

# Experiment in Delaware

3318

13

*Followers of Henry George 'Invaded' the State—Now There Is Lovely Arden*

By Michael Scott

JUST OVER HALF A CENTURY AGO, a band of courageous followers of Henry George's single-tax movement "invaded" Delaware to capture that state for the single-tax idea. Dressed in Civil War uniforms, they carried their campaign through the dirt roads of Delaware, living on the generosity of the few who agreed with them, marching through the width and breadth of the tiny state. With packs on their shoulders, they kept in step with their own campaign songs, lustily singing for all to hear:

We want the earth, we want it all,  
We want the whole terrestrial ball;  
Awake, awake, 'tis Freedom's call,  
Delaware, my Delaware.

Instead of capturing the state, however, Frank Stephens, a Philadelphia sculptor, and other leaders of the campaign were captured by local authorities and spirited off to prison for "disturbing the peace." The further defeat at the polls in 1896 only served to strengthen their convictions. With zealous determination to demonstrate the validity of their theories, a little village called Arden was founded at the uppermost tip of Delaware, just outside Wilmington.

Today Arden is a flourishing community of some 1,000 inhabitants. Many of the original founders still live there, and have

of the original principles involved in the founding of their village: the unspoiled practice of handicrafts, the intellectual give-and-take, the cultural social life. From the day of its founding, Arden welcomed mechanics and poets, artists and gardeners, musicians and chemists, carpenters and actors to make their home amid the quiet beauty of nature. To this day there are no street lights in Arden, although some of the homes look like pages out of *Better Homes and Gardens*.

When Frank Stephens and Will Price purchased the three tracts of farmland known as Grubb's Landing Road in 1900, they found an old farmhouse, a rambling barn, an icehouse, and several abandoned smaller buildings. A magic transformation took place through the years. The old barn is still standing, but the cows and horses are gone. Instead it serves as the "Guild Hall," Arden's social center, with a completely equipped stage and a huge stone fireplace.

Several times a year the fireplace is pressed into service, and all Arden gathers for an old-fashioned supper at long, gaily bedecked tables. Mrs. Frank Stephens, now in her late eighties, still lives in the old farmhouse amid stately pines. The icehouse, where farmers stored huge blocks of ice chopped from the nearby brook is now the comfortable home of Renzetti, a renowned photographer, his Pennsylvania Dutch wife, and two lively sons.



Photos by Robert Schlanger

**The Elders of Arden Get Together in "Buzz" Ware's Curio-Filled Living Room. Left to Right Are Don Stephens, Son of Arden's Founder, Hamilton Ware, His Wife, Jim, and Their Huge and Loyal "Barney"**

theater, one of only a few in this country, was built in a natural woodland dell, with huge rocks for a stage and the green of the forest as a backdrop. Year after year the citizens of Arden reenacted Shakespeare's greatest works in this theater, attracting neighbors from all over the countryside.

Frank Stephens' resonant *Malvolio* and Will Price's tragic *Hamlet* are still well remembered by the younger set of those days, and after each performance the actors in costume would join the audience in a parade with

days, and turned the tables on them by charging violation of an ancient state law against 'gaming on Sunday.' Eleven young men were arrested and haled before a Wilmington justice of the peace, in front of whose office the street was blocked by a curious crowd."

Mr. Potter and others among the older residents chuckled as they recalled the incident, particularly Don Stephens, the founder's son and now one of the village elders, who was arrested with Upton Sinclair and the nine others. Mr. Potter continued:

several flourishing enterprises, though no heavy industry, have been developed in Arden itself. Fine ceramics are produced at the old Arden Pottery by Miriam Hutzler for some of the finest stores in New York and Chicago. Dr. Hurlong and his family import dental tools to America. Authors and artists, such as Victor Thaddeus and Rod Santee, whose books are read far and wide, work in the atmosphere of Arden.

Although Arden does maintain its own police fire department, its scho-

spread their wings to an adjoining "Arden town" and another village to be founded soon. Enclosed in the beautiful green of the forests, Ardenites still boast

In the early days of Arden, cultural activities were high on the priority list of community life. An outdoor Shakespearean

swinging lanterns around the village green to the Guild Hall, where square dancing and community singing rounded out a merry evening.

Although the village was founded on Henry George's theories that "the man who owns the land owns the people," not all of the residents, then as now, believed in Henry George. Among the early residents of Arden were Upton Sinclair, the novelist, and Scott Nearing, the economist. Persons of all shades of opinion, and of none, were welcomed into the community, and this eventually led to one of Delaware's most celebrated court cases. A bitter controversy, arising from a series of free public forums sponsored regularly in the community, finally landed Upton Sinclair and several others in the county workhouse.

Edwin S. Potter, who marched through Delaware in the campaign with Frank Stephens before Arden was founded, recalled the event which was front-paged by most newspapers in the nation.

"It all grew out of the tenacious course of action pursued by a resident shoemaker, George Brown by name," Mr. Potter related. "He was an avowed anarchist who insisted on stating his views in such fashion as was felt to invade the personal privacy of some of the village fathers.

"Finally, this so irked the latter that they caused Mr. Brown to be arrested on a charge of disorderly conduct. By way of revenge, Mr. Brown later noticed the custom of Ardenites playing tennis and other games on Sun-

"The Squire refused to differentiate between gaming and gambling when Sinclair protested. Each offender was fined \$4 and costs. All refused to pay, and after serving an hour or two of their sentence partaking of ice cream at a nearby restaurant, were hustled off to the New Castle County Workhouse. They spent the night in cells and when released in the morning were greeted by 22 newspapermen and three photographers. When the pugnacious anarchist, George Brown, demanded a longer sentence, word had reached the court that he was planning to have wealthy golf players on the Wilmington Country Club arrested on a similar charge, and the court refused to hold the Ardenites any longer."

Don Stephens proudly displayed his scrapbook in which the final outcome of the incident was reported. After the 11 Ardenites were released, they published an exposé blasting intolerable conditions at the county workhouse, which finally forced the authorities to improve prison conditions in Delaware.

Arden today is a quiet community. As the land was parceled out on 99-year leases, and comfortable homes were built, an additional 97 acres were purchased in 1922. Known as Arden town, it was organized under the same general plan, but with a separate deed of trust and administered by a town assembly and three trustees.

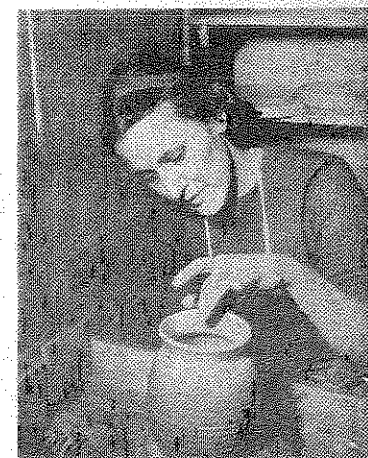
Most Ardenites today work in Wilmington or Philadelphia, but

of the most modern, set in the center of a large playground not far from the Guild Hall. And while the Shakespearean theater today is but a memory of the past, the Robin Hood Theater each year plays host to a summer stock company to the delight of neighboring theatergoers.

Hamilton Ware, known affectionately as "Buzz" since he joined the Arden community in 1903, is proud of the progress made by Arden. He is one of the most revered of the elder residents, sharing a quaint, rambling home with his wife and a huge St. Bernard—Barney. He believes that while Frank Stephens and Will Price may not have won their political crusade, the little village of Arden, which they founded and nurtured, remains as a monument to their honesty and courage.



Young Actors and Actresses Work as Carpenters in Preparing Props for the Robin Hood Theater Presentations Which Attract Many From Several States



Miriam Hutzler Works With Clay in Shaping a Beautiful Vase

Michael Scott is a free-lance writer

THE CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR, APRIL 15, 1950

*MAGAZINE Section*

Page Nine