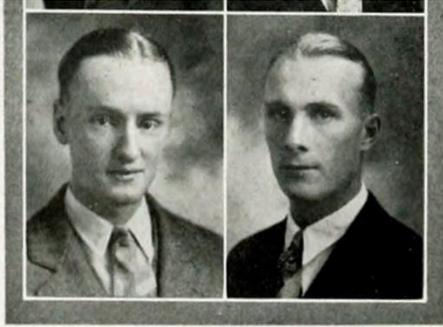
This farm contains 62 acres, admirably adapted for dairy purposes. The improvements are of the best and include one of the best dairy barns in the state, one that is second to none. The barn is 40x130 feet, with 18 foot posts and contains stall room for 75 head of cattle.

Any one interested write or see.

**C. W. Biggs**  
MARION, IOWA

*C.W. Biggs puts Bear Farm up for sale, Cedar Rapids Gazette, September 29, 1923*

Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah's son Everett graduated from Iowa State College in 1927 with a degree in dairy husbandry. With son Henry<sup>2</sup> managing Sunny Dale Farm and son Eldred managing Fairfield Farm, Everett took over management of the dairy operations at Bear Farm.



ALVIN BROOKS GEDDES  
*Calgary, Alberta*  
South Calgary High School  
ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING  
Tau Beta Pi; Pi Mu Epsilon.

EVERETT L. GENSICKE  
*Cedar Rapids, Iowa*  
Grant High School  
DAIRY HUSBANDRY  
Track '25; Cross Country '25,  
'26; Dairy Cattle Club; Ag. Club;  
Veishea Night Show '25, '26.

*Everett Gensicke's senior year Iowa State College yearbook entry*

Although the Gensickes continued to own the Gensicke retirement residence on today's Wilson Avenue into the 1930s, Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah moved onto Bear Farm with Everett. And it was here where Henry<sup>1</sup> committed suicide in December 1929.

Like the John Heins Farm, the Bear Farm became part of the F.H. Gensicke Estate. Some Bear Farm land was sold off, and was in the possession of "Home Ltr". The court ordered the sale of the remaining 35 acres in 1932, but the sale was delayed due to a hearing that Hannah Gensicke initiated, after which the sale did not happen. The estate finally sold its remaining portion of Bear Farm in 1938 to Franklin Bedell for \$7,250.

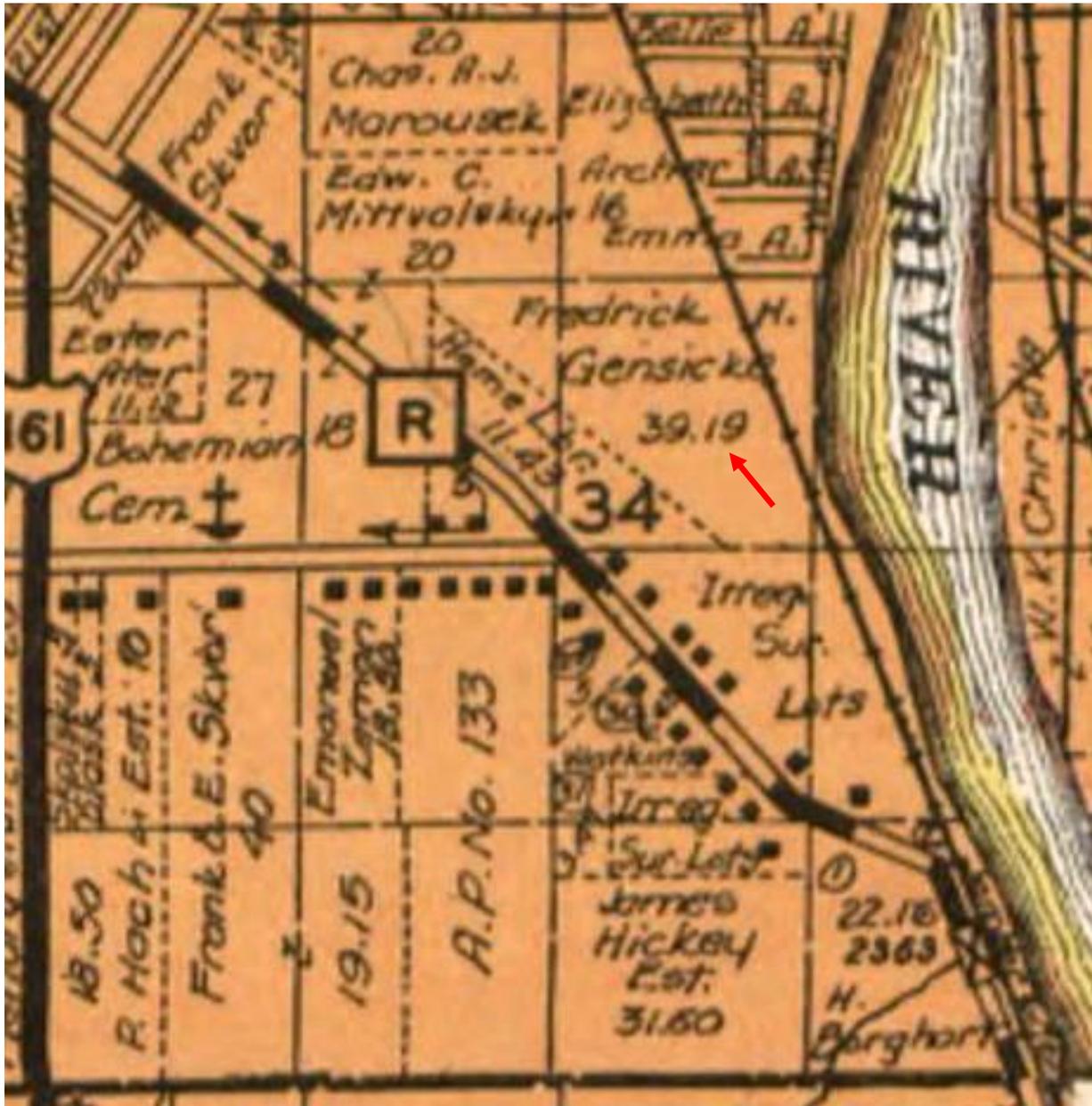
*Comment: Between this \$7,250 sale price and the Gensickes' \$4,000 mortgage in 1926, and I'm more than a little skeptical that Home Realty actually purchased Bear Farm in a \$60,000 deal in 1924.*

**35-Acre Farm In  
Cedar Rapids Is  
Sold For \$7,250**

H. F. Gensicke, administrator of the Frederick H. Gensicke estate, has been authorized by District Judge H. C. Ring to sell the Gensicke estate Beare farm at Ely road and C street SW in Cedar Rapids to L. Franklin Bedell, dairyman, for \$7,250. According to the description, the property includes approximately 35.50 acres less 2.36 acres deeded to the city of Cedar Rapids for street purposes.

*The F.H. Gensicke Estate sells the Bear Farm, Cedar Rapids Gazette, October 27, 1938*

Comment: As with the Heins farm, because this farm was part of Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke's estate, the proceeds of this sale would first have been used to pay off the mortgage, any debts and taxes owed on this farm. Any remaining proceeds would have been distributed according to the terms of his will, with one third going to Hannah and two thirds divided among their six children.



The Bear Farm was reduced to less than 40 acres before it was finally sold off.



*Aerial view of what were the two portions of Bear Farm (approximate, red lines); the Gensickes purchased the upper portion in 1926; the barn still stands in 2023 (red arrow); Tanager Place and housing fill the land today, Google Satellite, 2023*



*Bear Farm, late 1920s*



*The Bear Farm house. The barn would be off to the right.*



*The Bear Farm dairy barn had stall room for 75 head of cattle. As of 2023, this barn still stands and can be seen on the grounds of Tanager Place, 2309 C Street SW.*



*The Bear Farm barn was later the subject of "Tanager Place Barn", a painting by P. Buckley Moss*

Related news from the Cedar Rapids Gazette Archives:

- 1913-08-11: A windstorm blows down two new modern silos and about 25 trees on the Bear Farm, a modern dairy farm then owned by William Bear.

- 1916-08-11: Fire destroys most of the dairy operation buildings on the Bear Farm, including the main barn, two horse barns, two granaries, two silos and a hog pen. The fire also killed four of the farm's 50 head of cattle. Only the residence, the milk house and one outbuilding were saved, although the milk house was damaged. The fire started during the installation of a new mechanical dairy milking system.
- 1923-9-29: C.W. Biggs puts the Bear Farm up for sale. In the ad, he says that he recently purchased the farm from William Bear. He describes the farm as having 62 acres and a dairy barn capable of housing 75 head of cattle.
- 1923-10-2: C.W. Biggs sold the Bear Dairy Farm to George Barnoska, Sr.
- 1924-4-8: George Barnoska offers the city a ravine on the Bear Farm as a place to dump tin cans and other rubbish, as Barnoska wants to fill up that ravine.
- 1924-9-22: George Barnoska sells 62 ½ acres of Bear Farm located near the site of a proposed Woodrow Wilson Junior High School to the Home Realty Company, which plans to divide it into residential lots. Home Realty paid for this with cash and four new houses on Country Club Drive, with a combined value of \$60,000.
- 1926-6-2: Home Realty sells Gov Lot 3 and part of 83-7 Section 34, e ½ se ¼ nw ¼ to F.H. Gensicke for \$1 and valuable consideration including a \$4,000 mortgage. This is the Bear Farm that Home Realty bought in 1924. The Gensickes purchased the Bear Farm at about the same time that their son Everett graduated from Iowa State College with a degree in dairy husbandry. Everett would manage the Bear Farm for the next several years.
- 1928-2-15: F.H. Gensicke offers to give the city of Cedar Rapids 10 acres of the Bear Farm if the city buys another 25 acres at his price, where the price would be a little more per acre than the city paid for improvements on a 77-acre lot given to the city by someone else the previous fall. Gensicke says his lot is "something of much more value". The land includes the house and barn, but Gensicke would keep the contents of the barn, as well as the silo, poultry house and shed.
- 1928-11-26: City council members, several members of the zoning commission, offers of South Side civic clubs and others visited a handful of proposed sites for a new southside park. However, this team only briefly stopped at the Bear Farm for only a few minutes, giving it a "passing glance". Said C.T. Baugman, a city planning consultant brought in from St. Louis, the Gensicke lot would "seem to have little value as a park" because it has no streams and little timber, and the building (house) could not be adapted for park use.

- 1932-7-18: Henry<sup>2</sup> and Everett Gensicke as administrators of their father's estate published notice of a public auction of the now 35-acre Bear Farm scheduled for July 28. This was a court-ordered sale. The sale was put on hold when Hannah Gensicke went to court to ensure that she would be protected in the event that the sale did not raise enough money to cover the existing mortgage as the farm was not in her name.
- 1938-10-27: Henry<sup>2</sup> Gensicke as administrator of his father's estate sold what remained of the Bear Farm to Franklin Bedell, a dairyman, for \$7,250. This ended 12 years of Gensicke ownership of the Bear Farm. Today the land is home to Tanager Place, a children's human services agency.

## Town Lots

Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke bought and sold a number of lots in Cedar Rapids. The first took place while the Gensickes still lived in Benton County, but most of the known deals occurred after he retired from active farming. I have not come across anything that suggests that the Gensickes developed or rented out any of these properties.

- 1901-6-3: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell Hull's 4<sup>th</sup> Addition, Block 41, Lot 7 to F. Mach for \$1,600. (100 F Ave NW, middle of the block, now empty due to 2008 flood)
- 1917-4-30: Wesley Bishop and his wife sell Green & College Addition, Block 7, Lot 1 to F.H. Gensicke for \$1 and valuable consideration. (1327 C Ave NE, corner lot, now a parking lot)
- 1919-03-24: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell Green & College Addition, Block 7, Lot 1 to Allen McDonnell for \$1 and valuable consideration. (1327 C Ave NE, corner lot)
- 1922-10-19: John and Mary Stechom sell Bevers 1 Addition, Block 1 Lot 4 nw ½ to F.H. Gensicke for \$1 and valuable consideration. (615 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE, now site of the downtown post office)
- 1923-2-28: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell Anderson and Buchanan's Addition, Block 9, parts of Lot 1 and Lot 2 to John Heins, Jr. for \$1 and valuable consideration, including a \$1,800 mortgage. (2202 J St SW)
- 1923-2-28: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell Bevers 1 Addition, Block 1, Lot 4 nw ½ to John Heins, Jr. for \$1 and valuable consideration. (615 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE)
- 1923-2-28: F.H. and Hannah Gensicke sell College Park Addition, Block 1, Lot 1 and Lot 2 to John Heins, Jr. for \$1 and valuable consideration, including a \$1,600 mortgage. (now under I-380 just north of I Ave NE)
- 1925-4-21: F.H. Gensicke sells 83-7 Section 29, e ½ nw ¼ Lot 11 of the Mansfields Re-survey to the Cedar Rapids School District for \$15,000. (approx. site of Roosevelt School, 300 13<sup>th</sup> St NW)
- 1926-3-3: Emma Thomas and husband sell Mansfields 2 Addition, Block 17, Lot 7 ne 40 feet to F.H. Gensicke for \$1 and valuable consideration. (NE corner of 7<sup>th</sup> Ave SW and 3<sup>rd</sup> St SW, now empty due to 2008 flood)

- 1927-3-2: Jack Benzinger and his wife sell Bever Park 1 Addition, Block 12, e 20 feet of Lot 10 and the w 20 feet of Lot 11 to F.H. Gensicke for \$1 and valuable consideration, including a \$3,250 mortgage. (1434, 1436 Bever Ave SE)
- 1929-10-31: F.H. Gensicke and Virgil M. Lacock signed a contract for a land deal between the two men. Lacock agreed to deed 631 acres of land in Fallon County in eastern Montana to Gensicke; in exchange, Gensicke would deed two properties in northeast Cedar Rapids to Lacock and also pay Lacock \$3500. A year later, this deal became the basis of an eight-year legal battle between the estates of Gensicke and Lacock, who both died before fulfilling the terms of the contract. (NE Cedar Rapids properties are not known)
- 1934-5-18: After a judgment against the Gensickes, Henry<sup>2</sup> and Everett Gensicke as administrators of the F.H. Gensicke Estate and Hannah Gensicke transferred Park View Addition Block 2 Lot 29 to Perpetual Savings and Loan in consideration of canceling their note and mortgage on the property. (possibly actually Park View 2 Addition, lot 29, 3121 Ridgemore Dr SE)

### **The Gensicke-Lacock Land Deal and Subsequent Legal Action**

On October 31, 1929, F.H. Gensicke and Virgil M. Lacock signed a contract for a land deal between the two men. Lacock agreed to deed 631 acres of land in Fallon County in eastern Montana to Gensicke; in exchange, Gensicke would deed two properties in northeast Cedar Rapids to Lacock and also pay Lacock \$3500.

About a month later, Gensicke transferred ownership of Fairfield Farm into wife Hannah's name. Then on December 14, Gensicke killed himself.

At the time of his death, Gensicke had already deeded the two Cedar Rapids properties over to Lacock, but he had not paid Lacock the \$3500, so Lacock had not yet deeded the Montana land over to Gensicke.

In 1930, Lacock initiated legal action against the F.H. Gensicke Estate to get the \$3500. The case was scheduled for court on September 30, 1930, but on September 21, Lacock died of a stroke at age 49. His wife Lucy was the executor of his estate, and chose to continue the legal action.

The Gensicke Estate filed a counterclaim against the Lacock Estate. The Gensickes argued that F.H. Gensicke was mentally incompetent before October 1929 (likely as evidenced by his subsequent suicide), that Lacock had represented the value of the Montana land at \$10/acre, whereas it was worth only \$2/acre, and that the Montana land had never been deeded over to F.H. Gensicke. The Lacock Estate did recently offer to deed the Montana land over the Gensicke Estate, but that offer was refused. The Gensicke Estate asked that the \$3500 promissory note be set aside, and instead that the Lacock Estate pay \$5000 for the two town properties that had already been deeded over to Lacock.

The case went to court in December. It was especially tough for Hannah Gensicke, who became hysterical on the stand under cross-examination, resulting in a short recess. The jury deliberated for 90 minutes before deciding in favor of the Lacock Estate. Attorneys for the F.H. Gensicke Estate then announced plans to appeal the verdict.

Appeals apparently made it up to the Iowa State Supreme Court, but the Lacock Estate won those cases, too. By now, the courts had increased the original \$3500 claim to \$4,467. Unable to collect this from the F.H. Gensicke Estate, the Lacock Estate went to court in December 1934 seeking to undo the transfer of Fairfield Farm ownership to Hannah Gensicke. In July 1938, the district court dismissed the Lacock Estate action. This was the last published article I found about this case.

I have not found any evidence that the Gensickes ever paid the \$3,500 (or \$4,467) or that they ever received title to the Montana land.

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**RETURNS FROM  
INTERESTING TRIP**

County Clerk Walter F. Wilson returned Sunday from Cedar Rapids, Iowa, where he was called as witness in a civil suit. The case involved a \$3500 promissory note claim of the estate of V. M. Lacock against the estate of F. H. Gensicke, and a counter claim for \$5000 filed by the defendant estate.

The litigation was the outgrowth of a contract drawn between Lacock and Gensicke on October 31, 1929, whereby Lacock agreed to deed 631 acres of land in the western part of Fallon county, Section 31-8-55, in exchange for two properties in northeast Cedar Rapids and Gensicke's note for \$3500.

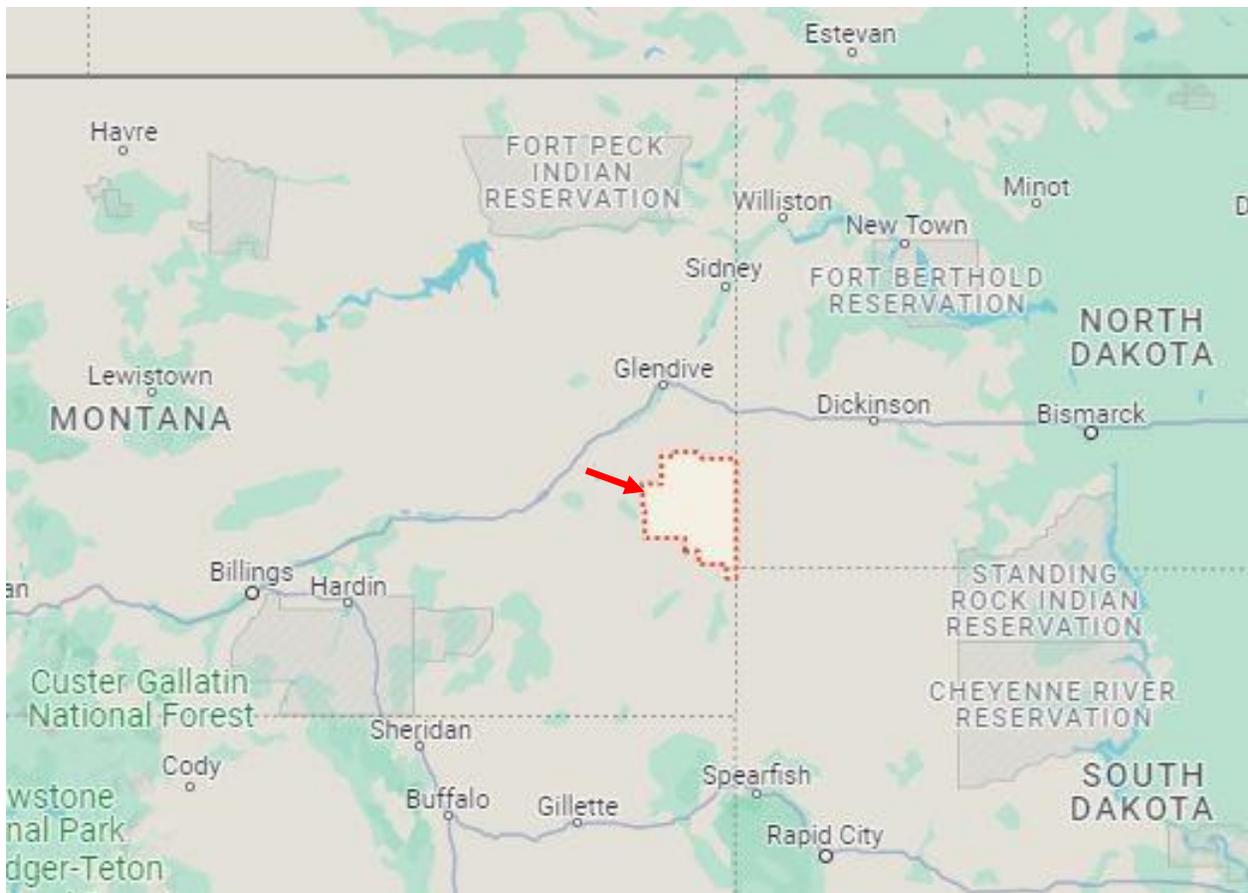
The case lasted five days and was decided for the plaintiff.

Mr. Wilson tells us that his trip was very interesting, as he met many people who have acquaintances in this part of Montana. The presiding judge, H. C. Ring and County Commissioner Gifford Bice of that city are old friends of T. A. FitzSimmons of Baker, and sent greeting to the latter.

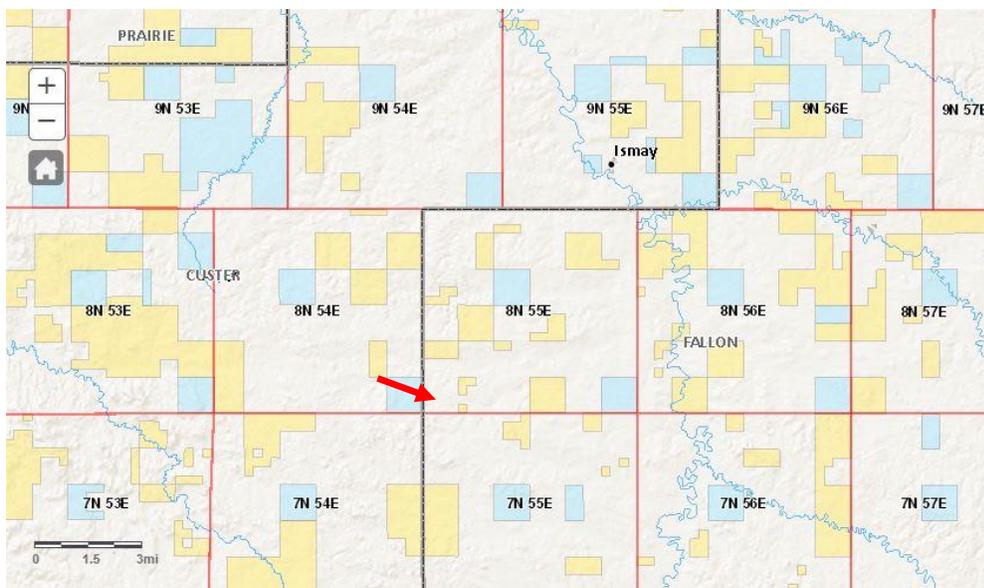
Mr. Wilson also visited with A. O. Ingram, former Fallon county resident, who was pleased to hear about the old folks and former friends from here. On his return Mr. Wilson stopped off in Minneapolis for a short visit with friends.

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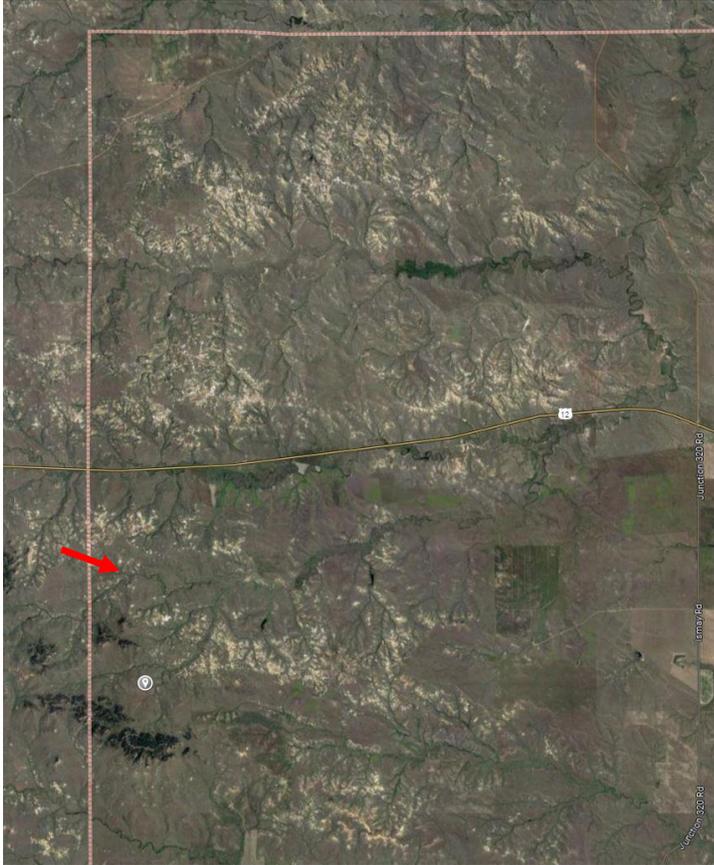
*A description of the land and an account of the trial in a Fallon County, Montana newspaper, Fallon County Times, December 18, 1930*



*Fallon County is in eastern Montana. The Montana land the Lacock had agreed to sell to Gensicke was located on the western boundary of the county.*



*The land basically included all of Section 31.*



*The land is 2-3 miles south of today's Highway US 12.*



*The view south from Highway US 12*

## Westdale Mall

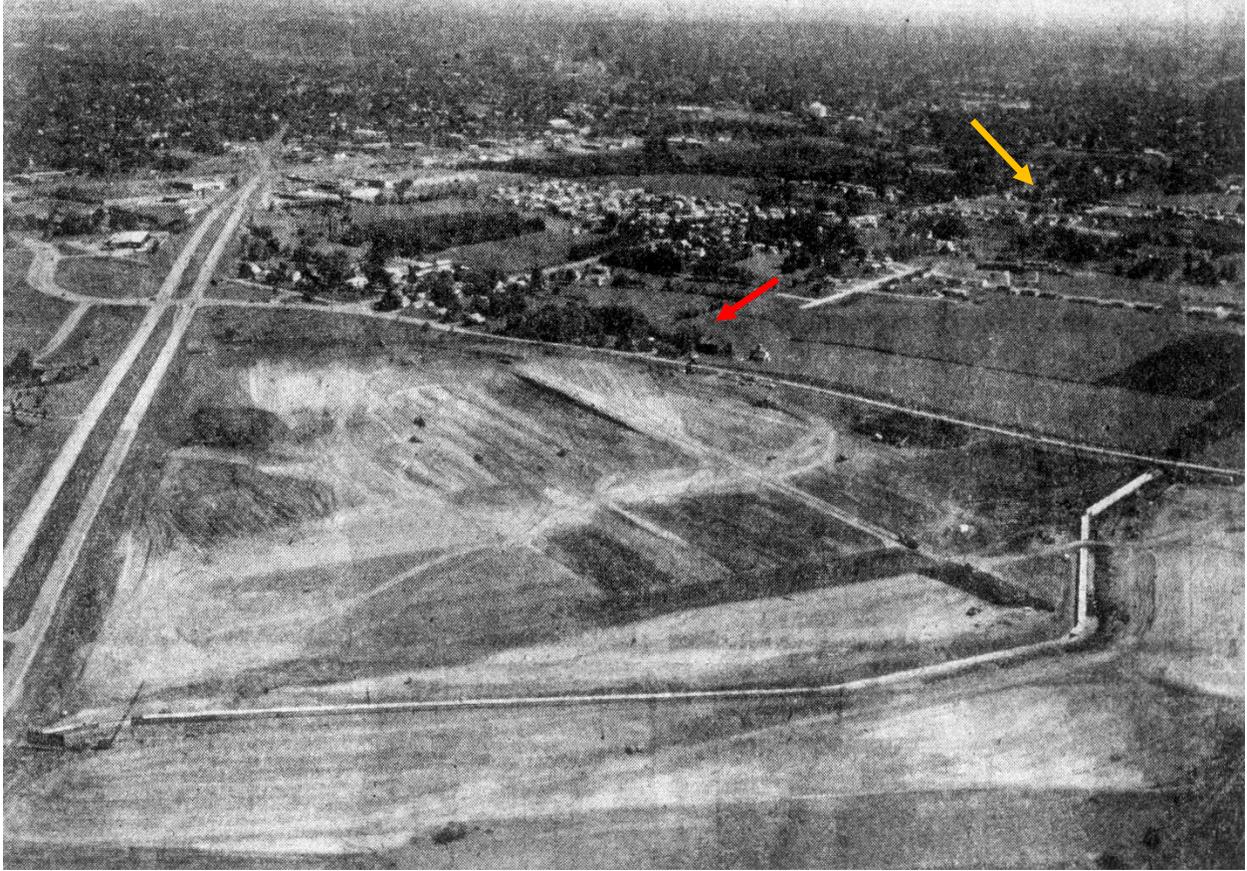
In 1972, the Midwest Development Company sought to have land southwest of the intersection of Highway 149 (Williams Boulevard) and Edgewood Road SW rezoned in order to construct a large shopping mall. After some planning and construction delays, Westdale Mall opened on the site in October 1979.

Eighty acres of this land was known as the Bunger 80 when Henry<sup>1</sup> Gensicke bought it in 1903. It became the portion of the Gensickes' Fairfield Farm that was west of today's Edgewood Road. The houses, barns and outbuildings that had survived from when the Gensickes lived here soon made way for the mall, parking lots and adjacent restaurants and retail.

The Cedar Rapids Gazette published a number of stories about progress on developing the mall, some of which were accompanied with aerial photos of the site. The two farms that were combined into Fairfield Farm each had a homestead with outbuildings. The Gensickes lived in the farmstead house on the east side of the road, across from what became the mall site. The photos show the final years of those homesteads.



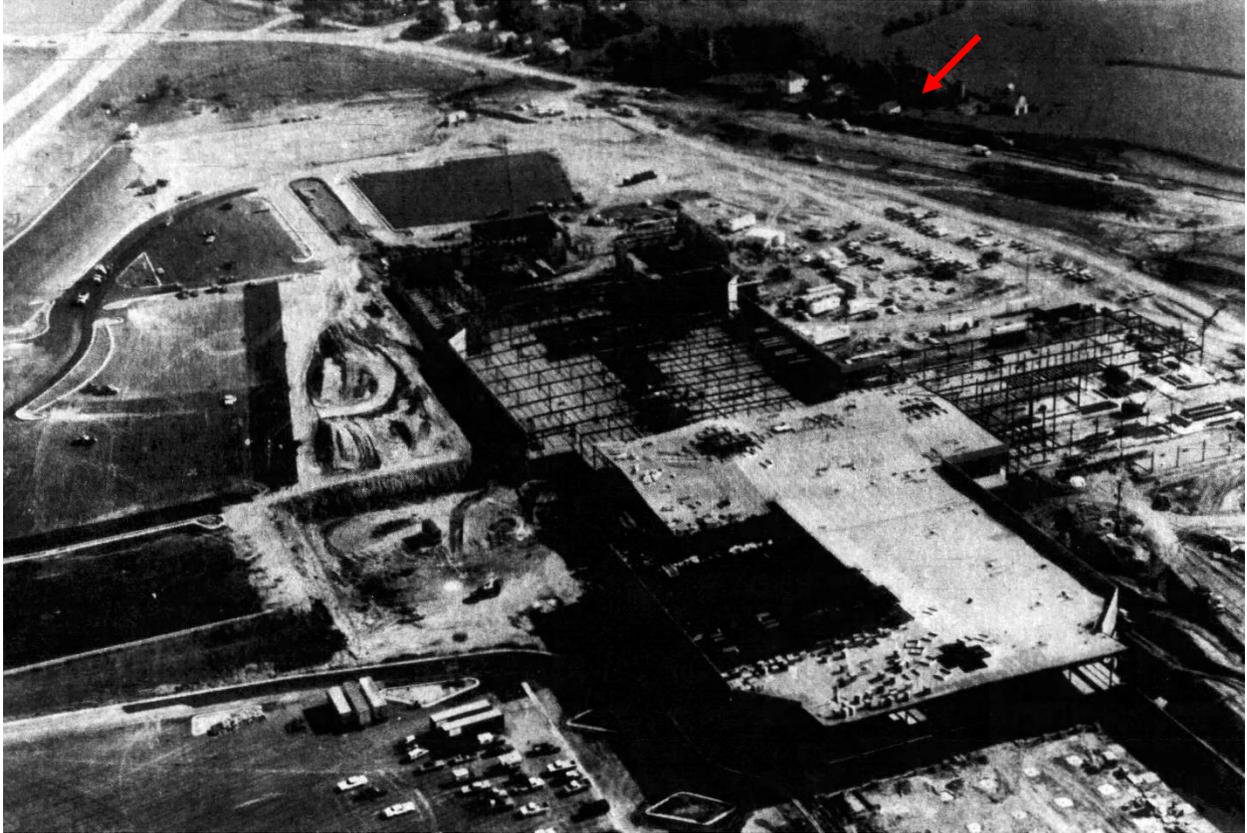
*The Gazette outlined the construction site on this map viewing it from the northeast. The green arrow shows the west homestead site, including what was probably left of the family's apple orchard. The red arrow shows the east homestead site where the Gensickes lived, first Henry<sup>1</sup> and Hannah Gensicke with their three youngest children and then son Eldred and his family after he took over management of Fairfield Farm. Cedar Rapids Gazette, November 28, 1974*



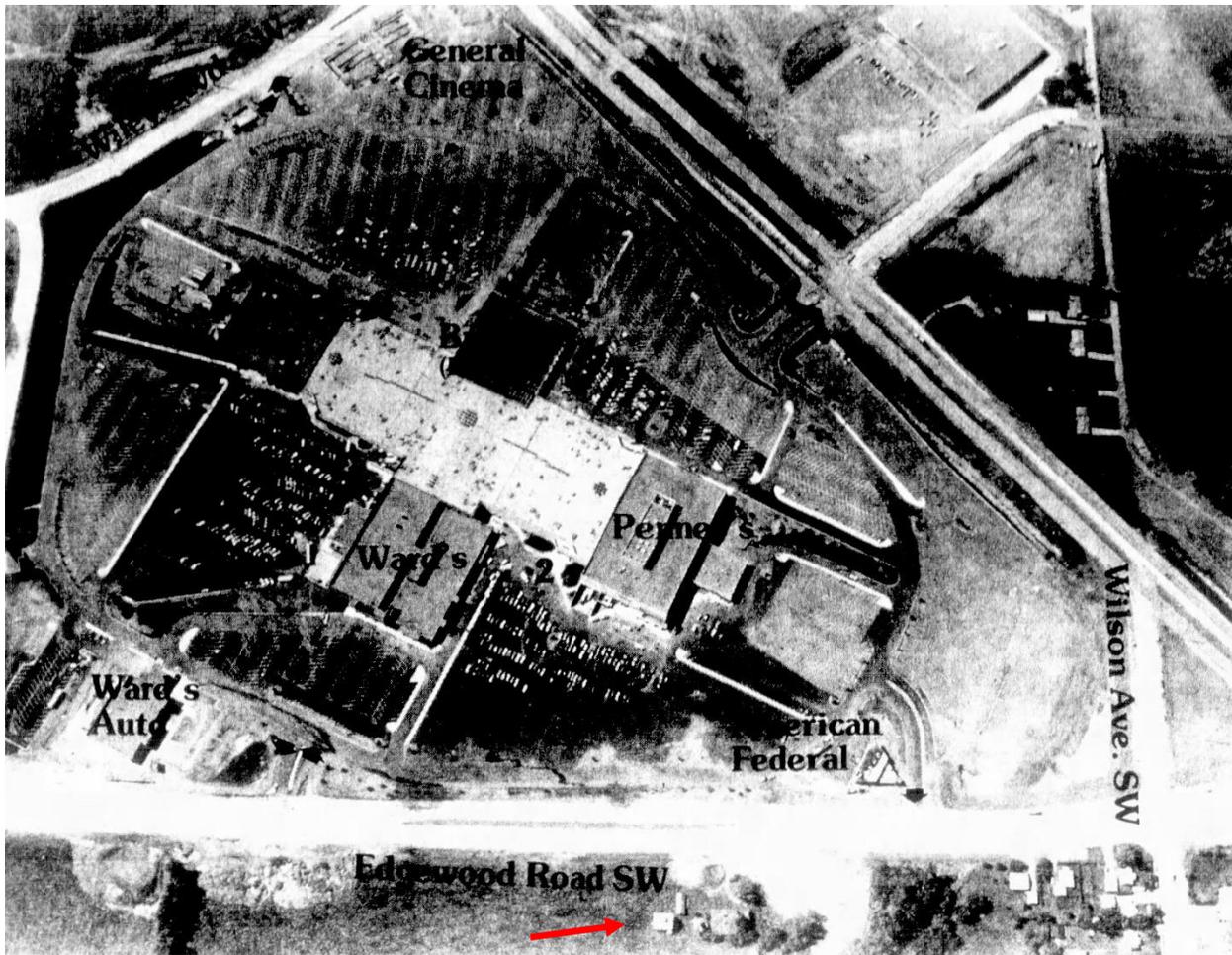
*Viewed from the southwest, the mall construction site has been cleared, but the east homestead site is generally still intact (red arrow). The orange arrow marks the approximate location where the Gensicke retirement residence was built on 23<sup>rd</sup> (Wilson) Avenue on land that was once part of the farm. Cedar Rapids Gazette, September 2, 1976*



*Viewed from the northeast, the mall begins to take shape across Edgewood Road from the east homestead site. Cedar Rapids Gazette, July 23, 1978*



*Viewed from the southwest, work on the mall progresses. Cedar Rapids Gazette, October 22, 1978*



*Viewed from above (north is to the right), Westdale Mall is just a few days away from opening. Part of the east homestead site still stands. Cedar Rapids Gazette, September 30, 1979 – Westdale Mall opened on October 4, 1979*

# Penney's Tells Plans For Westdale Store

J.C. Penney Co. Monday formally announced plans for construction of a new department store in Cedar Rapids' Westdale Mall.

R.L. Hillier, Penney district manager, said the merchandising firm has signed contracts with Ernest W. Hahn, Inc., of Hawthorne, Calif., developer of Westdale.

Penney's, like Montgomery Ward, has been rumored for several years as a possible tenant for Westdale, which is under construction on the city's far southwest side along highway 149.

Ward's confirmed its plans to locate a new store in Westdale earlier this month. The first major store announcement for the shopping center was made in February by J.L. Bran-

deis and Sons. A fourth major store is part of the Westdale plan.

Penney's store will be the largest of the three announced so far, a two-story, 155,000 square-foot building, which will be three times the size of its present downtown store.

Hillier said the new Penney outlet will be a full-line department store, and is expected to open in the spring of 1979 as part of the 950,000 square foot Westdale Mall. No decision has been made regarding the present Penney stores.

In addition to the main department store at 109 Second street SE, Penney's operates a patio shop in the old Iowa Electric office building.

Hillier said current employment

*Please Turn to Page 3.*

*J.C. Penney announces its plans for a store at Westdale Mall. According to Esther Gensicke Wasson who was raised on Fairfield Farm, the store sits where their apple orchard once stood. Cedar Rapids Gazette, August 22, 1977*



*View across Edgewood Road in 1993 of where the Gensickes' apple orchard once stood.*



*By June 1993, these were the only surviving farm structures from when the Gensickes lived here.*



*Where the heart of the Gensickes' Fairfield Farm once stood as seen in 2010*

Prepared by Mark David Wasson  
Last updated November 9, 2024