

*Utopia by Taxation:  
Frank Stephens and the Single Tax  
Community of Arden, Delaware*

Our business is now and for long will be, not so much attempting to produce definite art, as rather clearing the ground to give art its opportunity.

—WILLIAM MORRIS<sup>1</sup>

WHEN THE GREAT British designer, poet, and social activist William Morris wrote these words in 1891, little did he realize that his dreams for the transformation of society and a rebirth of art would find their greatest expression not in England but in America, in a small community called Arden. Founded in 1900 by Philadelphians Frank Stephens (1859–1935) and Will Price (1861–1916), Arden is perhaps this country's best-documented Arts and Crafts experiment, and certainly one of its most important. The community is located six miles north of Wilmington, Delaware, and, in spite of having been engulfed by suburban sprawl, survives today with its land plan, if not its founding principles, relatively intact. Frank Stephens described the community's guiding principles thus:

We were so disgusted with civilization that we decided then and there to go out into the open and start a new one in which the land theory of Henry George should provide the social basis for the industrial theory of Kropotkin, and the art theory of William Morris.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> William Morris, "The Socialist Ideal," in *The Collected Works of William Morris* (24 vols., London, New York [etc.], 1910–15), 23:254–64.

<sup>2</sup> Taken from a speech that Frank Stephens gave at the International Conference on the Taxation of Land, Oxford, England, 1923; transcript, Arden Archives and Museum (hereafter, AAM). An interesting point of comparison is Morris's oft-quoted statement: "Apart from the desire to produce beautiful things, the leading passion of my life has been and is hatred of modern civilization."

One can only imagine what Morris, "the idle singer of an empty day,"<sup>3</sup> would have thought of this fledgling utopian experiment. Peter Kropotkin he knew and respected. Following Kropotkin's arrival in England in 1886, Morris had on several occasions lectured with the noted Russian anarchist. He felt less kindly toward the American economist Henry George, referring to him in the British socialist paper the *Commonweal* as "a champion of a society of privilege" and an "enemy of socialism."<sup>4</sup> For Morris and many of the leading figures of the English Arts and Crafts movement, a socialist revolution seemed the only viable path toward the economic restructuring of society and the desired reintegration of art and labor. While Morris and his followers sought to destroy all vestiges of capitalism in the service of art, Arden's founders, Stephens and Price, embraced capitalism for the very same reasons. For them the answer to the "dull squalor of civilization"<sup>5</sup> lay not with the economics of socialism, but with Henry George and the single tax.

On Saturday, June 15, 1895, Frank Stephens and Will Price, along with eleven others, boarded the 3:30 P.M. train at Philadelphia's Broad Street Station to begin one of the most unusual political campaigns in Delaware history. Dressed in blue flannel shirts and ties, brown canvas leggings, light brown military style hats, and carrying knapsacks stuffed with literature, the group constituted the advance guard in what was to become a national crusade to secure the 1896 Delaware state election for the Single Tax Party (fig. 1).<sup>6</sup> At first on weekends, but gradually with more frequency, this small army hiked tirelessly from one county in the small state to another, holding rallies on street corners and in rented halls. Their enthusiasm must have been contagious. "If it wins," proclaimed one single tax campaigner, "it will mark the greatest turning point in the political, industrial and eco-

<sup>3</sup> Morris refers to himself as such in his poem "The Earthly Paradise" (1868-70).

<sup>4</sup> *Commonweal* (William Morris, editor), June 8, 1889.

<sup>5</sup> William Morris, *How I Became A Socialist* (London, 1894), as quoted by E. G. Thompson in *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary* (Stanford, Calif., 1955), 125.

<sup>6</sup> A verse that appeared in the single tax newspaper *Justice* of June 22, 1895, captures some of the spirit of the campaign:

We want the Earth—we want it all  
 We want the whole terrestrial ball  
 We are not shy—we have the call  
 Delaware! Our Delaware!



Fig. 1. Members of the Delaware single tax campaign, June 16, 1895, in commemoration of the first weekend of the "Delaware Invasion." From *Justice*, June 22, 1895. Frank Stephens is in the first row, center, with his son, Don, seated in front of him. This and all other illustrations in this article are from the collection of the Arden Archives and Museum.

conomic development of this country, perhaps of the civilized world."<sup>7</sup>

Popularized by the American economist Henry George in his book *Progress and Poverty* (1879), the single tax was so named because it represented an attempt to abolish all taxes save one on land value. George asked why a country of such bountiful resources and vast wealth should also have such debilitating poverty? And why, in spite of the great increase in productive power offered by the industrial revolution, did wages tend to fall toward subsistence level? The answer, the author reasoned, lay in a monopoly of land. Since land value was created by the community itself through improvements in infrastructure and services, the community, George argued, not the land speculators, should reap the profits. He proposed that a tax on land value instead of labor and improvements would

<sup>7</sup> *Justice*, Jan. 25, 1896.

lead to a more equitable distribution of wealth, giving more people access to the land and allowing them to keep the fruits of their labor.

Translated into a dozen languages and outselling any book previously written by an American author, *Progress and Poverty* polarized the late Victorian intelligentsia in America and abroad. In striking contrast to Morris's assessment of George, Clarence Darrow considered him "one of the real prophets of the world" and placed him in the rarified pantheon of "Moses, Jesus, and Goethe,"<sup>8</sup> while Leo Tolstoi proclaimed "the teachings of George . . . so clear and indisputable that it [*sic*] cannot but be recognized by mankind."<sup>9</sup> *Progress and Poverty* was widely debated in many of the progressive journals of the era. By the time of the Delaware campaign, most intellectuals probably had at least a cursory familiarity with George's ideas. While many progressive thinkers would affiliate themselves relatively quickly with either the socialist or communist parties, Arden's founders remained unwavering in their adherence to George and the single tax. For Stephens, in particular, *Progress and Poverty* would set his life's course for the next forty years.

George Frank Stephens (fig. 2), or Frank Stephens as he was known, was born in 1859 in Rahway, New Jersey. The son of the illustrator Henry Louis Stephens, Frank's childhood was, in his own words, "all books and daydreams and dread that all things worth doing in the world would have been accomplished by the time I was old enough to have a hand in any of them."<sup>10</sup> While the events of his early years are murky, we know that with his father's help he was enrolled in the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, where he studied for several years with Thomas Anshutz and Thomas Eakins, serving as Eakins's teaching assistant in 1880. The focus of his studies was sculpture, and during the early half of the decade he was employed in the studio of Alexander Milne Calder on two of Calder's most important commissions: the sculptures for Philadelphia's new City Hall and the monument to General George Meade in Fairmount Park.

During these years he also founded two decorative arts businesses: Stephens, Cooper and Company, a modeling business established in 1885

<sup>8</sup> George Geiger, *The Philosophy of Henry George* (New York, 1933), 463.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 459.

<sup>10</sup> Frank Stephens, "Autobiography," unpublished, p. 2, Arden Collection, Historical Society of Delaware (HSD).



Fig. 2. Frank Stephens with unidentified group, c. 1907.

with the landscape painter Colin Campbell Cooper, and Stephens, Armstrong and Conkling, an architectural terra-cotta business founded in 1886 with his brother Henry, Thomas Armstrong, and Ira Conkling. The latter firm in particular appears to have been highly successful, employing nearly one hundred workers by 1891, and producing decorative detailing for buildings nationwide, including the Waldorf Hotel in New York City and the Drexel Institute in Philadelphia.<sup>11</sup> It was through one of these businesses that he met his future partner in Arden, the architect Will Price.<sup>12</sup>

At the beginning of the 1880s, Frank Stephens's career seemed very promising indeed. In addition to his work for Calder, he received a number of prestigious commissions including a life-size bronze of brewmaster

<sup>11</sup> In 1891, Stephens, Armstrong and Conkling was one of only six architectural terra cotta businesses in the United States. *Philadelphia and Popular Philadelphians* (Philadelphia, 1891), 126.

<sup>12</sup> For a discussion of Price's life and work, see George E. Thomas, *William L. Price: Arts and Crafts to Modern Design* (New York, 2000).

Frederick Lauer (1884) that still stands in Reading's City Park,<sup>13</sup> and "several figures for bronze war monuments,"<sup>14</sup> which have not yet been located. Highly regarded in Philadelphia art circles, Stephens was active in many local and national arts organizations. He joined the Philadelphia Sketch Club in 1881, was a founding member of the Art Club of Philadelphia, and a founding member and the first president of the Academy Art Club. When in 1884 he married Thomas Eakins's youngest sister, Caroline, known as Caddy, his position among Philadelphia's art elite seemed all but assured.

By the end of the decade, however, the promise of these early years had begun to unravel. To place these events in context it is important to realize just how profoundly Stephens was affected by his contact with the writings of Henry George. According to a draft for an unpublished autobiography, Stephens first read *Progress and Poverty* in 1886 during George's highly publicized and nearly successful campaign for the New York mayoralty. He claims to have finished the book in one sitting, calling the final chapter "the highest flight of religious thought in literature." It gave him the knowledge that "there was a purpose in living, a work worth doing that should exceed the utmost of my childhood dreams and hopes."<sup>15</sup> For better or worse, it also planted the first seeds of doubt in his mind that perhaps sculpture was not to be his life's work. As he would write later, "When I discovered that it really was a possibility to abolish poverty and all the ugliness and suffering that comes with it, then everything else in my life seemed unimportant—what is other beauty compared with that created by right conditions?"<sup>16</sup>

The 1880s must have been a tumultuous time for Stephens. Judging from exhibition records, many of his greatest artistic achievements occurred during these years, but at the same time there were strong philosophical undercurrents working to undermine that path to success. Not all of these can be attributed to his exposure to Henry George, however. Stephens's lecture brochure for 1909–10 stated:

An ever-increasing interest in the relation of his art to the world about him, and in the social and economic problems belonging to it, led him to turn from the

<sup>13</sup> Located and identified by the author in 1996.

<sup>14</sup> Stephens, "Autobiography," 5.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>16</sup> "Well Known Personalities, Frank Stephens," unpublished biographical sketch by an unknown author, date unknown, Arden Collection, HSD.

practice of Sculpture, first to study the causes which in our day so commercialize and deaden it, and then to lecture upon the relation of Art to Social Life, along the lines followed by John Ruskin and William Morris.<sup>17</sup>

Stephens alludes to this briefly in an undated transcript of a lecture given to students at the Pennsylvania Academy when he writes, "I decided that it wasn't my figures only, but the times [that] were out of joint. No need to detail to you by what unhappiness I came to recognize that clay is not my medium, nor sculpture my work—it was tragic, but probably not so much so as those of you who still believe art is your medium of expression and go on talking in an unknown tongue to an uninterested audience."<sup>18</sup> Although we may never know with certainty what precipitated this "tragic" realization, the statement nonetheless adds considerably to our understanding of his shift from art to social activism during the next decade.

One reason for the change in direction may have been the terrible poverty that Stephens and his wife endured during their brief and tragic marriage. After years of great hardship for the young couple, Stephens, Cooper and Company was just beginning to become profitable in 1889 when Caroline died of typhoid shortly after the birth of their third child. In despair at his loss, Stephens turned to the author whose work had been such an inspiration to him a few years earlier. Traveling to New York, he found Henry George working in the offices of the single tax newspaper the *Standard*.<sup>19</sup> For Stephens the encounter was an auspicious one. George was compassionate, and after listening to his story, counseled Stephens to return to Philadelphia and work for the land reform movement, which he did, quickly aligning himself with a group of prominent single taxers in that city.

Inspired by the success of Henry George's New York mayoral campaign, and the reception that *Progress and Poverty* was receiving, Henry George clubs, or single tax clubs as they came to be known, were springing up all over the country. The Philadelphia branch, founded in 1886 by Arthur Stephenson, seems to have been particularly active, concerning itself not only with the single tax, but also with the fight for a shorter workday, prison reform, women's suffrage, free speech, and the abolition of child labor.

<sup>17</sup> Frank Stephens, Lecture Brochure, 1909–10, Archives, Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts.

<sup>18</sup> Arden collection, HSD.

<sup>19</sup> Not surprisingly, Stephens later wrote for the *Standard*. See, for example, the Oct. 15, 1890, issue which contains an early poem of Stephens's called "The Protected Workingman." Author's collection.

Stephens sympathized with all of these causes, but, aside from his single tax work, directed most of his energy to the battle over free speech. The right to free speech and free assembly was a cause championed not only by single taxers but anarchists as well, and according to his autobiography, Stephens was interested in the writings of the anarchist Benjamin Tucker during these years. Tucker, America's chief exponent of individualist anarchism, published the influential anarchist newspaper *Liberty* (subtitled "Not the Daughter but the Mother of Order") from 1881 to 1908. *Liberty* was arguably the most important of the turn-of-the-century, English-language, anarchist periodicals, and Stephens was a frequent contributor throughout the 1890s. He was also a charter subscriber,<sup>20</sup> and because the debate over the single tax was covered quite exhaustively within its pages, it may have been through *Liberty* that he first encountered the ideas of Henry George.

As a result of the Chicago Haymarket bombing in 1886 and the assassination of President McKinley by Leon Czolgosz in 1901, anarchism became associated with violence in the minds of the public at the turn of the century. In Tucker's journal, however, anarchism was identified with liberty. For anarchists, all forms of government, no matter how beneficent or democratic in their design, ultimately become restrictive. The ideal society therefore is one based on mutual cooperation. Emma Goldman, the anarchist best known to Americans, spoke for many when she defined anarchism as "the philosophy of a new social order based on liberty unrestricted by man made laws."<sup>21</sup> When Goldman was prevented from speaking at several locations in Philadelphia, Stephens invited her to address the Philadelphia Single Tax Society. He often lectured with her<sup>22</sup> and published in her journal *Mother Earth* with several other Arden radicals, including George Brown, Mary Hansen, and Upton Sinclair.

Throughout much of the 1890s, speakers often blended rhetorics of anarchism and the single tax, an overlap that is well illustrated by comparing Emma Goldman's definition of anarchism with Henry George's reflections on the use of the term "single tax." George was never totally comfortable with the term because it tended to obscure the fact that his ideas were less about fiscal reform than social reform. When asked to comment on its

<sup>20</sup> I am indebted to Bob Helms of *Guinea Pig Zero* for bringing this to my attention.

<sup>21</sup> Emma Goldman, *Mother Earth*, July 1912, 155.

<sup>22</sup> For Emma Goldman's speech at the Philadelphia Single Tax Society, see *Justice*, April 1901.



suitability, George replied: "Our proper name, if it would not seem too high flown, would be "freedom men," or "liberty men," or "natural order men," for it is on establishing liberty, on removing restrictions, on giving natural order full play, and not on any mere fiscal change that we base our hopes of social reconstruction. We want as few taxes as possible, as little restraint as is conformable to that perfect law of liberty which will allow each individual to do what he pleases without infringement of equal rights of others."<sup>23</sup> For Stephens, it appears the distinctions between the two philosophies were often blurred as well, for, in an 1895 lecture in support of free speech, he noted that "the single tax is only a means to an end, and that end is individual freedom."<sup>24</sup>

As Frank Stephens and Will Price headed toward Delaware with the other members of the Philadelphia Single Tax Society in 1896, it is clear that they were interested in more than just tax reform. From the beginning, the campaign was controversial. Only five months before, the National Executive Committee of the Single Tax League had declared that energy should be directed toward education rather than political action, and many felt that political action would only weaken their cause. Others, however, were impatient to put their ideas to the test. In Delaware, considerable lobbying had been done by the single taxers Howard Sudell and John Walls, and by all accounts the legislature seemed favorably inclined toward investigating a system of land value taxation. There were other reasons that the Philadelphia Single Tax Society considered focusing their efforts on Delaware. More than half of the state's voters were in the northernmost county and thus were easily reached from Philadelphia. The legislature was small, consisting of only twenty-one members in the House and nine in the Senate, and, most importantly, there were no constitutional obstacles to shifting taxation from labor to land. Given the eighteen months allotted, it didn't seem that formidable a task.

If any doubts lingered about the timing of the campaign, they quickly vanished, and the Delaware Invasion became a national crusade. Leaving little doubt as to their intent, the campaigners adopted the earth as their symbol and nominated a full state ticket behind Dr. Lewis Slaughter for governor. Support poured in from all over the country, with many campaigners staying for months at a time at their headquarters in Wilmington.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Young, *The Single Tax Movement in the United States* (Princeton, 1916), 111.

<sup>24</sup> *Justice*, Jan. 12, 1895.

By one account, in the first four months of campaigning and a full year before the election, single taxers held 469 meetings with 76 speakers making 1,060 addresses before an estimated total audience of more than 90,000.<sup>25</sup> The single tax newspaper, *Justice*, published first in Philadelphia and later in Wilmington, helped disseminate their ideas, and over five thousand copies were distributed weekly throughout the state. Henry George pronounced himself "heartily in favor of the Delaware campaign," and traveled to Wilmington several times to speak, as did such single tax luminaries as Louis Post and Edward McGlynn.

Unfortunately, in spite of the overwhelming optimism and effort expended, the election was a disaster. When the votes were counted, scarcely more than 3 percent of the state had voted for the Single Tax Party.

The story of Arden began in the wake of this resounding defeat. After the election, Will Price came to Frank Stephens and proposed a model of a smaller-scale single tax colony. Delaware was not their first choice for the colony's location. According to Stephens, he and Price first wasted months trying to secure a site in New Jersey, only to see it gobbled up at the last minute, ironically enough, by land speculators. Only then did they look to Delaware, largely because of its history with the single tax campaign. They decided specifically to concentrate on the cheaper land along the B&O rail line, and, as Stephens described it, "almost at once we secured a farm which was paying neither owner nor tenant anything except the little they could steal from each other: the landlord by levying on the tenant's belongings and the tenant by defaulting on the rent and burning the looser portion of the house and barn for fuel."<sup>26</sup>

The farm was owned by the Derrickson family and had 162 acres, some 70 of which were woodlands, with many mature poplars, oaks, chestnuts, and dogwoods. Two streams bordered the property. The purchase price of the land, a barn, and various outbuildings was \$9,000. Of this amount, \$2,500 was paid in cash and the remainder held in mortgage. The mortgage was later acquired by Joseph Fels, a wealthy soap manufacturer and a passionate crusader for social justice both in the United States and England.<sup>27</sup> As a tribute to a Shakespearean club that Stephens and Price had organized

<sup>25</sup> Young, *Single Tax Movement*, 149.

<sup>26</sup> Frank Stephens, "Arden Village," undated lecture, p. 2, AAM.

<sup>27</sup> Fels also contributed money to C. R. Ashbee's Guild Of Handicraft at Chipping Camden. See Arthur Dudden, *Joseph Fels and the Single Tax Movement* (Philadelphia, 1971), 254.

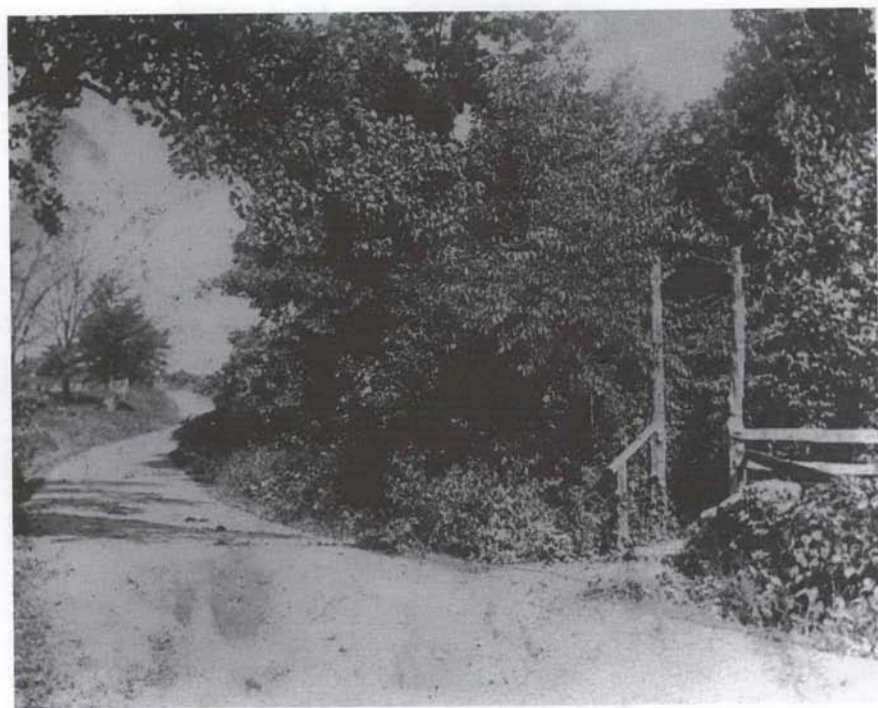


Fig. 3. The Arden stile, c. 1910. Inscribed with quotations from Shakespeare's plays, the front inscription taken from *King Lear* reads "You are welcome hither"; the reverse taken from *Julius Caesar* reads "If we do meet again, why we shall smile."

to train speakers for the Delaware campaign, they named the community Arden, after the Duke's forest in *As You Like It* (fig. 3). In a 1907 brochure, Stephens described their plan:

The little settlement of Arden . . . is an attempt . . . to develop a village community holding its land in common, in the spirit of medieval times, but under modern conditions, in accordance with the single tax philosophy of Henry George. The individual holders of several plots of land pay the rental value of the land into a common fund, from which all the taxes levied by the state and county are paid, the remainder being spent upon the maintenance and improvement of the roads, woodlands, and commons, with no profit to anyone as a private landlord. It is believed that even an experiment upon these terms will give for all easier ways of earning a living, a simpler, more democratic and more peaceful

manner of life than that characteristic of our time and country, and a freedom from mere wealth-slavery from which craftsmanship and art will of themselves develop . . . The underlying thought is that the study of medieval life in Merrie England, as charming and lovely a time as any of which history has record will create for us a life so picturesque and fruitful under economic conditions equally free and just and without the loss of anything that civilization has really gained.<sup>28</sup>

Arden was not this country's first single tax colony. In 1895, the community of Fairhope had been established in Alabama on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay. While Frank Stephens acknowledged Fairhope as a model, the two communities are strikingly different in both their intent and land plan. In Arden, as at Fairhope, a system of trusteeship was established by which ground rent was assessed irrespective of improvements, with the excess moneys after taxes being turned over to the community. It is there, however, that the similarity ends. Borrowing not only from George but also from, most likely, Ebenezer Howard and the Garden Cities movement, Will Price designed the new community around two central village greens with a network of intersecting pathways and a border of woodlands.<sup>29</sup> During the early years, the houses, many of which were designed and built by Stephens or the leaseholders themselves, were intentionally small and rustic, emphasizing the resident's connection with both the community and the environment (fig. 4).<sup>30</sup>

Arden also differed from Fairhope in that its founders were inspired by the English Arts and Crafts movement. As Stephens pointed out in his description of the community, he and Price wanted to provide the eco-

<sup>28</sup> Arden Boys Camp brochure, 1907, AAM.

<sup>29</sup> In a short story by Frank Stephens from 1923 titled "Village Paths," he writes: "There lies the Green decent and square cornered just as it was laid out to lie when Master Will Priceless drew the streets upon a map." AAM.

<sup>30</sup> It is unfortunate that scholars have thus far been unable to date Arden's land plan. The community may in fact predate Letchworth, England, "the world's first Garden City," which was founded in 1903. As documented in the *Arden Advocate*, by 1902 a central green had been established with houses along its perimeter, but beyond that, everything else is pure conjecture. The earliest map of the community to surface thus far is dated 1910, and by then the land plan was fully in place. One tantalizing bit of Arden history is the fact that in 1911, Raymond Unwin, one of England's most important Garden City architects and the architect and town planner of Letchworth, furnished a proposed design for the village church. Howard's description of the Town-Country Magnet, described in *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform* (London, 1898), is remarkably similar to the governmental structure of Arden, and is in fact based on the single tax.



Fig. 4. The "Owl's Nest" in 1908. From a May 1908 article by Mabel Tuke Priestman in *American Homes and Gardens*.

nomic freedom "from which craftsmanship and art will of themselves develop." It is an important point that sets Arden apart not only from Fairhope and other single tax communities, but from all other Arts and Crafts communities as well. Rather than founding a community of like-minded artists and craftsman drawn from their associates in Philadelphia, Stephens and Price hoped to encourage the practice of art in those unaccustomed to those pursuits. Their aim was to produce the seamless integration of art and daily life that Morris and the founders of the English Arts and Crafts movement had always intended. As Stephens explained it:

The purpose was NOT to bring from the city into conditions to which they were not used those who had failed to make a living in the city, but to bring in and plant upon the land those who knew the ways of the country and how to make some small living and endure some considerable hardship there. It was in no way necessary that they should understand the economics of the situation beyond realizing that there was a little more hope of making a living here than elsewhere under landlordism. Many such rented small plots and raised truck [vegetables]

to be hauled into the markets of Wilmington, six miles away. Almost from the first these farmers began as we hoped they would, to specialize into craftsman in the between whites. They were expert ax men to begin with and have learned enough of rough carpentering and masonry to have worked with such mechanics as have settled upon the land, so that all our houses have been built by our own people who have had some interest in the building.

We have a printing shop, and a good inn, and a bakery and are hoping to develop the arts and crafts among us. And now having our mechanics upon a foundation of farmer folk we are beginning to put the icing on the cake by the incoming of painters and musicians and the like, but everyone is to some extent a tiller of the soil, as it was in that picturesque medieval life which came from an underlying communal land tenure on which our system is an improvement.<sup>31</sup>

In light of Stephens's statement, it may be a measure of Arden's success that so much of the art produced was of a decidedly amateur nature (fig. 5).<sup>32</sup> But there were notable exceptions: the painter F. F. English (1854–1922) lived in Arden, as did the sculptor Marcus Aurelius Renzetti (1897–1975), who probably did more to encourage the arts in the community during its middle and late years than anyone else. The most accomplished artist was arguably Robert Rautenberg (1857–1940), renowned for his statuary gracing the main staircase of the Library of Congress. A German by birth, Rautenberg came to the United States in 1887 and worked with the sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens before joining the community of Arden in 1912.

Another noteworthy professional artist was the illustrator Louise Roberts (1884–1936) who lived in several artists' communities. After studying at the Philadelphia School of Industrial Art and the Art Students League of New York, Roberts worked as an illustrator at the *Philadelphia Record* for fifteen years and as a staff designer for a number of women's magazines. With her husband William, she started the Roberts Press in the Rose Valley art colony (also founded by Will Price) and produced a line of hand-printed greeting cards that are charming examples of the Arts and Crafts aesthetic (fig. 6). With a few exceptions, Louise designed the cards and William took charge of production and marketing. The Women's Educational and Industrial Union in Boston, Scribner's Bookstore in New York,

<sup>31</sup> Frank Stephens, "Arden Village," emphasis added.

<sup>32</sup> For further discussion of Arden's arts and crafts, see Mark Taylor, "Arts and Crafts and the Single Tax: The Utopian Experiment at Arden, Delaware," *Style* 1900 10, no. 3 (Summer/Fall 1997), 46–51.



Fig. 5. Harry Page, 1914. Photo that accompanied a description of the "Arden Craft Guild" [sic] published in the *New York Tribune*, September 27, 1914.



Fig. 6. Greeting card by the Roberts Studio, c. 1920. Designed by Louise Roberts.

Wanamaker's in Philadelphia, and the Boston Society of Arts and Crafts carried Roberts Studio cards. The Robertses moved to Arden in 1917, running the studio until 1933, when they left for the art community in New Hope, Pennsylvania.



Frank Stephens's son, Don, produced Arts and Crafts style furniture for the community. The Arden furniture shop was of particular interest to the architect Will Price, who collaborated with Don Stephens on furniture design. In a 1964 interview, Don noted that the furniture in his house was designed by Will Price.<sup>33</sup> The "Craftsman's Chair" was part of a dining room set that Don made for his own family (fig. 7). Don was an active member of the Arden community from its inception until the mid-1920s when he and his family left for Russia to help with the Russian Reconstruction Farms project started by Ardenite Harold Ware.

Arden's longest-lived craft business, and by far the most productive, was the Arden Forge. Both residents and nonresidents worked in the forge over the years, but the exact number of craftsmen has not been documented. First mentioned in the 1912 issue of *Arden Leaves*, the community's magazine, the shop was already selling through outlets in New York, Philadelphia, and Boston. Under the direction of Frank Stephens, the forge offered an extensive catalog line as well as custom-made work (fig. 8). Advertisements for the Arden Forge appeared in *House Beautiful* throughout the years 1923 and 1924. With the exception of brief hiatuses in 1926 and 1928, operations continued without interruption until Frank Stephens's death in 1935.

Arden attracted its share of literary celebrities as well. Best known as a guru of the "back-to-the-land" movement of the 1960s, Scott Nearing (1883–1983) spent summers and weekends in Arden from 1905 through 1915 (fig. 9). Nearing, "that stormy petrel of radicalism,"<sup>34</sup> was fired from his position as an economics professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania in 1915 because of his outspoken opposition to child labor. His case, widely condemned as an assault against academic freedom of speech, was debated nationally for several years. A prolific writer, Nearing wrote more than twelve books and seventy articles during his ten years at Arden.

Upton Sinclair (1878–1968) (fig. 10), the muckraking author of *The Jungle* (1906), moved to Arden in 1910 after his own socialist utopian experiment, Helicon Home Colony, in Eaglewood, New Jersey, burned to the ground. His house in Arden, nicknamed "The Jungalow," was built by Stephens. According to his autobiography, Upton Sinclair came to Arden

<sup>33</sup> *Wilmington (Del.) Morning News*, Oct. 17, 1964, 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Wilmington (Del.) Sunday Morning Star*, Sept. 6, 1931.



Fig. 7. Craftsman's chair made by Don Stephens, c. 1916.

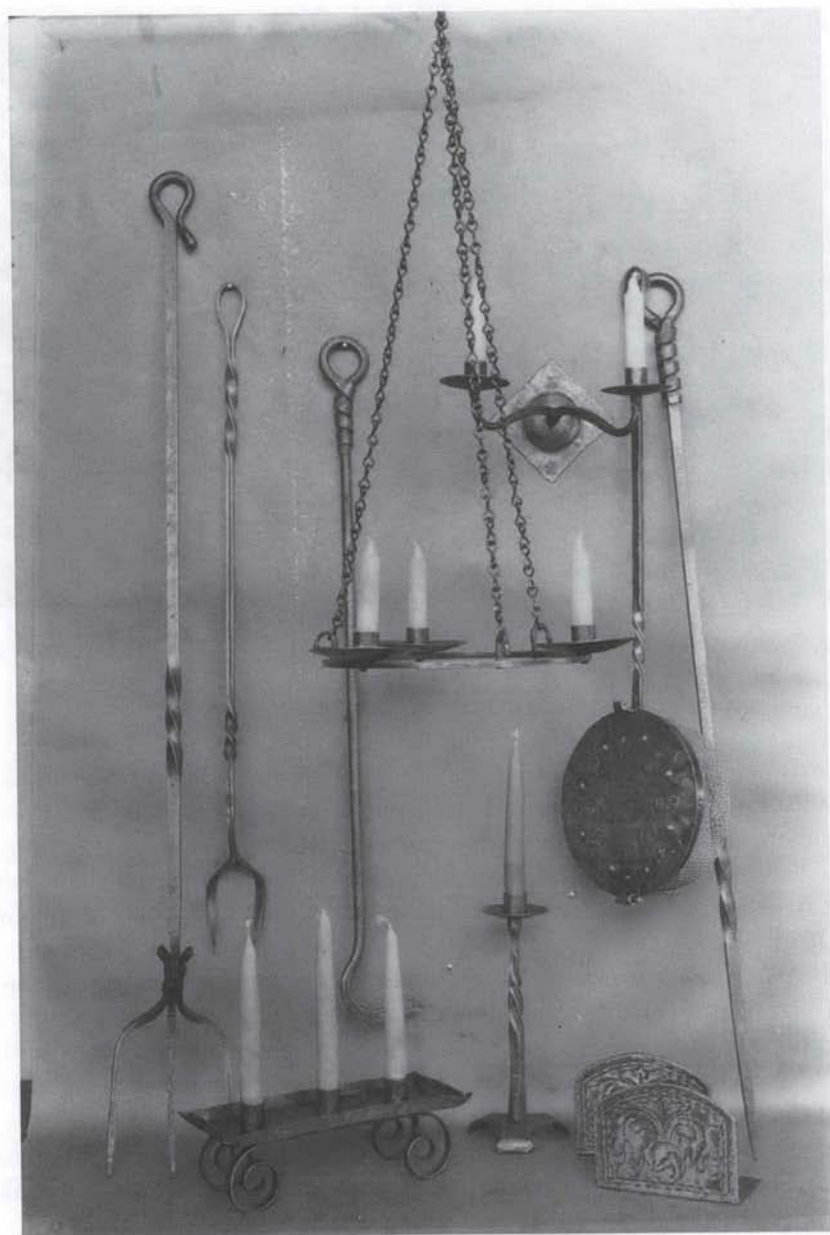


Fig. 8. Catalogue photograph of items made in the Arden Forge, c. 1923.



Fig. 9. Scott Nearing c. 1910 in front of "The Jungalow," the Arden residence of Upton Sinclair.

to write a sequel to his book *Love's Pilgrimage* "to illustrate the new attitude toward love and marriage, in which the equal rights of both parties to experiment and self-discovery are recognized." The book, called *Love's Progress*, was never finished and exists today only in manuscript form. Sinclair left Arden shortly after the sensational scandal of his divorce became public in 1911.

Poets, actors, musicians, labor agitators, communists, socialists, anarchists, practitioners of free love, nudism, vegetarianism all at one time or another made their home in Arden. Frank Stephens made friends with some and enemies of others, but his focus always remained the single tax and the economic opportunity he believed it provided for people to integrate the arts into their lives. In this respect, Don Stephens's description of Arden as "a sociological experiment" may be the most apt.<sup>35</sup> Frank Stephens died believing that the experiment had been a failure, but the

<sup>35</sup> Don Stephens, undated biography, Collection of Peggy Stephens Aumack.



Fig. 10. Upton Sinclair and Frank Stephens, Arden Field Day, 1910.

community of Arden still survives and with it the blueprint for the "great and glorious city" that he and Will Price dreamed of. "The desire for artistic expression, for that which Morris defined as the evidence of the joy a man has in his work, is in everyone," wrote Stephens, "its growth into life depends upon the economic surroundings, upon the opportunity given by the social life of the community, as the growth of a plant to its flower depends upon the condition of the soil and climate in which it is placed."<sup>36</sup>

*Arden, Delaware*

MARK TAYLOR

<sup>36</sup> Frank Stephens, "Art and Economics," unpublished lecture, AAM.

