

Recognition that's overdue

Interest is renewed in a noted economist

By Michael E. Ruane
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Betsy Ross' place it isn't, nor the haunt of Benjamin Franklin.

But the home of another long-departed Philadelphian who some say has equal stature has just been restored and may soon be added to the local tourist brochures.

It's the birthplace of Henry George, a 19th-century man who rose from poverty in his home town to become one of the best-known economists — and personalities — of his time.

Born Sept. 2, 1839, in the little brick house at 413 S. 10th St., George went to sea at age 16, later became a San Francisco newspaper publisher and found world fame as the author of a popular economic treatise called *Progress and Poverty*.

Amid the economic turmoil and lepression of the late 1800s, George advocated equal economic opportunity, a single tax on land, and the elimination of all other taxes. George promoted his benign utopian vision in pamphlets, magazine articles and lecture tours in the United States and abroad. His book was extremely popular and was translated into many foreign languages.

Today his theories are not widely held, except, his advocates say,

among a few thousand followers around the world.

Many showed up Sunday when his birthplace, the 2½-story brick house on 10th Street, was rededicated after a \$200,000, 10-month restoration project.

The site, which has housed the Henry George School of Social Science and a George museum since 1957, was restored to its original 1830s condition by the Council of Georgist Organizations.

Its rededication was timed to coincide with the 150th anniversary this year of George's birth and an international Henry George conference under way this week at the University of Pennsylvania.

The house is expected to be open to the public next month.

It contains, among other items of George memorabilia, the mahogany table on which he wrote *Progress and Poverty* in the late 1870s, the ornate mahogany bed in which he was born, and the pine sea-chest he used as a teenage sailor.

And on a pedestal in the living room stands a bronze bust of the great Philadelphian himself — a bearded, bald man with protruding ears and a kindly face.

For Georgists, the house restora-

tion is overdue recognition.

"It is a nice slice of history to us," said George L. Collins, the school's director, "that Henry George can take his place among noted Americans whose life and life work is recognized in some tangible, symbolic form."

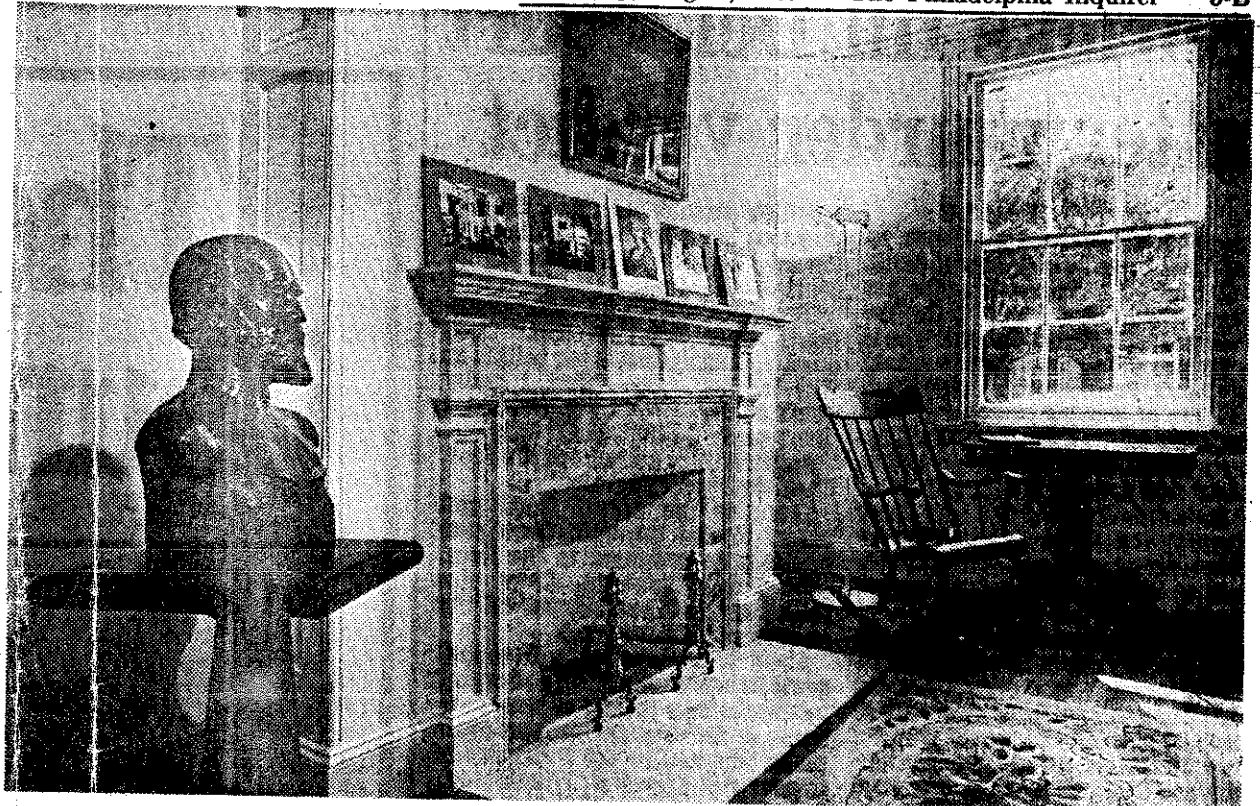
For sure, said Collins, George — who died on Oct. 29, 1897, while running for mayor of New York — is no Betsy Ross or Ben Franklin.

"The nature of his contribution ... requires more analyses to comprehend and to fit into the general context of our lives today," he said.

Think of "Betsy Ross and the flag, and there's an emotional hook," Collins said.

"You think of Ben Franklin, ... a folksy, almost Renaissance man," he said.

"Henry George," said Collins, "thinker, activist, reformer, is of a ... different path."



A bust of Henry George, a 19th-century economist, in the parlor of his recently restored home.

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