

Wed - Nov. 4 6-7 P.M.

Michael Curtis "The Delaware Story"

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# The songs of the Single Taxers

*We want the earth, we want it all;  
We want the whole terrestrial ball.  
Awake! Awake! 'Tis Freedom's call.*

*Delaware, my Delaware.*

— Single Tax fighting song.

**Y**EARS AGO on Labor Day this song would reverberate through the village of Arden, seven miles north of Wilmington.

On that day the last of the militant Single Taxers and their followers would gather in the open air theater to honor Henry George and his Single Tax philosophy.

But believe me, this coming Monday, Labor Day of 1987, between 3 p.m. and 5 in the Arden Open Air Theater, I doubt if you will hear any of the marching songs of the brown-shirted Single Taxers who invaded Delaware in the 1890s.

- None of the original Single Tax "soldiers" are living.

- None of the few current Single Taxers, no more than a half dozen, know any of the old songs.

- If the Labor Day-Henry George program in the Arden theater proceeds as it has in the past few years, no mention or very little mention will be made of the pioneer Single Taxers who helped found the villages of Arden and Ardencroft.

Anyway, if you are interested in a unique and lovely segment of Delaware, why not drive out to Arden for Labor Day afternoon. Make yourself comfortable in the

open air theater and listen to whatever speakers have to say about this intelligent and practical tax theory that has been persistently ignored by governmental leaders.

Of Delaware's more or less 600,000 people today, I would suspect that not more than a dozen know anything about Henry George

and statesman who wrote and spoke out against inequality and championed passionately for individual liberty.

He also notes in his proclamation that Henry George's books, "Progress and Poverty" and "Protection of Free Trade," have been hailed by economists and by states-

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and his philosophy of Single Tax. Further, I can say with assurance that only two residents of Delaware, other than a professor or two in the University of Delaware, can discuss Henry George and the Single Tax with a good degree with accuracy. They are Frank E. Nelson of Brookside Park near Newark and Michael Curtis of Arden.

Despite all this, our good Gov. Michael N. Castle, who I'm sure knows practically nothing about Single Tax, has issued a proclamation designating Sept 7, 1987, as "Henry George Day." He urges "all Delawareans to recognize the importance of this observance."

Our governor's proclamation is very interesting because it goes into such detail as designating Henry George as "a great thinker,

men for their original and provocative thought and continue to influence public policy.

Unfortunately, the governor does not reveal if either one of these books has influenced him.

I have no idea just what the Sept. 7 program will be like but I feel sure it will not be like any of the old-time Henry George Day presentations. As I recall them during my early days in Arden, we had singing of the old campaign songs, bits of Shakespeare presented on the open air stage, and of course speeches by the founder of Arden, the notable Frank Stephens. I remember one of the popular songs such as:

*Tax! Tax! Tax!*

*We'll tax the landlords;*

*Cheer up, comrades, tax them*

*high!*

*And we'll whoop it up for freedom everywhere*

*With our knapsacks on our backs,*

*With our little Single Tax.*

*Oh! There's lots of fun ahead for Delaware.*

Of course in the early days, the pioneer Single Taxers told how they appeared dressed in the military uniforms of 1898 and took over street corners in downtown Wilmington for preaching, particularly Fifth and Market streets.

Also one favorite story was of the week a handful of Single Taxers were arrested in Dover and shoved into the town jail on charges of street preaching without a license. And how Henry George refused to come to their rescue.

But those exciting days are gone. The truth is that Arden and its so-called sister villages of Ardencroft and Ardencroft are quiet; in fact, somewhat dull. But Henry George Day might be the time for stirring them to the old excitement and controversy.

Yes, why not go back, just for a while, to the days of Brown, the anarchist, Upton Sinclair, the Socialist, and Frank Stephens, the Single Taxer? And the event might end with everyone singing the Arden hymn and reciting from Shakespeare, "Now am I in Arden; the more fool I."

Bill Frank is a News-Journal columnist.