



# Community as Museum

## FREE ACRES, NEW JERSEY

A Community Exhibition Through the Lens of an Artist



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A Community Exhibition Through the Lens of an Artist

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## ADVISOR

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines several “intentional communities” that shared similar communal values and ideals related to art, natural living and education. It will highlight one New Jersey community in particular and provide a unique framework for how a community, functioning as a museum, can celebrate its history and future. The research and project will help answer the question, “Can an exhibition, located physically within the community, be developed and designed to define and celebrate a community and its foundations by using the lens of an artist's work?”

Creating an exhibition within the homes, buildings and natural surroundings of a community that was started and supported by artists, will ideally attract interest and support growth. The research will be used to support the creation of an exhibition with meaningful experiences involving community, art, natural surroundings and history to foster a rhythm and community spirit. This framework can be used to support the growth of community and artistic values and be used as a foundation for individuals to conceptualize their own identity as it fits within the context of their community.

Allowing the community to function as a “museum,” open to the public and connecting to a wider audience, this exhibition will celebrate the community of Free Acres and its history through the lens of Free Acreite Gershon Benjamin's artwork and can act as a model for other communities, developers and institutions. By celebrating Free Acres 100th anniversary, the exhibition

will explore its history, provide an opportunity to view local art within the context of community, encourage first hand accounts, invite interaction and ideally foster dialogue. The goal is not only to commemorate but also to provide a creative, active and enjoyable experience. This experience is intended to enhance community spirit and involvement while providing a framework for future research, development and programming to facilitate the continual re-examination of values and rhythm supporting the community as it evolves in the future.

To accomplish these goals, the Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities were adapted as guidelines to help inform this thesis and the design and development of the exhibition. Focus is on designing for growth, using familiar and exciting elements, fostering interaction and dialogue among members and non-members, utilizing private and public spaces, creating opportunities for reflection and discussion and examining and reassessing community values and culture.

.



## NOMENCLATURE

**Community** - Encompasses a group of people who share some things in common such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, politics, history, sexuality, background, interest, work or neighborhood. The essential defining factor of a community is the sense of belonging that comes to those who are a part of it.

**Community-Focused Events** - Events that primarily focus on the community in which they are held. These events tend to build social capital, foster community spirit and showcase local talent and culture.

**Founder's Dilemma** - The creative tension between affirming the original intent of a community, while at the same time being deeply responsive to the need for growth, flexibility and fresh air.

**Intentional Communities** - A group of people living cooperatively, dedicated by intent and commitment to specific communal values and goals. An inclusive term for eco-villages, co-housing, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing cooperatives, alternative communities and other projects where people strive to come together around a common vision.

**Single-Tax Communities** - Communities based on the single tax theories of economist, journalist and social reformer Henry George. Single-Tax communities were planned to be free from any forms of private monopoly, to secure its members equality of opportunity, the reward of individual efforts and the co-operation in matters of general concern.

## AUDIENCE

This thesis will inform and provide information to designers, developers, community leaders and artists on how to implement and create exhibitions, with potentially more meaningful experiences, involving community, its history and connection to visual art by attempting to broaden the concept of "museum."

Allowing the community to function as a museum, this project strives to involve past and present Free Acres Association community members, local and state groups, artists and like-minded communities. It could act as a model or vehicle for state and local historical societies, non-profits and other communities and groups looking to celebrate their past in hopes of fostering community spirit and sustainability.

Community as museum provides an experience that allows visitors to understand the dynamics and history of a community within its natural surroundings, fosters and creates relationships, enhances a deeper understanding of the subject matter and provides a model for others.

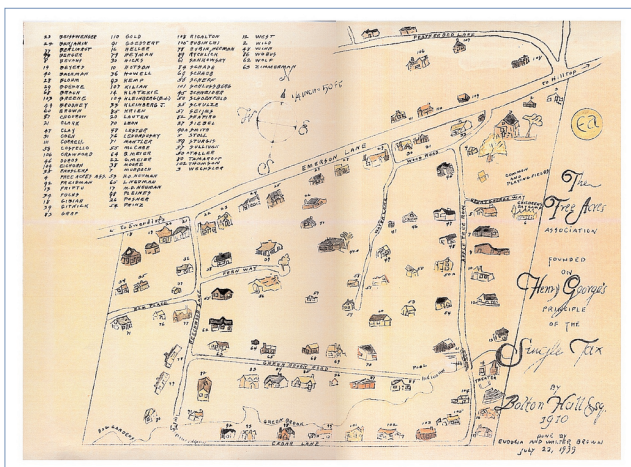


## MISSION STATEMENT

Implement and create an exhibition with meaningful experiences involving community, art and history to foster a rhythm and sense of “aliveness.” This framework can be used to support the growth of community and artistic values and be used as a foundation for individuals to conceptualize their own identity as it fits within the context of their community.

## THESIS STATEMENT

There is a proliferation of discussions around “community building” and what a “community” can be but the terms can be very abstract. This thesis is an investigation of the concept, structure and benefits of “intentional communities” and attempts to answer the question, *“Can an exhibition, located physically within the community, be developed and designed to define and celebrate a community and its foundations by using the lens of an artist's work?”*



Map of Free Acres by Free Acreites Walter & Eudoria Brown, 1939

## IMPACT STATEMENT

The research and development of this project will provide information and insights about the dynamics of creating exhibitions within a community in ways that will enhance its context and meaning. These types of experiences are designed to involve a connection to art and history through exploring the context of its creation and the community surrounding. By displaying the works outside of the museum, in an environment within the community, a rich and unique story can be told and explored. These experiences are driven and influenced by the environment in which the artist created the works. Ideally dialogue will ensue when visitors come together in the community where the artist lived and worked, having an opportunity to discuss an artist and his surroundings from the perspective of those in the community. The information will be disseminated through an online component and by attempts to reach out and partnership with other communities, historical groups and artists. These experiences can engage visitors and the community on new levels in active environments allowing them to experience and participate in the richness and celebration of the past to help foster the possibilities and spirit of the future.



## THESIS GOALS

- 1) To develop a framework that establishes principles for the development and design of an experience in a community that explores the context of an artists' work.
- 2) To be able to connect to a wider audience outside of the community who are interested in an experience with an artists work and the environment and community that influenced its development, fosters dialogue and first hand accounts with community members.
- 3) To provide a case study for communities and neighborhoods to help define their communal values, develop the structure and relationships necessary for partnerships, educate, preserve their history and sustain community involvement.



Monthly meeting at Free Acres Farmhouse

## THESIS METHODOLOGY

This thesis is an investigation of “intentional communities” and the people at their core who often identify with similar values and intentions that include their relationship to the land on which they live. To sustain themselves, communities must navigate both the good and bad times, foster the values at their core and adapt to current issues. The dynamic of the land, spirit and values of the people, social and political pressures influence a community's prosperity and ability to adapt to changing times. In hopes of preserving and passing along a community's legacy, this thesis examines several “intentional communities,” highlighting communities where the natural surroundings are central and where artists and creative individuals were influenced by and contribute to the sustainability of the community. This thesis will focus on one “intentional community” in particular and will provide a unique framework for how a community can celebrate its history and future by functioning as a museum. Creating an exhibition within the homes and buildings of that community, while highlighting the natural surroundings, will ideally attract interest and support growth. Museums have the power to play a major role in the regeneration of communities and can act as educators and informers. Allowing the community to take on the role of a “museum,” this thesis and accompanying exhibition will strive to instill an understanding of place and culture, community pride, memory making, preservation of heritage while providing opportunities for learning across all age levels and interests.





## PROJECT METHODOLOGY

Focusing in depth on Free Acres, an “intentional community” located along the second ridge of the Watchung Mountains in Berkeley Heights and Watchung, NJ, the proposed art exhibition will document the community’s history, people, culture and values at a pivotal moment as the community approaches its 100th Anniversary. Free Acres Association was a haven for artists and creative individuals who were part of the community’s founding mission. For this reason the first community exhibition will focus on the community’s history seen through an artistic perspective. When community comes together to celebrate their history, a sense of aliveness and a growth in spirit can occur. To create a truly meaningful experience and to stimulate dialogue, an art exhibition will be located physically within Free Acre homes. On display will be the works of Free Acres’ artist, Gershon Benjamin. “The goal of community design is to bring out the community’s own internal direction, character, and energy.”<sup>1</sup> Allowing the community to function as a “museum,” being open to the public and connecting to a wider audience, the exhibition will celebrate Free Acres and its history through the lens of Gershon Benjamin’s artwork. Displayed in the environment in which it was created and influenced, the community will take on the role of a museum, an “institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment.”<sup>2</sup> By celebrating Free Acres and its history, viewing local art within the context of community,

encouraging first hand accounts, inviting interaction and fostering dialogue, the goal is not only to commemorate but also to provide a creative, active and enjoyable experience different from “traditional” museums. This experience is intended to enhance community spirit and involvement while providing a framework for future research, development and programming to facilitate the continual re-examination of values and rhythm supporting the community as it evolves in the future.



Free Acres sign, Census Bureau Map of Berkeley Heights, New Jersey

<sup>1</sup> Etienne Wenger; Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder; "Cultivating Communities of Practice: A Guide to Managing Knowledge - Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice." <<http://hbswk.hbs.edu/archive/2855.html>>.

<sup>2</sup> "ICOM Definition of a Museum." ICOM Website. International Council of Museums. 13 Apr. 2009 <<http://icom.museum/definition.html>>.

## RESEARCH: INTRODUCTION

This research examines seven intentional communities, the Free Acre Association in particular, founded on and inspired by secular ideological affinities such as aesthetic ideals, education and a connection to the environment. The research focuses on the communities founding principles, communal values, spirit, member involvement and artistic influence. Key aspects of community growth and decline will be reviewed. The research will also showcase the importance and effectiveness of developing a unique, authentic art exhibition, viewed within a community's natural surroundings and through the lens of an artist, for celebrating the community's history and reinforcing its communal values and sustainability.

## CHAPTER 1: DEFINITION OF COMMUNITY

Community encompasses a group of people who share some things in common such as age, gender, ethnicity, language, religion, politics, history, sexuality, background, interest, work or neighborhood. "Let us accept that the essential defining factor of a community is the sense of belonging that comes to those who are a part of it and



Free Acres folk at monthly meeting, 1949

that, through association with communities, individuals conceptualize identity.”<sup>3</sup> Rich, lively communities have a strong sense of identity and connection to their heritage, their environment and to each other. “By using as broad a definition as possible of what makes a community, individuals and partnerships can address their shared issues in the most fruitful way possible. Communities can be based on faith, perspective, land and profession, as well as being determined by geographical lines.”<sup>4</sup> The concept of community includes a shared intention. Members often take pride in their past, actively explore the present and strive to create a better future. “A community’s vision is the story of its desired future. To be powerful and inspiring, a community’s vision should reflect the core values of its diverse members. A vision is not a statement on the wall – it is a living expression of shared accountability to priorities.”<sup>5</sup> President Obama spoke to the importance and role of community when he stated, “The true test of the American ideal is whether we’re able to recognize our failings and then rise together to meet the challenges of our time. Whether we allow ourselves to be shaped by events and history, or whether we can act to shape them. Whether chance of birth or circumstance decides life’s big winners and losers, or whether we build a community where, at the very least, everyone has a chance to work hard, get ahead and reach their dreams.”<sup>6</sup> Intentional communities are an American construct and

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<sup>3</sup> Sheila Watson. Museums and Their Communities. (New York: Routledge, 2007) 3.

<sup>4</sup> "MyCommunity - Community Resource Centre."  
<<http://www.csscanada.com/checklist2.htm>>.

<sup>5</sup> <<http://www.csscanada.com/checklist2.htm>>

<sup>6</sup> "Barack Obama Quotes - Barack Obama.net!"  
<<http://www.barackobama.net/barack-obama-quotes.html>>.





are different from communities made up of haphazard groups of people with no deep connection, who often don't know their neighbors. As defined by Allen Butcher, "an 'intentional community' is a group of people living cooperatively, dedicated by intent and commitment to specific communal values and goals. Life inside each community is managed using established decision-making processes. Generally, intentional communities place high value on the shared ownership or lease of common facilities -- housing, land, commercial buildings -- which often serves to demonstrate communal values and goals to the wider society."<sup>7</sup> "Intentional Community is an inclusive term for eco-villages, co-housing, residential land trusts, communes, student co-ops, urban housing cooperatives, alternative communities, and other projects where people strive together with a common vision."<sup>8</sup> Often the word "utopia", employing its loose definition, is used to describe experimental living arrangements with a variety of missions, all with a common goal. According to Robert V. Hine, author of California's Utopian Colonies, a utopian colony "consists of a group of people who are attempting to establish a new social pattern based upon a vision of the ideal society and who have withdrawn themselves



Henry George, © Robert Schalkenback Foundation

from the community at large to embody that vision in experimental form."<sup>9</sup> Intentional communities are sometimes referred to as utopian colonies. This thesis will examine intentional communities, focusing on single tax colonies and others based on artistic, educational or agricultural ideals. Their history, creative residents, connection to the land, living expression and desired future will be central to the discussion, design and development of an unique, powerful, experiential exhibition within one such community.

## CHAPTER 2: FREE ACRES PAST, PRESENT & EVOLUTION INTO THE FUTURE – SUCCESSES, CHALLENGES & CELEBRATIONS

The Free Acres Association was founded in 1910 by Bolton Hall on the principles of 19th century journalist and economist, Henry George. "The property is set about four hundred feet above sea level on the side of the second mountain in the Watchung chain in east central New Jersey, was about twenty seven miles west of NYC, although in the words of an early colonist, in rural remoteness it might be one hundred miles away."<sup>10</sup> Henry George believed the community should own land, rather than individual residents, and should follow the single tax principles thereby achieving freedom through

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<sup>7</sup> Dan Questenberry. "Who We Are: An Exploration of What 'Intentional Community' Means."

<sup>8</sup> <<http://www.ic.org/>>

<sup>9</sup> "Utopias -- Shaker Historic Trail -- National Register of Historic Places."

<sup>10</sup> Perdita Buchan, "Utopia, New Jersey." New Jersey Monthly Magazine.





Bolton Hall in front of "Suepine Hall," in Free Acres, NJ.

community and land equality. This was at a time when people were opposing the poverty and pollution that seemed to be a by-product of the industrialized society. Bolton Hall believed that the control of land, overdevelopment and taxation led to divisions in wealth and power. Free Acres has functioned on the ideals of communal land ownership, intellectual thought and living simply on the land for almost one hundred years. The first Free Acreites described Free Acres as, "a place of great natural beauty. Meadows were filled with daisies, Queen Anne's lace, honeysuckle, bayberry, and wild roses. In the southern section of the colony flowing in an easterly direction through low, boggy ground was Green Brook. Behind it on slightly higher ground, was a grove of cedar trees."<sup>11</sup> Free Acres communal land was taken care of by the community, nurtured and enjoyed. Pathways can only be passed by foot and connect the dead end roads. "Paths wound through the woods from road to road connecting all sections of the colony. All the roads, with the excep-

tion of Water Lane, also led into each other so there was always a sense of the whole. Meeting in the woods, two people could take different paths and meet again by the brook or in the meadow. Nature mattered to the denizens of Free Acres, and next to nature, art."<sup>12</sup>

Hall structured the community by establishing Free Acres as a non-profit corporation and created a constitution among other documents for the community to follow. In the preamble of the Free Acres constitution the goals of the community are discussed. "We the leaseholders and residents of Free Acres, desiring to create a community for the study and demonstration of problems of self-government, social progress and taxation where all shall be mutually helpful and free from all forms of monopoly of natural resources, in order to secure to all equality of opportunity and to teach each a full reward of efforts, have this day organized ourselves under the name of Free Acres Association."<sup>13</sup> Under the Constitution community members own their homes and the improvements made, but lease the land for ninety-nine years, which is owned collectively by Free Acres. A single annual tax is charged to each resident and then the Association pays a tax to the town. The annual tax paid by each resident is determined based on the size of a resident's leasehold, maintenance fees, common land and improvement taxes. A working experiment in local democracy Free Acres constitution states that the Association shall be run by three trustees who enforce the rules of the constitution,

<sup>11</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. (New Brunswick: Rivergate Books, 2007) 33.

<sup>12</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 37.

<sup>13</sup> Free Acres Constitution





set policies, oversee the financial aspects of the community and run the monthly meetings, however collectively all the residents come together to govern themselves. Each leasehold has one vote, but the husband and wife are allowed to split their votes. Along with the constitution, Hall drafted three documents to establish a community consistent with his philosophy including a corporate charter, deed of gift and a leasehold agreement. The land in Free Acres is owned by the community, not individuals and the land is protected from abuse by clauses in the deed of gift, however in extreme cases if mismanagement occurs by Free Acres that could lead to the return of the land to Bolton Hall's heirs.

"When you meet your neighbors once a month, you get to know them pretty quickly, Don Herrens said, referring to the monthly meetings to discuss issues of interest to the community."<sup>14</sup> The Free Acres constitution also gave



Illustrations by Free Acres resident Bill Crawford

women the right to vote nearly ten years before the United States Constitution. The community's choice to provide everyone equal opportunity to participate, regardless of race, sex, belief or financial status is a testament to Free Acres forward thinking and open-minded attitude. From the beginning, the community was made up of people from different ethnic backgrounds, religious beliefs and economic status. The one thing they had in common was that they were looking for an alternative way of living. Free Acres brought this dynamic group of people together based on the ideals and principles of the community. "Being a Single Tax Colony, and not a Colony of Single Taxers, Free Acres did not close its gates to any applicant, whether Single Taxer, Socialist, Anarchist, or rigid conservative. So far as I know, no man or woman has ever been barred because of his or her beliefs, for the fundamental principle of the Single Tax is equal opportunity for all. Perhaps one of the surest proofs of the rightness of the Single Tax principles has been the harmony in which all these holders of diverse opinions have lived."<sup>15</sup> People brought their own unique skills, talents and ideals, looking to come together to share the land and to find a sense of belonging, friendship and cooperative spirit while maintaining a voice in the process. "We get to decide how our money is spent, Mrs. Brodgesell said, we decide what roads need to be paved, and how we want to deal with our forest and our trees."<sup>16</sup>

Started as a summer colony, a weekend sanctuary for city dwellers, Free Acres quickly became a quiet hideaway for

<sup>14</sup> Jay Romano. "Free Acres Journal; A Haven Where Residents Own the Houses but Not the Land." *The New York Times*, 1991.

<sup>15</sup> Free Acres 20th Aniv. Document

<sup>16</sup> Jay Romano.



creative types including artists, actors, musicians, authors, scientists, builders and nature lovers. Among the residents were Konrad Bercovici, short story writer; James Cagney, actor and illustrator of Western tales; Victor Killian, Broadway and Hollywood actor; Thorne Smith, writer; McKinley Kantor, novelist and Gershon Benjamin, artist. Charles Lester, another long time Free Acres resident, was a pen and ink artist who chose to use Free Acres as his subject. Free Acreite Dr. Ben Zion Liber, a pioneer in Free Acres, studied medicine as well as art and remembered, "There was a warmth permeating that place... a feeling of fellowship, and a good humor that cemented the entire membership... The majority were intellectuals or artists or other people interested in books and art. They all loved nature and humanity and were radically inclined. We were all happy to leave the city behind and to come here to build and grow things, each in his own way, unlike how it was done in other communities."<sup>17</sup> These creative minds designed and developed ways for people to come together around community, art, education, entertainment and recreation, all while paying respect to the land.

With all the possibilities, along came issues and hardships associated with such radically inclined thinking and development of uncharted land. In the early days living in a remote location was quite difficult. "Water was scarce, lights non existent. There were no roads or automobiles; purchasable food was miles away."<sup>18</sup> Issues of malaria were a concern. "All was not bucolic, however in those first summers. Water and sanitation were pressing problems. Water from a spring in the pasture of a neighboring farm was potable, and Bolton Hall paid to have a well dug near the old farmhouse. This solution was obviously not

going to be sufficient for the long term, and in fact water remained a problem for twenty years, necessitating various bond issues to provide a pump house and other things, Free Acres was then connected to township water."<sup>19</sup>

At this point in United States history the nation had been going through a lot of pressure as they watched President McKinley get assassinated in 1901 and V.P. Theodore Roosevelt take over as president. Two years later, the Wright brothers made the first sustained flight in an aircraft in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. In 1905, Albert Einstein developed his theory of relativity. Five years later a recession was felt by the nation in 1910 and lasted until 1914 at which time World War I began and the Panama Canal opened. By 1920, women had the right to vote, which was preceded by the stock market crash of the late 1920's and the Great Depression that ensued. This period of time was marked by developments and change and brought on feelings of uncertainty and prosperity. Free Acres was able to come together and rely on each other in both good and bad times to grow and prosper. As seasons came and went, some problems and issues remained while others were easily solved. The dynamic of the residents helped dictate how the community grew, changed and prospered. The principles of the community and the land attracted folks to Free Acres but it was the spirit of the Free Acreites and their commitment to community that fostered its success. Living in Free Acres was anything but ordinary, the communal approach to the land fostered a sense of

<sup>17</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 35.

<sup>18</sup> Fred Scheff. "The Story of Free Acres."

<sup>19</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 36.



belonging. Community members were bound by the constitution, participated on various working committees, attended monthly meetings and made decisions for the welfare of the community. They brought together their various skills and fostered social interaction. Each member had a voice in the process and a stake in its success. The principles of combining land and community contributed to Free Acres sustainability and allowed it to survive.

Social events and activities helped build relationships with neighbors, provided support and feelings of camaraderie. Adults and children had a place to discover. Children attended nursery school at the farmhouse where mothers from the community came together to educate them. Summer activities such as theater, archery and art lessons were enjoyed. Halloween parades, Labor Day potluck suppers, structured activities and impromptu gatherings occurred regularly helping to bond the community. Much time was spent enjoying the land, swimming in the cold spring-fed pool and gathering at the annual bonfire in the meadow. The social events and activities allowed Free Acre folk to share their skills, learn from their neighbors and gain a sense of being part of something larger than themselves.

“The many social activities of Free Acres is an indicator of the individuality of its inhabitants.”<sup>20</sup> As noted by Lillian Leon,<sup>21</sup> “Lois Rubin gave a very instructive talk on modern music, including boogie woogie. Gershon Benjamin spoke on modern art. Mr. Van Stratten gave a talk on art from the layman’s point of view, while, Wallace West’s lecture on South America was very instructive. I could go on indefinitely recalling the pleasant lectures and the heated



Free Acres Open Air Theater. The last performance held was in the early 1940s. Only the stage apron remains today.

discussions over the coffee cups near the cozy fire or out on the platform and about the friendly neighbors.”<sup>22</sup> Along with forums, plays were popular, usually performed outside and often brought crowds in from nearby communities. Mrs. Katherine Clay, a Free Acres resident starting in 1922 explains, “We had an excellent theater group here until World War II, and really had top talent. Everybody just had so much talent years back and there’s still many an artisan and genius living in our little colony.”<sup>23</sup> Although somewhat insulated the community was greatly affected when men were called to war. War’s impact was an example of one of the many times in Free Acres history of unrest and change in spirit. “The blackouts of

<sup>20</sup> Rajoppi. “Free Acres Observes Birthday in Harmony with Nature.” *Newark Sunday News*, 1970.

<sup>21</sup> Lillian Leon, a Free Acres resident began coming to the community as a child in 1930. In 1946, Lillian chronicled the history of Free Acres.

<sup>22</sup> Lillian Leon. *Free Acre Chronicle*. (Free Acres, 1949) 10.

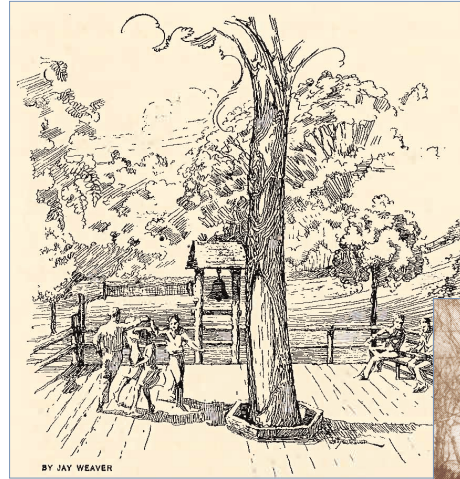
<sup>23</sup> John L. Cavnar. “Utopia, N.J.: Just Plain Folks - Free Acres Began as a Bold Communal Experiment.”





World War II signaled the end of the outdoor performances; they were never to be revived.”<sup>24</sup> The blackouts occurred due to Free Acres’ concern for enemy bombers and changed the dramatic arts in the community. However the community still found ways to come together to express their creative sides.

“As early as 1915, the colonists were referring to themselves as Free Acres Folk. Like one of their inspirations, William Morris and the Pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, they looked back to the Middle Ages for models of cooperative life.”<sup>25</sup> Free acres had guilds reminiscent of times long ago, dramatic guilds for adults and children as well as library and gardening guilds. “The colonists of those days had to make their own amusements, which included pageants, flower shows, spelling bees and folk singing.”<sup>26</sup> A number of these guilds and events took place at the farmhouse including the Locksley Archers who were active in the early 1930s. Situated on common land, the Free Acres farmhouse was originally named, “The Inn” and the grounds were considered the “The Common” area, functioning as the meeting place for community members for the last ninety-nine years. The basement of the farmhouse is known as Frank Stephens Hall. This space along with the adjacent platform in front of the farmhouse has been used in many ways as a place for the community to come together to discuss, enjoy, celebrate and learn. In 1930, Free Acres installed a library on the second floor of the building that was used for activities and eventually housed the community’s collection of books and archives. The Hall was named after early Free Acreite, artist and activist Frank Stephens (1859-1935). A sculptor, poet, musician, actor and crusader for human



Top to bottom, Illustration by Jay Weaver, included in FA 20th Anniversary brochure. Free Acres Farmhouse, 2000 and photograph by Wm. Armbruster photo in 1930.

<sup>24</sup> Rajoppi. "Free Acres Observes Birthday in Harmony with Nature."

<sup>25</sup> Perdita Buchan. Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden. 44.



Frank Stephens, (1859-1935)

and animal rights Stephens was closely involved with Free Acres and went on to live in Arden, the single tax colony located in Delaware. Many individuals that believed in this type of communal living spent time and energy working and living in other like-minded communities. Stephens dreamed of founding a community where he

could bring economic and social ideals to life and incorporate Henry George's Single Tax philosophy and William Morris's Arts and Crafts principles.

In the early days Free Acres lacked electricity and was extremely remote, making transportation difficult. Due to this situation, the need for the community to come together to provide social interaction was great. "Until the Thirties, things ran along in an idyllic but impractical way. Records were carelessly kept. Boundaries were marked off by paces or the position of trees. No one cared, for it did not seem to matter. All was primitive and rustic. The colony liked it. Few could afford to improve their holdings and made the most of what little they had. They created their own fun to their great satisfaction. Then came the Thirties, and with it arrived a group, fairly well situated financially, who began building "citified" houses."<sup>27</sup> By 1929, due to hard economic times and the depression, residents started moving to Free Acres full

time and began weatherizing their summer shacks and cottages and sold their city dwellings as they were forced to downsize. Others in more financially stable positions from the city also began searching for more space and Free Acres quickly grew into a community serving as an alternative to overcrowded city living and a refuge from the uniformity of suburbia. At this point, "Free Acres began to take on its eclectic but charming hodgepodge appearance, every house has a distinct character," says Mrs. Hessing. "Indeed, no two houses even remotely resemble each other, in a style, age or value."<sup>28</sup> As more residents came to Free Acres the architecture became more and more diverse. Residents began adding additions to their small residences expanding outward, not upward, as the constitution in its early stages restricted second floors to be built. "As Grace Colbron described it in the April 1920 issue of Touchstone magazine, the houses were 'architectural experiments which express a spirit of adventure in homemaking. Free Acres is an experiment and adventure in itself.'"<sup>29</sup>

Although Free Acres residents hoped to escape the issues of the outside world, they were unable to avoid the pressures in the 1940s and in the impending war. Transition and change came and disagreements between the "old timers" and the "newcomers" arose. "Somehow the old-time kinship (for we were isolated, no telephones, poor roads, few cars) is gone. It is to recall these days,

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<sup>26</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 45.

<sup>27</sup> Lillian Leon. *Free Acre Chronicle*. (Free Acres, 1949) 7.

<sup>28</sup> Jay Romano. "Free Acres Journal; A Haven Where Residents Own the Houses but Not the Land."



these activities that I write. Newcomers should adjust to our ways and not try to do us over into their pattern. Live in Free Acres long enough, and the charm will be perceived.”<sup>30</sup> Some felt these newcomers, “knew little of the old customs and traditions, and were indifferent to the sacred cow. Finding Free Acres delightful, its charm was taken for granted.”<sup>30</sup> The old timers believed that the newcomers were coming in unaware of Free Acres history and attempting to shape the community into their own. “They wanted comfort, lights, heat, water and covered pipes, drainage, sewers, a swimming pool and the real roads, not ruts. In short, they wanted suburbia, while the older residents fought for rusticity. Hard times were rolling hard and fast.”<sup>32</sup> At this time the newcomers were happily making improvements and were financially able to do so, but the old timers were feeling the pressure of those improvements as the taxes rose. “There came a time when those who had comfortable homes on small acreage saw the injustices of the whole setup of the Free Acres economy and its impractical form of taxation. Many even clamored to pay a higher tax rate, feeling that living here was inexpensive enough, but the stipulations of the Deed of Gift blocked their altruistic nature.”<sup>33</sup> At this moment, among many others in Free Acres history, the emotions and tension rose high. “The newcomers felt that the old timers were dyed-in-the-wool reactionaries. The old residents resented having strangers coming in and spoiling all that they had so laboriously created to make the charming place that IS Free Acres. “Free Acres” is an intangible thing. It is not the houses and the roads that make it what it is but its Spirit and the People who live here.”<sup>34</sup> This tension caused many old timers to retreat and retire from participation in the community and felt

they no longer had a voice in the affairs. As expressed by Lillian Leon, “this is a great loss to the present community for these people lent color and character to the colony.”<sup>35</sup>

Throughout its nearly hundred years, Free Acres has had ups and downs in spirit, finances and development. One thing that has stayed true is the philosophical foundation of the community and the beauty of the land. “Perhaps, this natural atmosphere-both physical and spiritual is Free Acres' most precious legacy.”<sup>36</sup> Along with the spirit and the people, the importance of nature and preserving the environment has been a focus for Free Acres. When the pool was enlarged in 1935, many trees had to be torn down. Countless pictures were taken. Everyone had a never-to-be-forgotten hilarious time. However, the laughter was covered up the sadness felt at the sights of the falling trees. It takes so long to grow a tree and in a few minutes, the work is undone. In the constitution Free Acres prohibits cutting down trees that are more than 4 feet high and three inches in diameter without the permission of the forestry committee. Although nature was typically a subject of agreement and enjoyment, some issues have caused ongoing battles such as the problem of Poison Ivy, sumac and other plants that cause allergic

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<sup>29</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 37.

<sup>30</sup> Lillian Leon. 10.

<sup>31</sup> Lillian Leon. 7.

<sup>32</sup> Lillian Leon. 7.

<sup>33</sup> Lillian Leon. 8.

<sup>34</sup> Lillian Leon. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Lillian Leon. 12.

<sup>36</sup> John Romano. "Free Acres Single Tax Colony, 1910-1930: An Experiment in Pleasant Living." 1972. 38.



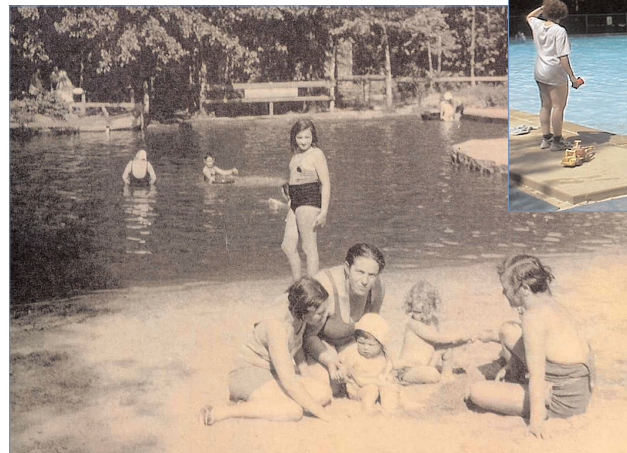


reactions and displeasure. Free Acreites have been dealing with this issue and the matter of eradication since the beginning. "In spite of our efforts, the ivy finds a way of sprouting in other portions of the land. So the fight continues. By the time eradication is completed none of us will be here to enjoy it."<sup>38</sup> With each season and storm, Free Acres continued to preserve the trees and were knowledgeable enough to replenish and reseed when necessary to maintain one of Free Acres best assets. "Lillian had planted innumerable varieties of evergreens. The Garden Guild met on her lawn one meeting, and made the rounds to identify them. In 1946 she bought 1000 seedlings from the State and distributed them. They arrived on a rainy weekend and not the one of a meeting, so she gave handful to the nearest neighbors and to whomever she met on the road. She hopes Free Acres would continue the reforestation since so many oaks, beeches and maples etc. were chopped down during the Great Tree Cutting during the severe ice storm of January 1948."<sup>39</sup> The land and its natural beauty in Free Acres has been continually admired, replenished and enjoyed.

One of the great ways to enjoy a summer afternoon in Free Acres has always been at the Free Acres pool, which has gone through numerous iterations from a swimming hole to in ground pool, as it exists today. A source of enjoyment for the community, the pool has also led to a number of debates and issues surrounding it. The most notable was in 1986 with the addition of the fence around the perimeter of the pool that included a locking front gate. As argued by Gopi Gopinath, a Free Acre resident, "putting any limit on the swimming pool keys and, thus access to the pool, offended the egalitarian ideal."<sup>40</sup> These changes were the result of the need to

comply with liability insurance policies. However Free Acre residents felt violated having to give up their keys and their access to the pool. "In fact, Free Acres' swimming pool might well be representative of its present community. The original water hole has given way to a modern swimming convenience. But the water is pure, pumped from an artesian well. Thus nature unites past and present in Free Acres."<sup>41</sup>

In 1949, Lillian Leon, in her chronicles captured Free Acres status at the time, "in the beginning, Free Acres was a delightful but impractical experiment, but oh, so charming.



The original Free Acres Pool was simply a swimming hole in the Green Brook. Walls and a bottom were added over the years. Top, 1990's. Bottom photo circa 1920's.

<sup>37</sup> Lillian Leon. 6.

<sup>38</sup> Lillian Leon. 20.

<sup>39</sup> Lillian Leon. 82.

<sup>40</sup> Samuel G. Freedman. "In New Jersey, Social Vision of 1910 Still Carries on in '86." *The New York Times*, 1986.

<sup>41</sup> Rajoppi. "Free Acres Observes Birthday in Harmony with Nature."

Nowadays, with its predominance of hardheaded businessman, its picturesqueness is gone. From a simple summer colony, it has changed to a comfortable middle class suburban community. Free Acres is a microcosm. It is a cross section of U.S.A. In it one may find Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Agnostic and Atheist. In politics, all major and minor parties are represented. Liberals and conservatives live in amity. Should one choose to live alone and remain aloof, no one cares. If one prefers a more gregarious life, then he may join the card parties, the mahjongg games, the more cultural activities or whatever happens to interest him.”<sup>42</sup> Because of what Free Acres had to offer, however fewer in number, artists still came to Free Acres. Most notably was Gershon Benjamin, “perhaps the last of the “old” artists, remained until his death in 1985; his wife, Zelda, stayed for the rest of her life.”<sup>43</sup>

“The real threat to Free Acres, however, came at war’s end. Suddenly, this little enclave with its wild bog garden, its protected communal woods and fields, its quirky houses and bohemian customs, was directly in the path of the postwar real estate boom.”<sup>44</sup> The train commute from New Jersey to New York, which took an hour became



Interstate 78, rural western New Jersey, 1965. © Eastern Roads



Wildlife Overpass, I-78, Union County, 2002. © Eastern Roads

very attractive to suburban families and urban sprawl began to take over the once undeveloped area. “Behind the trees that fill the gorge to the north of the superhighway, a 70 acre enclave known as Free Acres inches slowly into the 1990’s while residents fondly stoke the embers of its quasi- utopian past.”<sup>45</sup> Along with all the choices and control that Free Acres was afforded came strife and disagreements and some issues that Free Acres became over powered by. Route 78 was constructed between 1956 and 1989 and has forever stolen a huge part of Free Acres tranquility. The portion directly alongside Free Acres opened in 1987. “The design of I-78 reflected contemporary Interstate-standard design. Design capacities were established at 60,000 vehicles per day on the six-lane section in western New Jersey. The route of I-78 was described in New Jersey Highway Facts, published in

<sup>42</sup> Lillian Leon. 3.

<sup>43</sup> Perdita Buchan. Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden. 52.

<sup>44</sup> Perdita Buchan. Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden. 50.

<sup>45</sup> Jay Romano. “Free Acres Journal; A Haven Where Residents Own the Houses but Not the Land.”

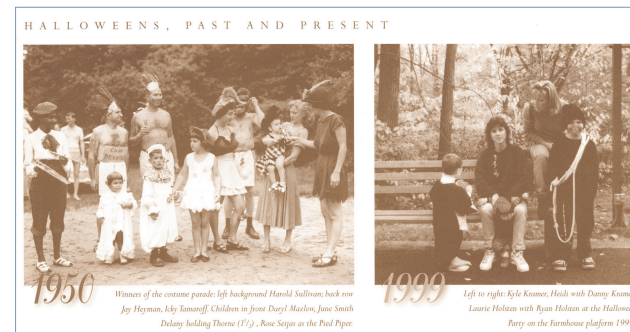




1967 by the NJ Department of Transportation: This freeway will provide an express highway for transcontinental traffic crossing the state from Easton-Phillipsburg to the Newark metropolitan area and the Holland Tunnel. It will divert cross-country traffic from US 22, permitting that primary highway to fulfill its design function as a land service road, and facilitate the flow of local and commuter traffic. To mollify concerns of environmentalists and local residents, engineers designed the freeway to blend in with the topography.”<sup>46</sup> Free Acres fought unsuccessfully to have the highway constructed anywhere else but in their neighborhood and for the addition of sound barriers. A combination of community, town and state politics and lack of funding prevented the installation of sound barriers. Instead Free Acres residents have become accustomed to the constant sounds of big rigs and cars speeding 80mph down the highway. The only reprieve is in the summer months, when the expansive foliage comes out and provides a natural barrier quieting some of the offensive sounds. All could feel the development in the area with mixed reaction. Recently the state has chosen to begin planting evergreen trees along sections of the highway in hopes of creating a barrier. Free Acres is lucky to be a part of this planting, although it's been twenty-two years since the highway opened, better late than never.

By the early seventies a change could be felt in the community. “Housing projects have sprung up nearby. The noise from Interstate 78 has some colonists worried and turn over in the community has increased as the traditional residents – artists, playwrights and socialists – have been replaced by white-collar professionals who can afford the six-figure price of a home.”<sup>47</sup> In the 1980s, the Free Acres constitution, after much discussion, debate and

disagreement, went through iterations and removed the ban allowing residents to build a second floor. This opened the door for residents to build as they pleased and invited the construction of typical suburban homes and forever changed the feeling of a summer colony with simple, rustic cottages. However, by the same token, residents were given the freedom to make decisions about their homes. “Now, gone are the days of the vacationing arty set from Greenwich Village, the free thinkers, the abstractionists, the radicals. Here to stay, today at least, are just people. They are people like others in Berkeley Heights and you can't tell them apart.”<sup>48</sup> Revisions to the constitution allowed the community to change with the times. “Instead of being an isolated little enclave, the place became a kind of rather unique suburban community, said resident Martin Bierbaum.”<sup>49</sup>



Free Acres, Halloween, Past and Present, 1950 and 1999

<sup>46</sup> "Interstate 78 (New Jersey)." *New York Area Roads, Crossings and Exits*. <[http://www.nycroads.com/roads/I-78\\_NJ/](http://www.nycroads.com/roads/I-78_NJ/)>.

<sup>47</sup> "Berkeley Heights colony of Cagney has changed little." *Courier News*. 1987: 1.

<sup>48</sup> John L. Cavnar. "Utopia, N.J.: Just Plain Folks - Free Acres Began as a Bold Communal Experiment."

<sup>49</sup> Martin Bierbaum. "Free Acres: Bolton Hall's Single-Tax Experimental Community." *New Jersey History* Spring/Summer 1984: 37-63.





“Another thing that brings Free Acres together is its children.”<sup>50</sup> In the early 1990s, there was a boom in the number of children in Free Acres, which led to resurgence in the activity of the community. “Children form relationships for life here,” Mrs. Benjamin said. “Friendships stay very strong, and anybody who goes away always tries to come back.”<sup>51</sup> In the twentieth century, development surrounding Free Acres has been shockingly noticeable. Mini mansions popped up all around, filling in the landscape and building up empty land. As the economy and times changed many families became dependent on both parents working and priorities shifted. Changes have been noticed in Free Acres as families have become less involved with the community. In 2009, some problems still exist as they did ten, twenty, thirty years ago. The most prominent is Free Acres water supply. Free Acres is currently in the process of upgrading its water system and its design. Once redesigned the water system will be transferred over to the public water company, which contradicts George’s original principles of avoiding monopolies. However it is Free Acres’ only reasonable option.

Free Acres has developed from primitive beginnings to a modern community. “Those who responded to Hall’s plan to create Eden in the wilds of New Jersey had to be strong individuals— with traits that might not easily accommodate cooperation. The early settlers came for George’s theories and ideas, themselves involved with other utopian colonies and projects. Free Acres itself was always a hotbed of opinions. The Association meetings were often fiery, and fights among colonists and their dogs were common, but people worked things out and friendships appeared to survive.”<sup>52</sup> When Bolton Hall

passed away in 1938 and, “only his close friends mourned his passing. Most leaseholders wished they could be free to pay outright for the land, and not be shackled with the terms and restrictions of the Deed. They forget that but for Bolton Hall there would have been no Free Acres.”<sup>53</sup> Although the principles of Bolton Hall and Henry George informed Free Acres, it is the “folk” and the land that truly shaped what the community has come to mean today. “Although Bolton Hall’s careful design had kept Free Acres together for some forty years, that was not the whole story. It seemed that Free Acres, in tune with its make-do beginnings, had an adaptable quality that allowed it to change just enough to stay the same.”<sup>54</sup> However if the principles and constitution weren’t crafted as skillfully as they were, it is possible Free Acres would no longer exist. “Free Acres has seen plenty of tempers rise and fall, and the colony has always found a way to muddle through. A certain adaptability, in fact, may be a saving trait at Free Acres. As many of the state’s other experimental communities have vanished or assimilated.”<sup>55</sup> As Free Acres approaches its one-hundredth anniversary of its inception perhaps its most impressive legacy to date is its longevity and history that still continues today. “One of the things that makes Free Acres so unique is simply that it has lasted so long, says Martin Bierbaum.

<sup>50</sup> Jay Romano. “Free Acres Journal; A Haven Where Residents Own the Houses but Not the Land.”

<sup>51</sup> Jay Romano.

<sup>52</sup> Perdita Buchan. “Utopia, New Jersey.” *New Jersey Monthly Magazine*, 2008.

<sup>53</sup> Lillian Leon. 3.

<sup>54</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 50.

<sup>55</sup> Samuel G. Freedman. “In New Jersey, Social Vision of 1910 Still Carries on in ‘86.”



Part of the reason is because the community was never static; it was able to bend. And you can't underestimate the nature of the landholding arrangement either."<sup>56</sup>

### CHAPTER 3: SINGLE TAX COMMUNITIES

"From the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century, New Jersey's proximity to New York and Philadelphia, as well as its landscape of coastal plain, mountains, and farms, made it home to a surprising number of so-called utopian communities. Created in response to an increasingly industrialized society that separated people from nature and from each other, these communities were hungry for open land. In rural New Jersey, you could pick your paradise."<sup>57</sup> In response to industrialization and urbanization happening in America these trends were causing people to look toward a simpler more communal way of life with an emphasis on nature. "These experimental societies were a manifestation of the social ferment before World War I. The industrial revolution transformed American society after the Civil War. The growth of large corporations and the growing reliance on industrial technology seemed to lessen the importance of individual initiative in an increasingly complicated world. People perceived a disintegration of society and social chaos. Thus with the growing inequality in the distribution of wealth, a wide range of reformists and revolutionary thought was spurred."<sup>58</sup> As a response to historical events Utopian communities were started as social experiments and places for people to find an alternative way of living. Some communities prospered while others failed.

A number of these communities were located near large

cities that had financial and intellectual centers like New York and Philadelphia. City dwellers searching for land and space and in most cases a better life looked to neighboring states with expansive amounts of undeveloped and inexpensive land. "Each began as a nonprofit corporation that bought land, using the corporation as a holding company. Real estate taxes were billed to the corporation, which would pay the taxes in a lump sum after assessing the colony's residents on the value of their landholdings according to George's theory. Between 1895 and 1927, ten single tax colonies were formed in the United States. Hall believed that the freedom for the individual could come through community."<sup>59</sup> Although ten colonies existed, the three that exist today are Fairhope, Alabama; Arden, Delaware and Free Acres, New Jersey.

The community of Fairhope was started in 1894 in Fairhope, Alabama. Bolton Hall was one of the early leaseholders in the community, "a friend to radical causes, he also promoted the Garden City movement, important later to Roosevelt, New Jersey, and the Modern School movement, which eventually produced the anarchist community at Stelton, New Jersey. He was a frequent visitor to Upton Sinclair's Helicon Hall."<sup>60</sup> Bolton Hall was inspired and looked to William Morris, an English artist and designer and Leo Tolstoy, a European philosopher and

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<sup>56</sup> Martin Bierbaum. "Free Acres: Bolton Hall's Single-Tax Experimental Community." *New Jersey History* Spring/Summer 1984: 37-63.

<sup>57</sup> Perdita Buchan. "Utopia, New Jersey."

<sup>58</sup> Linus Yamane. "Free acres." 1997.  
<<http://pzacad.pitzer.edu/~lyamane/free.htm>>.

<sup>59</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 29.

<sup>60</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 22.



writer who impacted the Modern School movement. "Like William Morris, Hall nursed a nostalgia for the old ways of tiny village communities based on personal relationships. Morris, in his utopian novel *News from Nowhere*, posits a world in harmony with nature and the old crafts. Hall believed the freedom for the individual could come through community."<sup>61</sup> With those goals the community of Fairhope was established. "Upon passage of the constitution one of the founding members said he believed there was a fair hope that the experiment would succeed. Thus, the name for the utopia demonstration community, Fairhope."<sup>62</sup>

"The social theories of Henry George attracted progressive, freethinking liberals and socialists to Fairhope. His economic theories attracted more conservative individuals. Together they have formed a diverse activist independent community that in turn attracted artists, writers, educators, and eccentrics of all types."<sup>63</sup> Fairhope is one of the rare southern utopian communities and the first that was connected to Henry George and his theories. "There were not a lot of utopian communities in the South since most such communities had as a premise that they had to spring from free men and women," said Steven Suitts, head of the Southern Regional Council, a non-profit educational organization. "That was a very hard premise to find in the South with its agrarian and low-wage economy and its history of slavery."<sup>64</sup>

The community owns approximately 4,300 acres and leases it to about 1,300 homeowners, businesses and farms. The residents pay a single tax each year to offset the costs of public services including water, roads, electricity, schools and parks. Taxes are determined by the



Fairhope, Alabama, 1897. © Fairhope Single Tax Corporation

value of the land and not the value of buildings, farms or businesses. Fairhope has always been environmentally focused. "Back in 1894, the Single Tax Colony founders knew they had something both beautiful and also vital to preserve, in their ownership of the beachfront at Fairhope, on historic Mobile Bay."<sup>65</sup> Today this special spot is still thriving. The beach and parklands were eventually dedicated to the town citizens for free use, home to an array of wildlife from birds to freshwater steeps. A bluff to the east is covered with kudzu and vine-like vegetation that helps prevent erosion while a rose garden at the entrance to the piers blossoms half the year.

"Fairhope stands as a tribute to George's ideas on urban planning and land use. Because of the corporation's

<sup>61</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 30.

<sup>62</sup> "History of Fairhope and the Single Tax Corporation." <<http://www.fairhopesingletax.com/fhstory.html>>.

<sup>63</sup> "History of Fairhope and the Single Tax Corporation."

<sup>64</sup> Ronald Smothers. "The Story of Fairhope, Alabama."

<sup>65</sup> Ronald Smothers. "The Story of Fairhope, Alabama."





control of the land, the town has open vistas, open beaches and abundant parkland. In other interesting ways time, progress and prosperity have drowned out the envisioned utopia. Fairhope is clearly no longer the haven of radical political experimenters and artists that it once was. Recent lawsuits filed by residents have attacked the tax-setting practices of the corporation, or the "colony" as it is often called. Some critics, pointing to steep tax increases on some farmland, suggest that even the corporation has become infected by the greed and land-lust that George despised. It is still a wonderful and beautiful place to live, they said, but Fairhope has lost its sense of mission."<sup>66</sup> As other intentional communities Fairhope has adapted over time and in doing so was forced away from some of its original principles and the goals of its founder. The practices and ideas have faded in many of these intentional communities but the land and the spirit remain. "It was once a place of radical ideas that now votes Republican and gave Ronald Reagan huge margins some years ago," said Paul Gaston, a history professor at the University of Virginia whose grandfather, Ernest B. Gaston, was one of the town's founders. It was once a place where people came to try to solve social problems. Now it is a place where people go to escape social problems, Ms. Aller said."<sup>67</sup> The two main issues that led to these changes and adaptations included the choice to lease land to people that weren't members of the corporation as well as the decision to integrate the corporation with the town of Fairhope. Both decisions led to problems focused on issues related to having two types of land ownership and the split between corporation and town. Eventually Fairhope, the town, gained the upper hand and the single tax ideas and principles of this

community have begun to fade to the background. "Mr. Rowe said that from the beginning the colony made a lot of compromises and adaptations in order to survive and it is likely that those adaptations helped doom its success as a laboratory of the single tax idea."<sup>68</sup>

The single tax community of Arden is located in Delaware and began in 1900. Philadelphians, sculptor Frank Stephens and architect Will Price, founded Arden based on William Morris's Arts and Crafts principles and Henry George's Single Tax philosophy. "So in 1897 they scrounged up enough money to buy an old farm north of Wilmington and laid out plans for the village of Arden."<sup>69</sup> William Morris believed in resisting the trends in modern cities and industry. An Englishman, he supported a revival of craft production, quality design and community living. "The life, work, and ideas of William Morris are as important today as they were in his lifetime. Morris aimed for a state of affairs in which all might enjoy the potential richness of human life. His thought on how we might live, on creative work, leisure and machinery, on ecology and conservation, on the place of the arts in our lives and their relation to politics, as on much else, remains as challenging now as it was a century ago."<sup>70</sup>

At first, Arden was a summer community where residents lived an uncomplicated life in tents and rustic properties. Community members were allowed to improve their residences without the land tax increasing.

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<sup>66</sup> Ronald Smothers.

<sup>67</sup> Ronald Smothers.

<sup>68</sup> Ronald Smothers.

<sup>69</sup> Joyce Foote. "The Founder's Dilemma: Lessons from Arden Village." <http://communities.ic.org/85/47.php>.

<sup>70</sup> "William Morris Society Statement of Purpose." <http://www.morrissociety.org/statement.html>.



Inspired by the Garden-City Movement, half the land is woods and the other half, open space connected by paths throughout the village. Arden in its early years was the summer home of artists, musicians, theater people and social activists. "Price designed a town plan that preserved communal open space and encouraged people to mingle with their neighbors. Stephens and Price adopted "You are welcome hither" as the community motto because they wanted Arden to be a place open to people of all economic levels and political views, a new departure in an era when restrictions were the norm."<sup>71</sup>

Plays and the customs of England inspired Arden's community life. In 1908, The Arden Club was created to organize community activities including groups called Gilds that would come together around different interests and communal responsibilities. "Their little village quickly took on this artisan flavor. Soon it attracted a rich diversity of other artists and social activists, and became known for its weavings, woodwork and stained glass, for its Shakespearean theater, and for its eccentric population. With Single Taxers and Socialists,



Map of Arden, Delaware

Anarchists and Communists, Arden community in the early days was a wild mix of young hotheads and visionaries. Nowhere was this more evident than in the town meetings."<sup>72</sup> Similar to Free Acres, Arden was a haven of community spirit and interaction but was much more focused on craft and artisan trades. "From the beginning, Shakespeare's plays were produced in the outdoor Field Theater. Fairs, pageants, and Arden holidays filled the calendar. Monthly town meetings of all the "Ardenfolk" gave everyone—including women and children—a voice and vote in town affairs. It took longer to implement the Arts-and-Crafts ideal because the community was so small at first. Many people worked in Wilmington or Philadelphia. In 1913, the Craft Shop was built, which provided facilities for various artisans. Arden crafts, especially from the Arden Forge and Arden Weavers, became popular in the area."<sup>73</sup> The community members not only lived in Arden but also participated in its success by working directly on the land fostering their creative spirit and endeavors.

"It began as a summer camp, laid-out on a farm, up a remote dirt road."<sup>74</sup> Arden has become the oldest, planned single tax community and is considered the premier garden city in the United States. The community believed in providing artists with an alternative. The school at Arden was very progressive, being the first to willingly desegregate after the 1953 Supreme Court verdict. "Growing up in Arden in the mid-'40s and '50s,

<sup>71</sup> [http://www.hsd.org/Lib\\_ArdenExhibit.htm](http://www.hsd.org/Lib_ArdenExhibit.htm)

<sup>72</sup> Joyce Foote.

<sup>73</sup> "Arden, DE." Delaware Historical Society - Home Page." <[http://www.hsd.org/Lib\\_ArdenExhibit.htm](http://www.hsd.org/Lib_ArdenExhibit.htm)>.



we children were oblivious to these seeming failures, as, happily, most of the village remains today. What survived of the dream is rich and special--the beauty, the quaintness, the town meetings, the arts and theater, the Gild Hall and the gilds, the village forests and greens, and a town that, nearly a century later, still eats together on Saturday night. It's all very good."<sup>75</sup>

As in the other examples of intentional communities, the ups and downs in spirit, agreement and purpose in Arden were very evident. "The battles were often intense. As the years passed, the forces of change pounded away at the village's Georgist legacy. Much to the dismay of founders Stephens and Price, the original vision lost out. What remains of Single Tax in Arden today is but a shadow of how it was meant to function."<sup>76</sup> Although the initial vision of the community has faded, Arden still remains successful in the relationships it has created and the land it has preserved. "Frank Stephens died believing that Arden community had failed. His 'come one, come all' policy had indeed proved fatal to his cause. What he could not see, however, but which is visible to us nearly a century later, is that in founding Arden he had established a garden--a fertile, sustainable garden--in which not only he, but many others after him, could build toward their dream of a better world. His beloved crop, Single Tax, was lost, but the garden itself survived. In setting up those democratic town meetings that, in the end, voted him down, this founder trained a staff of vigorous and experienced gardeners, eager and able to carry on, season after season, long after the founders had passed. This is not, perhaps, such a terrible thing."<sup>77</sup>

What is so special about Arden is that by the 1990s the community still had many residents interested in the arts and interested in maintaining the community activities. "Residents [in 1992] include close to 100 artists, writers and musicians, and all kinds of other people."<sup>78</sup> Today, the community of Arden is still centered on its community spirit and gatherings. The activities exist today as they did years ago, gilds, still focused on a variety of topics ranging from dancing to discussions about George's economic theories are held in the Gild Hall, a preserved 18th-century hay barn. The community still gathers for weekly meals, music, events and fairs. It is their spirit that continues to be the driving force in maintaining this unique community.



Pond at Arden, Delaware. © Historical Society of Delaware

<sup>74</sup> Russ McKinney. "Arden Facts."  
<<http://www.ardenartists.com/interest.htm>>.

<sup>75</sup> Joyce Foote.

<sup>76</sup> Joyce Foote.

<sup>77</sup> Joyce Foote.

<sup>78</sup> Russ McKinney.





## CHAPTER 4: SECULAR COMMUNITIES – ART, AGRICULTURE, NATURAL LIVING, & EDUCATIONAL

### NEW JERSEY COMMUNITIES:

• THE STELTON COLONY (1910-late 1940s/early 50s): Unique among colonies of that time, Stelton was the first colony founded by a school. The Modern School featured diverse groups of people, bringing together immigrants and natives, intellectuals and blue-collar workers. Many residents at Stelton were involved with other intentional communities either prior to or after living in the community. Bolton Hall in fact acted as treasurer at Stelton. Similar to Free Acres, Stelton didn't require residents to subscribe to any one socialist, political or religious point of views.<sup>79</sup> "There was the usual smorgasbord of socialists, single taxers, and other progressive thinkers. Upton Sinclair was a representative socialist on the advisory board."<sup>80</sup> Begun as a summer colony few remained over the rough winters and most retreated back to New York City. To keep up interest and spirit the colony would come together two times a year to celebrate and make public its goals and ideals.

"There was a rich and varied life in the colony. By summer 1918, there were regular lectures every Saturday evening, often combined with violin or piano recitals. On Sunday evenings, there was music and dancing. Small discussion groups met nearly every evening. There were regular adult classes in addition to the school, and plays were performed in the school auditorium."<sup>81</sup> Residents were mostly poor, commuting to New York City for work, many in the garment industry. The community was made up of an eclectic group of cottages that were



Stelton Colony Dorm and Living House, 1915.  
© Special Collections & Archives, Rutgers University Libraries

pieced together and often dilapidated and only reachable by rustic, unpaved roads. Residents utilized the land and grew vegetables, which were the main staple of their diets. This type of communal lifestyle allowed residents to withstand the depression better than those in urban regions by providing them with land to produce food and people to share responsibilities and support.<sup>82</sup>

The Modern School Movement encouraged the creation of schools in many cities including, Philadelphia, Chicago, Salt Lake City and Seattle and only a small amount lasted. "Many were ephemeral ventures lasting a few years at best, and some were only Sunday schools. In contrast, the Modern School at Stelton lasted almost four decades."<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>79</sup> "Stelton Modern School."  
<http://www.talkinghistory.org/stelton/steltonhistory.html>

<sup>80</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 61.

<sup>81</sup> "Ferrer Colony, Stelton - ICWiki."  
<[http://wiki.ic.org/wiki/Ferrer\\_Colony,\\_Stelton](http://wiki.ic.org/wiki/Ferrer_Colony,_Stelton)>.

<sup>82</sup> "Ferrer Colony, Stelton - ICWiki."

<sup>83</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 61.



The Ferrer Modern School, founded near New Brunswick, New Jersey was an experiment in education. Located in the country the school and its students spent ample amounts of time outside learning, growing food to eat and adventuring through the natural environment. "The Modern School, the 'Living House' for boarding children, and surrounding Ferrer Colony became a center of libertarian ideas, art, and politics. Based on the principle of 'freedom in education,' the children took part in running the school and were allowed to make their own educational choices, free of established curricula, conventional classes, examinations, and grades."<sup>84</sup> The founders of the school attempted to create an environment for children that emphasized taking responsibility for oneself and those around you in hopes the children would grow up to be productive citizens that believed in the power of community and working together.<sup>85</sup> "The arts and crafts curriculum was immensely varied for so small a school. It included, as it always had, printing, but also weaving, pottery, leather and metal work, basket making, and carpentry. Sports were important and music became central."<sup>86</sup> Steltonites as they were called made it through the 1920s but the Great Depression of the



Stelton Colony, Camp Kilmer, 1960.  
© Special Collections & Archives, Rutgers University Libraries

1930s hit hard causing many families to opt to send their children to public school instead of paying the fees at the Modern School. Others chose more traditional routes for their children out of fear the students weren't getting the same academic skills in the nontraditional, open environment.

"In the 1920s, the main conflicts were between the colonists who had remained anarchists and those who, enthusiastically influenced by the revolution in Russia and the creation of the USSR, had become communists. (This conflict within the working class and the radical movement was widespread in many countries and in other intentional communities.)"<sup>87</sup> In the 1940s, in conjunction with the onset of World War II, the United States government purchased land near the colony of Stelton for Camp Kilmer, where thousands of young soldiers were housed. As the residents left, the area was inundated with people not interested in the school or community and the spirit of the community faded away. "These problems lead many colonists to move away, renting out or selling their properties to (mostly black) soldiers and their families. By the end of the war, the colony had been decimated and few colonists remained."<sup>88</sup>

Stelton like a long list of intentional communities that have since ceased, have influences that are still impactful

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<sup>84</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 57.

<sup>85</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 57.

<sup>86</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 76.

<sup>87</sup> Ferrer Colony, Stelton - ICWiki."  
<[http://wiki.ic.org/wiki/Ferrer\\_Colony,\\_Stelton](http://wiki.ic.org/wiki/Ferrer_Colony,_Stelton)>.

<sup>88</sup> Ferrer Colony, Stelton - ICWiki."



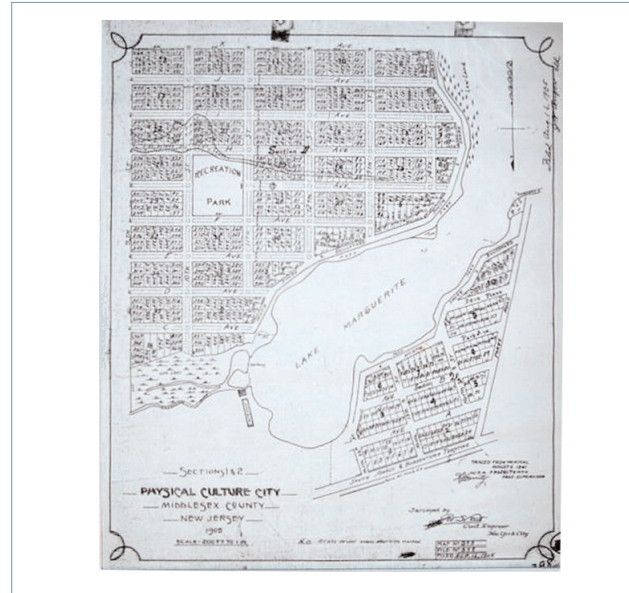
and relevant today. The colony and school were both good representations of promoting and instilling the power of the individual, the community and the land. “The good of the next generation is a powerful glue for holding together a disparate group of people. And it was an appealing idea— to change the world by changing the character not of institutions but of people. Today, many of the Modern School’s innovations are standard educational practice; learning by doing, and the incorporation of art, music, and drama into the curriculum.”<sup>89</sup>

• PHYSICAL CULTURE CITY (1905-1907):

Bernarr McFadden, a publisher and advocate of physical wellness, started Physical Culture City in 1905. McFadden leased 1,900 acres of untouched land in close proximity to New Brunswick in Helmetta, New Jersey and attracted residents locally and from Canada, South America, Cuba and Africa. Physical Culture City was established to be a community that encouraged exercise and healthy living in conjunction with a closeness to nature.<sup>90</sup> McFadden began publishing about wellness in 1899 after a childhood of illness and believed that exercise could cure. His first publication was Physical Culture magazine and subse-



Physical Culture City - The Old Mill & Brook  
© Roger Fillary & Gil Waldron



Physical Culture City Map, 1905. © Roger Fillary & Gil Waldron

quently he created a publishing empire, which he eventually moved to the city. Like the other intentional communities Physical Culture City came together around community activities, ideals and spirit. “Pageants, parades, and events on the lake, such as the water spectacle, ‘A Venetian Night,’ were regular occurrences, along with group sings on the shore.”<sup>91</sup>

“Saloons and the like were not permitted. Because the people who joined MacFadden in PC City shunned restrictive clothing, it acquired what seems to be an

<sup>89</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 83.

<sup>90</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 102.

<sup>91</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 107.

<sup>92</sup> Jim Bennett. “Bernarr Macfadden - Weakness, a Crime.”  
<<http://www.riverflow.com/macfadden/macfadden3.html>>.





underserved reputation for being a nudist colony.”<sup>92</sup>

This open lifestyle and increased nudity eventually became a problem for surrounding neighbors and local authorities along with the mosquitoes proved to be detrimental to the community. McFadden leased the land, as did Free Acres for ninety-nine years. “MacFadden decided to lease rather than sell the property in order to retain control of his city. He had been warned if he sold the property that, his restrictions would be much harder to enforce.”<sup>93</sup> However this was quite different than in Free Acres where the community was run based on democratic principles not singular control. MacFadden was eventually distracted from his city and the ideals of living simply in the natural world and his time was taken over by issues with his publishing company and beyond causing the city to fade away. “Unlike Bolton Hall, the cool intellectual who set Free Acres in motion as a social experiment and got out of the way, Bernarr McFadden was a despot, if a somewhat benevolent one. He admired strong leaders like Teddy Roosevelt and Franklin D. Roosevelt. He was even impressed by Benito Mussolini, whom he visited in Italy and who endorsed the principles of the physical culture. Physical Culture City would not survive without its leader.”<sup>94</sup>

#### • HELICON HOME COLONY, HELICON HALL (1906-1907):

Created by Upton Sinclair in Englewood, NJ, Helicon Home Colony or Helicon Hall as it is known, was an attempt to focus on, “the servant problem, a topic popular in middle-class households of the day.”<sup>95</sup> Sinclair’s intentions were to create a colony that allowed professionals to do their work in a communal environment

while having the responsibilities of household chores and responsibilities taken care of for them. “Helicon Hall fulfilled his longtime dream—to build a utopian community that would herald the virtues of socialism. He invested \$30,000 he received from *The Jungle*, his best selling novel about the Chicago stockyards. But his dream turned into ashes.”<sup>96</sup> Helicon Hall was a mix of professionals who wanted to avoid chores of domestic life. The majority of residents believed in some type of socialist ideals and supported the women’s movement of the time. The residents were professionals that included authors, artists, musicians, editors and teachers. A farm community was established that generated meat, milk and produce. Residents lived in the Hall, once a school for boys, food was served in a communal kitchen and children were raised in nurseries. “As one young colonist, actress Undena Eberlein, later a colonist at Free Acres described it: ‘The house has a big court in the middle full of giant rubber plants and ferns that reach to the glass roof and a brook flows through with rustic bridges etc, and mossy banks and statues, etc.’”<sup>97</sup> Sinclair opened, “Helicon Hall on November 1, 1906, with twelve families and hopes of eventually attracting hundreds more utopian-minded authors, poets, and colleagues. Cynical journalists said Sinclair built it as a “free love nest” just to have mistress-

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<sup>93</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 102.

<sup>94</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 111.

<sup>95</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 5.

<sup>96</sup> “SINCLAIR AUTOBIOGRAPHY.” <<http://www.uptonsinclair.com/bio.html>>.

<sup>97</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 11.



es available. Despite the cynics, it was a successful albeit brief experiment in communal living with the families cooperating and upholding high moral standards, as Sinclair was quick to point out."<sup>98</sup>

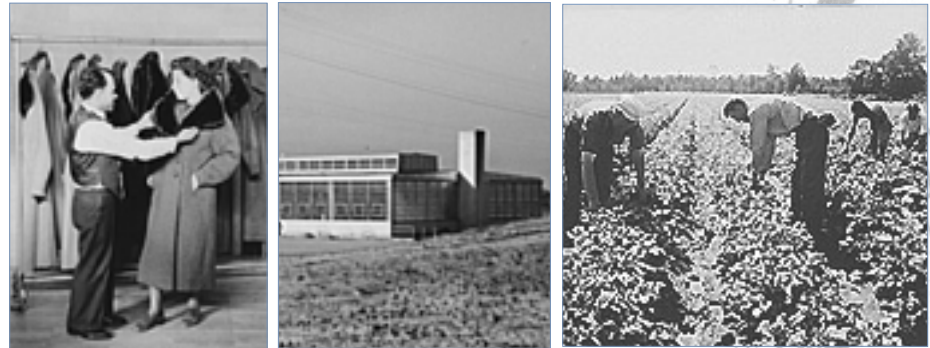
The colony had many notable visitors during its short 6-month existence, mostly literary types with similar issues and concerns that plagued Sinclair, many of which were involved with other intentional communities. After a few months, Helicon Hall and Upton Sinclair came under great scrutiny for accusations that the community was discriminating against African Americans and Jews as well as their policies regarding institutionalized childcare. The colonies singular perspectives and Sinclair's choice to surround himself exclusively with like-minded people could have eventually been its downfall. "It is hard to know how long Helicon Hall would have lasted, or how its difficulties would have been resolved, because on March 16, 1907, at three in the morning, Helicon Hall burned to the ground."<sup>99</sup>

*"We stood in the snow and watched our beautiful utopia flame and roar, until crashed and died away to a dull glow."* – Upton Sinclair, *The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair*

• ROOSEVELT, JERSEY HOMESTEAD'S (1936-1946):  
*"It's not communism. It's not socialism. It is the new way—the cooperative way."* – Benjamin Brown, as quoted in the *Saturday Evening Post*, February 5, 1938

Originally called Jersey Homesteads, the community was started on 1,275 acres southeast of Hightstown, New Jersey. Following the death of Franklin Roosevelt in 1945 Jersey Homesteads officially became Roosevelt, a community intended as an agricultural and industrial community for garment workers. The subsistence-home-

stead program played an influence in the development of Roosevelt. In 1933, the National Industrial Recovery Act created the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, "the Division of Subsistence Homesteads was intended 'to decentralize industry from congested cities and enable workers to improve their standards of living through



Roosevelt garment factory and cooperative farm.  
© Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, FSA-OWI Collection

subsistence agriculture."<sup>100</sup> The community was greatly influenced by Jewish immigrant, Benjamin Brown who had experience developing rural cooperatives and who made his fortunes in the poultry industry.

"Roosevelt was one of ninety-nine communities across the country created by the federal government as part of a New Deal initiative. Jersey Homesteads was unique, however, in that it was the only community planned as an

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<sup>98</sup> "SINCLAIR AUTOBIOGRAPHY."

<sup>98</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 19.

<sup>99</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 178.

<sup>100</sup> "Rutgers University Libraries: Manuscripts: Borough of Roosevelt Historical Collection."

agro-industrial cooperative which included a farm, factory and retail stores, and it was the only one established specifically for urban Jewish garment workers, many of whom were committed socialists.”<sup>101</sup> Roosevelt had a community school, a factory building, poultry yard and modern water and sewer plants. “Despite conflicts and hardships, the residents of the borough did manage to build a close-knit community--working, playing and developing the land together. Indeed, in the late 1930s the Community Manager, through the Works Progress Administration, developed recreational programs of adult education, arts and crafts, and founded a library. The borough also had many clubs and societies. The Orthodox synagogue did not seem to be of central importance but religious services were held at various locations until a synagogue was built in 1956.”<sup>102</sup>

In 1935 the community began to have problems with the structures at Roosevelt and called in an architect to redesign the community. “In designing the community, Kastner was influenced by both the English Garden City Idea and by the German Bauhaus style. Jersey Homesteads' buildings are characterized by their spare geometric forms and use of modern building materials (including cinder blocks). The houses are integrated with communal areas and surrounded by a green belt. Although it appears rather stark today, Kastner's design was considered innovative at the time.”<sup>103</sup>

“The middle years of the twentieth century were years of relative stability for Roosevelt. There was little development, and the community remained fairly homogenous, except for an influx of artists, which gained Roosevelt a reputation as an artists' colony. In 1936, Alfred Kastner

had invited the artist Ben Shahn to paint a mural on the wall of the school depicting the founding of Jersey Homesteads. Ben Shahn and his wife Bernarda Bryson settled permanently in Roosevelt in 1939 and attracted other artists, including former chairman of the Pratt Institute's Fine Arts department Jacob Landau; painter Gregorio Prestopino and his wife artist Liz Dauber; graphic artist David Stone Martin and his son wood engraver Stefan Martin; photographers Edwin and Louise Rosskam; and others.”<sup>104</sup>

In 1945 the community felt tension from the federal government as several advances were made to abolish the project and its federal funding. After the Second World War, the federal government chose to cease its control of all subsistence homesteads projects and offered the residents at Roosevelt an option to purchase their house at appraised value or vacate the premise. The homes were eventually sold by the end of 1947 and the Federal government was no longer affiliated with the community. “Now that anyone could buy, the town began to change. Different kinds of people moved in, yet something essential about Roosevelt did not change. Roosevelt is also fortunate in that its physical location, in the New York–Philadelphia economic corridor, meant that jobs were available after the cooperative dream failed.”<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>101</sup>“Rutgers University Libraries.”

<sup>102</sup> “Rutgers University Libraries: Manuscripts.”

<sup>103</sup> “Rutgers University Libraries: Manuscripts.”

<sup>104</sup> “Rutgers University Libraries: Manuscripts”

<sup>105</sup> Perdita Buchan. *Utopia, New Jersey: Travels in the nearest Eden*. 200.





By the 1970s, the demographics of Roosevelt shifted as the Jewish working class residents moved away and new generations settled. "With the rise of the automobile and commercial shopping centers, Roosevelt became suburbanized and the residents became less dependent on the community to satisfy their needs. A new generation of professionals settled in Roosevelt, gradually altering the Jewish working class homogeneity of the community. These changes led to conflicts between some of the long-time residents, who wanted to preserve the community as it was, and new arrivals who supported more industrial and residential development."<sup>106</sup> The community of Roosevelt lasted for only ten years and shows the effects of government control and funding.

## ART-CENTERED COMMUNITY:

### • ROYCROFT (1895-1915):

A reformist community of craft workers and artists played a significant role in the Arts and Crafts movement in the USA. "Many people believe that Elbert Hubbard had no intention of starting a community when he purchased the land in East Aurora NY that would eventually become known as Roycroft. Whether he intended to or not, this parcel was destined to become a vast, wanting stage for some of the most productive and talented artisans in America at the time."<sup>107</sup> Hubbard was fascinated by the Arts and Crafts Movement and spent time with William Morris. Hubbard was deeply inspired by Morris's Kelmscott Press and was influenced to set up his own press. "Roycroft, which means 'king's house,' was an artistic community, which grew out of the initial success of the print shop."<sup>108</sup>

"Hubbard set up a community that was to be self-sufficient, based on pre-industrial agrarian ideals where artisans and their families lived and worked in healthy, idyllic conditions. Housing was provided in the form of Bungalows in the craftsman style."<sup>109</sup> Located in upstate New York near Buffalo, residents moved to Roycroft from all over the United States. Some came to the community as skilled and established craftsmen and artists while others came as apprentices looking to gain skills from their neighbors. Together the residents worked to produce furniture, lead and glasswork, metal objects and focused considerable attention on bookmaking and the printing process. "Even though Hubbard, the master, the writer and the entrepreneur, actually provided the main focus and support for the Roycroft community, it was the artisans and their designs that embodied the spirit of the Arts and Crafts Movement and appealed to the buying public."<sup>110</sup>



Roycroft Art Gallery and Print Shop. Images from a book circa 1907. Painting by a Roycrofter.

<sup>106</sup> "Rutgers University Libraries"

<sup>107</sup> "The Roycroft Community."  
<<http://www.roycroft.org/community.html>>.

<sup>108</sup> "The Roycroft Community."

<sup>109</sup> "The Roycroft Community."

<sup>110</sup> "The Roycroft Community."

“From its inception in 1894 to its demise in 1938, the Roycroft community produced some of the finest hand-crafted furniture, books, lamps and metal work of the Arts and Crafts Movement. The community reflected the Movement's ideals of art and craftsmanship as instruments of social reform in its organization as well as in its products. The high quality and unique artistry of the Roycroft creations made them very popular. But it was the business acumen and charismatic personality of its founder, Elbert Hubbard, that made Roycroft one of the most successful artistic enterprises of the Arts and Crafts era.”<sup>111</sup> By 1901, Hubbard created a catalogue to advertise and sell his furniture, which was produced in the community. Throughout his years in Roycroft Hubbard utilized his printing skills to help him advertise and achieve his goals for the community. “After working hours, residents enjoyed the lectures of Hubbard in the chapel, attended picnics together and read magazines and literature produced by the Roycroft press. The magazine, along with other philosophical pamphlets and publications, became popular and helped to bring Hubbard and the Roycroft community to national attention while supporting their activities at the same time.”<sup>112</sup> The community expanded to 500 in 1910 and remained fruitful until after the founders’ death in 1915 when Roycroft saw a gradual decline in residents and spirit. The official demise of the Roycroft community was in 1938 in conjunction with the Arts and Crafts Movement declining in popularity. “But the Great Depression and the general loss of interest by the public sealed the fate of the Roycrofters and the business was sold at auction in 1938.”<sup>113</sup> The Roycroft spirit lives on today due in part to a renewed interest in the Arts and Crafts Movement and

restoration of original buildings and community property. Roycroft crafts can be seen at auctions and in museum exhibitions highlighting the movement and allowing the spirit of the community to live on. The Roycroft community may have been the most influential of intentional communities in creating its place within the history of American art.

## RESEARCH CONCLUSION

Single tax communities and other intentional communities explored in this thesis, based on artistic, educational or environmental ideals, share common elements including their creative residents, connection to the land, living expression and desired future.

The research reviewed the influences on these communities and explored the reasons some failed while others, including Free Acres, continue to thrive. The information gained supports the need for communities to re-examine and celebrate their history, promote, reflect and redefine core values and foster on-going dialogue, spirit and involvement.

The research also showcases the importance of intentional communities and the power of identity that comes from belonging to a group committed to communal values and goals. As a Free Acreite of 29 years, living in Free Acres has been anything but ordinary; a magical tree-filled land of 70 plus expansive acres to explore, a giant

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<sup>111</sup> Hilary Davis.

<sup>112</sup> Hilary Davis.

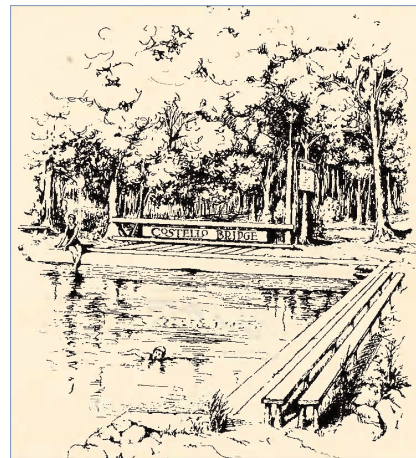
<sup>113</sup> Hilary Davis.



playground with no fences allowed. The environment fostered a sense of belonging, a place where neighbors are more like family. Adults and children alike have a place to discover and live in a lush wooded environment, exploring nature while paying respect to the land. They are encouraged to have a voice in governing their community.

I clearly remember a question my best friend's father, a part of my extended Free Acre family, would always ask. "Did you have a happy childhood?" he would inquire. Of course growing up, I thought it a silly question, but as the years passed that playful question has taken on much meaning. Living happily in this unique environment has taught me to value community, relationships and nature. It has encouraged me to be creative, collaborative, to rethink the status quo and to give back.

As our nation and world face economic, social and environmental challenges, there is significant relevance to working collaboratively to reach communal goals; sharing land, values and responsibilities in governance and finance. Also important is the need for communities to renew their commitment to a shared vision and future. The Free Acre Association, celebrating its 100th Anniversary in 2010, can serve as a model for fostering co-operative living and sustainability.



Top, Illustration by Chas F Lester and bottom by E. C. Eichhorn included in FA 20th Anniversary brochure.





## CHAPTER 5: COMMUNITY SUSTAINABILITY – "FOUNDER'S DILEMMA":

Some of the communities that failed lacked organization and the establishment of legal principles. Most were communities that were founded by individuals who oversaw both the communities founding and its demise, because of singular control. "General causes relating to the demise of these utopian colonies have to be explained individually, as each utopian community faced different circumstances. Overall, the conflict that many of these agrarian or small craft communities faced in an increasingly industrialized world may have contributed to their demise, as did external hostility manifested in the larger, surrounding society."<sup>114</sup> Each of these communities left a legacy of much more than the structures or stories that remains but legacies that are inspiring, surprising, and often eclectic.

"Many of our communities are just now reaching that sobering age when we start to question our immortality. The founders are aging, as are many long-time members. Meanwhile, there is a surge of interest in the communities' movement among younger people, who see this lifestyle as a partial solution to the multiple crises facing our world. At the place where these two phenomena meet lies a crucial challenge--the blending of old and new. This is the 'founders' dilemma.' It is the creative tension between affirming the original intent of a community, while at the same time being deeply responsive to the need for growth, flexibility, and fresh air. New people arrive with strong and good dreams of their own. How can their visions be woven into the original tapestry without obliterating it?"<sup>115</sup>

The question facing the communities that remain intact is how do we respect and pay homage to a founders' original intention, while remaining open and responsive to new ideas, accepting change and growing from it? Not only in America but worldwide, globalization is tearing communities apart, and uprooting community life. "Many intentional communities fall apart soon after their initial launch because they don't have enough energy to sustain themselves. Communities, unlike teams and other structures, need to invite the interaction that makes them alive."<sup>116</sup>

As the years, then decades pass, people come and go, as the political, economic and social climate changes intentional communities stray from their original mission but can still be considered a success. Although the original vision shifts and adapts as long as the people and their experiences remain present they can be considered holding true to course. "Long-time members must continually stretch to be open to renewal, while 'newcomers' need to take active responsibility for the core intent of that which attracted them in the first place, being careful not to slide into either submission or rebellion."<sup>117</sup> As long as both groups work in tandem it seems they can continue and adapt. "Often we get caught up in the issues--should we grow our wheat or buy it, build the new shelter here or over there, use hand tools or power?--and neglect to see that it is the process that is

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<sup>114</sup> "Utopias -- Shaker Historic Trail"

<sup>115</sup> Joyce Foote. "The Founder's Dilemma: Lessons from Arden Village."

<sup>116</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.

<sup>117</sup> Joyce Foote.



crucial, the training of vigorous gardeners, not so much any particular outcome. This is also why our communities are best left a little undone, a little imperfect, providing a seemingly endless supply of flaws to be corrected, issues to be hashed out, grist for the mill. These are the skills that will, if continually exercised, keep a community alive and relevant beyond its founding generation. Changing times call for discernment, responsiveness, perhaps even a radical reorientation. Such shifts often entail the stripping of outmoded form from essence, and so require not only a strong grounding in the vision... For the dismantling of old (and perhaps precious) forms can be painful.”<sup>118</sup> It is important that intentional communities make space for the growth of new dreams in hopes of continuing to add history and meaning while compensating for changing times. These communities required cooperation and the willing participation of members during tumultuous, yet opportune times.

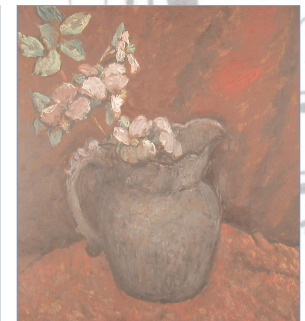
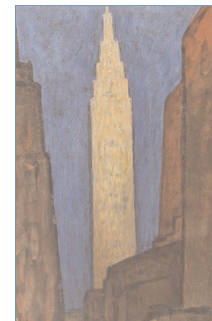
## CHAPTER 6: FREE ACRES ARTIST AND COMMUNITY - GERSHON BENJAMIN

The Benjamins were early settlers that moved to Free Acres full time after spending many summers commuting from New York City. The physical surroundings, feelings of camaraderie and large concentration of actors, writers, visual artists, musicians and intellectuals drew them to Free Acres and kept them there for fifty years. The community nurtured the Benjamins and they in turn nurtured the community.

Gershon Benjamin married Hilda Zelda Cohen, an actress, in 1923, known to all as “Zelda.” Like Gershon,

she too was from Romania. The two met in Montreal at a Jewish theater where Zelda was performing. Soon after Zelda chose to pursue her career in New York City and inspired Benjamin to do the same, which proved to be the most important move of his career. In the beginning, Benjamin was so enamored with New York, and its museums and art, that he neglected his job search initially and allowed Zelda to support them. Gershon started working the night shift at the Sun Newspaper in May 1925, which began his 25-year career touching up photographs and setting type. Benjamin worked the night shift so he could devote his days to painting. His early dawn trips home from his job through the quiet city, devoid of people and action, provided subject matter that would influence his early work.

Gershon Benjamin and his contemporary, Milton Avery, were part of a circle of artists whose friendship at the time was not determined solely by artistic style. Most of these artists incorporated the strategies of European modernist painting but felt it was up to each individual to



Gershon Benjamin at work, Detail of Paintings.  
© Gershon Benjamin Foundation

<sup>118</sup> Joyce Foote.

choose which method or approach to embrace. By relying on inspiration from their wives and each other, as well as other artists, for subject, friendship and community, this group of artists adopted what they termed an “expressionist art.” The style combined the inspiration of European modernism with a context focused on the subjects of domestic life in an authentic attempt to create art that was accessible to everyone. It evoked a connection to the viewer and their own personal experiences.

By the late 1920s, the vibrant young community of artists came together, along with their wives, to encourage self-expression and exploration concerning their own vision for living and the creation of art. Benjamin and Avery developed a unique style at a time when the American Scene and Regionalist painting trends focused on subjects relating to the American heartland and nostalgic rural scenes. In the 1930s, these styles conveyed a sense of nationalism and romanticism through the use of realism and put pressure on other artists to conform. Instead Benjamin and Avery found their own voice and resisted popular trends. Both artists favored and were influenced by Matisse, Cezanne, the School of Paris and primitive and folk art of the 1930s. Their work was also highlighted by their interest in the style of Tonalism that depicted mood through the use of hues.

My interest in these artists and their dynamic relationships and vision brought me to question how they developed this unique style and community and how those choices and factors impacted their art, family, community and ultimately their careers. Gershon Benjamin and Milton Avery were part of a group of artists that at the time chose to pursue their own vision and



Gershon Benjamin, *Cardplayers*, circa 1933  
© Gershon Benjamin Foundation

style for creating art and resisted popular trends. This group laid the framework for artists that came after to be able to work within a variety of styles and traditions. Influenced by practice not theory, these artists came together around life views, artistic beliefs, subject matter, family and community and created their own unique artistic style and expression. Focused on innate desires to create art and not in search of gimmicks or fame, these artists without the support of each other and their wives would have been unable to achieve and create such a poetic, natural body of work and a style that documents their own journey, the influences around them and of the time.

Benjamin and Avery turned to their community for subject matter and friendship, which was evident in 1927, when they were both living with their families at the Lincoln Arcade, which is today the location of Lincoln Center. This building at Broadway and 66th Street was transformed from offices to artists' studios and living spaces. The Benjamin's apartment was the biggest of the group since Gershon had a position at the time that paid







Gershon and Zelda Benjamin

well unlike Avery and others who did menial jobs. The majority of the time was spent at the Benjamin's apartment eating group meals, having thought provoking and inspiring conversations, as well as time spent painting the views out the windows of the apartment and of each other during evenings spent socializing. "When models were unavailable, they portrayed each other, resulting in insightful portraits in which they captured subtleties of each others' personalities. Whereas Avery conveyed Benjamin's combination of whimsical humor and sincerity, Benjamin captured Avery's pensive reserved nature. In 1945, Benjamin purchased a portrait of himself by Avery as a way of showing his support to his friend, who was still seeking recognition by the art world."<sup>119</sup> These two artists shared their homes, their sense of color, artistic practice and their desire to create art that people could experience in a positive way during an unsettling time. Also included in this group were Mark Rothko, Adolph Gottlieb, Wallace Putnam, John Sloan and Barnett Newman who were regular visitors, enthusiasts and supporters of each other's work and who would later show with Benjamin. As outsiders from the American art world, Benjamin and Avery came together to go against

the direction at the time of Regionalist art. They went against the principles that the art should convey a specific message and instead felt the work should convey feeling and "they felt it should express the point of view of the artist in a way it could be understood by anyone who chose to try to do so."<sup>120</sup> The majority of the artists from this group achieved recognition, however Benjamin was content simply to create art.

Benjamin merged his love for nature and familiar landscapes with intimate family scenes by combining the use of abstraction and representational forms in a poetic way. "The aesthetic innovations and experiments that were being adopted and domesticated in the late twenties and early thirties tended to alienate many American painters from their own experience, and thus imposed that distance between conceptions of style and the realization of the feeling that remains."<sup>121</sup> Benjamin worked outside this trend and used subject matter as an antidote to the Depression in a comforting style that was a familiar, yet modern approach that allowed viewers to imagine themselves within the work. The Great Depression in 1929 is reminiscent of the tough



Sign announcing Benjamins' art classes, 1950-53. © Gershon Benjamin Foundation

<sup>119</sup> "Gershon Benjamin Biography-CV Spanierman Modern Gallery." <[http://www.spaniermanmodern.com/inventory/B/GershonBenjamin/gershon-benjamin\\_BIO.htm](http://www.spaniermanmodern.com/inventory/B/GershonBenjamin/gershon-benjamin_BIO.htm)>.

<sup>120</sup> Lisa N. Peters. *Over Seven Decades: The Art of Gershon Benjamin*. (NY: Spanierman Gallery, 2008) 40.

<sup>121</sup> Robert C. Hobbs. *Milton Avery: The Late Paintings*. (NY: Harry N Abrams, 2001) 11.

times facing Americans today due to factors including bank failures and the stock market crash. At this time, artists were searching for any kind of work possible to support them while they created their art. Instead of conforming Benjamin and Avery continued to create works and subjects from an internal place and were not driven by the market, which in turn directly effected and influence how they are recognized today.

Benjamin's work focused on familiar landscapes and family scenes, which helped draw attention away from the negativity of the times and focus on daily life. By combining abstraction with representational forms Benjamin's unique style formed relationships independent of subject matter and created unified, modern compositions focused on aesthetic principles and not ideology. Pairing down to the most fundamental forms, Benjamin captured mood in his subject's poses and by his use of color. Benjamin's body of work continued to evolve over time incorporating parts of Impressionism and Modernism, included experimentation with scale, and returning to the past for subject matter and inspiration.

The Sun Newspaper closed in 1950 after which Benjamin spent a few jobless years, allowing his wife Zelda to support them. "Eventually the Benjamin's began to withdraw from their lives in the city to the home that had been their warm weather retreat."<sup>122</sup> In 1961, Zelda retired from teaching acting classes to devote herself to foster Gershon's work. "In 1936, they had bought the two-room "shack" in Free Acres."<sup>123</sup> Zelda referred to it as a "shack" which was a good description for the early summer structures and tents that were scattered throughout Free Acres. Due to tough times in New York



Gershon Benjamin house and studio in FA, 1950-60.  
© Gershon Benjamin Foundation

City, Gershon and Zelda chose to focus their lives solely in Free Acres, which fulfilled their life long desire to live in the country. "They winterized the house and added heat, indoor plumbing and several rooms. Mr. Benjamin kept a studio that is the largest room in the house, filled with his work."<sup>124</sup> Zelda took on the role of maintaining the house, acted as a critic and sounding board, helped provide subject matter and inspiration for Gershon, all while playing an active role in Free Acres. "The wooded lots and winding dirt roads of Free Acres, as well as the couple's garden, would become the subject for many of Benjamin's later, meditative works, which reveal his intimate connection to nature."<sup>125</sup> Gershon and Zelda had an affinity with the idea of



<sup>122</sup> "Zelda C. Benjamin, 100 lived in Free Acres." *The Independent Press*, 1999: C6.

<sup>123</sup> Sylvia Herrens. "Remembering Old Friends." *Free Acres Review*, 90th Anniversary Edition.

<sup>124</sup> Zelda C. Benjamin, 100 lived in Free Acres."

<sup>125</sup> Lisa N. Peters. *Over Seven Decades: The Art of Gershon Benjamin*.



community and surrounding themselves with creative individuals, a feeling of camaraderie and in turn inspiration. Zelda directed countless community plays and was always opening their door to visitors. Gershon brought values and artistic sensibilities to the community through the designs he created for anniversaries, celebrations and events, including the Free Acres t-shirt, worn by Free Acresites for generations. Without children of their own, the Benjamins thought of their friends and neighbors as family and were very involved in all aspects of Free Acres. They participated in FA government meetings and events and also brought the community into their home. "The couple found lifelong companionship within the local community, particularly among fellow artists. Benjamin's portraits of Free Acres residents are a testament to these many friendships."<sup>126</sup> Gershon painted many residents and students including Alice, the Free Acres treasurer, a neighbor and musician, Julius Prinz and daughter of Thorne Smith, Dorothy. "Benjamin's art became freer in his retirement, as he experimented more with pastels and vibrant



Gershon Benjamin painting, detail.  
© Gershon Benjamin Foundation

colors. His subject matter for these later works ranges from still-lives and the various trees in Free Acres to the local well-fed pool (where the community congregated during the summers around the artesian foundation,) as well as a rare self portrait".<sup>127</sup>

Gershon taught art courses to the ladies in the summer and held exhibitions of his students at his home studio. The studio became known as the "Benjamin Studio," and at times was open for all to come admire and discuss art. In 1952, Gershon decided to again open his home, this time for a Free Acres Forum. In the summers, Free Acres held Forums every Friday at the Frank Stephens Hall conducted in the Farmhouse covering topics such as, "What the Schools Do For Your Children" and "Berkeley Heights Looks Ahead." Benjamin decided to conduct his forum titled, "How to Judge Pictures" in his own studio so he could show examples of his work and bring participants into an environment where the works were created. "Attracted by the opportunity to view a large number of original and beautiful paintings, the gathering, was the biggest held by the Forum so far this year, for it included a numerous contingent of visitors from outside Free Acres. Both the talk and the pictures shown proved to be highly stimulating."<sup>128</sup> Benjamin received much interest in his work and chose to open his studio on a regular basis. Every Sunday afternoon for three hours Gershon would open his doors to anyone interested in art. "That's how I learned painting – from admiring the great masters and

<sup>126</sup> Lisa N. Peters. 71.

<sup>127</sup> Lisa N. Peters. 72.

<sup>128</sup> "84-year-old Free Acres artist to exhibit paintings." *TheDispatch*, 1993: 5.





from the artists I knew, Benjamin says.”<sup>129</sup> Benjamin believed in the spirit of sharing and learning from those with experience and therefore lent his time, knowledge and friendship to many around the subject of art. “The children in Free Acres saw Gershon as their friend, and it was always a disappointment for them to find the curtain to this studio drawn, which meant an afternoon with Zelda in their kitchen, rather than with Gershon in his studio.”<sup>130</sup>

One of the most powerful influences on Gershon’s subject matter came from his surroundings and his love for nature. “Sometimes I make notes about things I want to paint. Sometimes I’ll make a sketch of a landscape and then paint it later. Usually, I do it from memory. I paint everything that is in my experience, in my daily life, Benjamin says.”<sup>131</sup> From her garden in Free Acres Zelda would make brilliant flower and plant arrangements as inspiration and subject matter for Benjamin’s paintings. She also spent time finding fruit and other objects for Gershon’s still-life sketches and would welcome friends from the community who would bring flowers and subject matter to their home as well as offer their time as models. “I’m not an intellectual painter, I’m more of a humanist, a naturalist. Nature intrigues me. Living is so miraculous from day to day, I feel, I have to do something about it. Everything is part of my education. I believe our progress consists of who we admire – that’s what we become, Benjamin says.”<sup>132</sup>

Gershon’s years in Free Acres were some of his most productive years. Not having to worry about making a living he focused on creating his art full time and immersed himself in his environment and expressed his

love for nature through his paintings. “The bare winter trees surrounding the home in Free Acres would become one of Benjamin’s favorite subjects, as he found that their nakedness allowed him to see their fundamental forms more clearly. The first winter Benjamin produced a number of water colors of these trees, which was a marked shift in his subject matter.”<sup>133</sup> One of his paintings, titled, *My Garden*, was “executed in dark spring green which envelopes the whole canvas, except the splashes of red flowers and the small figures in the distance, the painting exudes a sense of mystery and poetry. The figures represent his wife and a young mother carrying a small child who had strolled over to visit the garden.”<sup>134</sup>

Benjamin’s work, in his later years, was tied to the people and natural environment of Free Acres. He felt great joy and esteem to Free Acre residents interested in owning his art to enjoy in their homes. Gershon Benjamin passed away in his beloved Free Acres in 1985. It is recent that his work, which spans seven decades, is becoming more available to the public through the Benjamin Foundation. Benjamin’s interest in the community and the community’s interest in Benjamin have allowed his art and legacy to continue in Free Acres. By inviting a wider audience into the community to learn about Benjamin’s work, a rich history can be explored, expanded and continued

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<sup>129</sup> Miriam Congdon. “Gershon Benjamin: Local Artist.” 1979.

<sup>130</sup> Lisa N. Peters. *Over Seven Decades: The Art of Gershon Benjamin*. 71. note from personal communication from J.Facey, 2008

<sup>131</sup> Miriam Congdon.

<sup>132</sup> Miriam Congdon.

<sup>133</sup> Lisa N. Peters. 39 - noted from DVD with Zelda Benjamin

<sup>134</sup> Rachel Mullen. “Morristown Exhibit Rediscovered Artist Gershon Benjamin.” *The Bernardsville News*, 1984: 10.



into the future both within Free Acres and beyond.

“The extraordinary beauty of the garden, the sense of youth and rebirth left a lasting impression on Benjamin. ‘What I want to convey is the love I feel for nature. That’s the basis of what I do,’ says Benjamin.”<sup>135</sup> Throughout his career Benjamin was devoted to an artistic style that was personal, sincere and not commercially motivated, never wanting to compete against other artists for recognition. For these reasons, his life’s work is essentially intact and his name has remained somewhat unknown. “Benjamin’s body of work is a testament to a life guided by a steadfast commitment to a creative expression that emanated from inner necessity.”<sup>136</sup> Free Acres provided the Benjamin’s with subject matter, support, inspiration and community which fostered an expansive body of work and in turn the Benjamin’s made a lasting impression on Free Acres through their commitment to the community, education, nature and art.

“Drawing inspiration from an array of sources, including his own academic background, Japanese prints, folk art, primitive painting and the European modernist artists he admired, such as Cezanne, Picasso, Matisse, Vuillard and Pissarro, Benjamin captured the life around him in thoughtful, reductive images with a masterful interplay of form and color that revealed his innermost feelings, while expressing the true essence of his subjects. In his quest to evoke “the quiet beauty of the everyday,” in Ira Spanierman’s words, Benjamin left behind a sublime body of work distinguished by its powerful simplicity and intense emotion.”<sup>136</sup>

Benjamin was influenced by his community, its values, people, and natural surroundings, and he profoundly

influenced his community although brilliant and talented he remains relative undiscovered. Today, the work that Benjamin created over 74 years, spanning the twentieth century still exists mainly intact and under appreciated. In order to bring attention to his art and foster dialogue and spirit within the community, a Free Acres 100th anniversary community exhibition is proposed to provide an opportunity for the community and public to explore and celebrate the history of Free Acres through the lens of Gershon Benjamin’s art.

## GERSHON BENJAMIN FOUNDATION & SPANIERMAN GALLERY

The Benjamin Foundation was started in 2001 to manage Gershon Benjamin’s expansive collection, “to permanent placement where it will be loved and appreciated.”<sup>137</sup>

Gershon and Zelda Benjamin envisioned the foundation in the 1970s and since its founding, has been managed by Joan Facey, a long time friend and neighbor. Benjamin’s work has remained largely overlooked and therefore the Foundation has taken on the role of attempting to bring Gershon’s work to the forefront by exhibiting and selling pieces from this extensive collection. Gershon wanted his work in people’s homes to be enjoyed and admired. The collection consists of Gershon’s art created between 1912 and 1985. The proceeds from sales are to be dispersed to mid to late career artists in the form of grants that may be used in any way to support their work. However, this information has not been confirmed and it is unclear if

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<sup>135</sup> Rachel Mullen.

<sup>136</sup> Lisa N. Peters. I I.

<sup>136</sup> Lisa N. Peters. I I.



that intention has been realized. The Spanierman Gallery, located in New York City was hired by the foundation to represent the artist and create an “awakening” of Benjamin’s artwork by attempting to bring it to the public. The gallery is renowned for its scholarship, support and research in American art. The gallery is also recognized for finding artists who aren’t well known but have extensive collections, which has been a profitable approach for the gallery for more than half a century. Spanierman gallery has Benjamin’s entire estate including hundreds of paintings and drawings along with nine boxes of ephemera and memorabilia that the Benjamin’s amassed over the years. Gershon and Zelda had an affinity for collecting and despised throwing things away. They had elaborate collection of memorabilia including Christmas cards, postcards and other correspondences. This love for organizing and collecting might have also attributed to the reason that Gershon’s body of work has remained mostly intact. Gershon’s art pieces are mostly signed and dated and both he and Zelda were always diligent about preserving and cataloguing his art, big and small, which lends to the value and elaborateness of this collection.

In attempts to bring Benjamin’s work to the public a number of exhibitions were developed by the Foundation and Spanierman Gallery. Gershon and the City was Benjamin’s inaugural exhibition in October 2003 at Fairleigh Dickenson University in Madison, NJ. Selected works were also included in an exhibit at the Spanierman Gallery, NY, in February 2004. Gershon Benjamin: His Art over Seven Decades in March/April 2008 was a retrospective of Benjamin’s work at Spanierman Gallery and included an accompanying catalogue that was the first

publication that utilized the extensive archive from the Gershon Benjamin Foundation. The exhibition was the largest to date and included more than sixty works of arts. Over seventy years of Gershon’s work was on display and included landscapes, cityscapes, still-lives, figurative works and portraits. The gallery opening for this exhibition included a lively mix of art collectors, New York City residents, long time friends of the Benjamins and Free Acre residents.

Since the retrospective exhibition the gallery has chosen to show Benjamin’s work at two large Art Fairs and most recently at the Cape Ann Museum and Foundation, Gloucester, MA. The exhibition, Gershon Benjamin and His Contemporaries was on view from November 2008 to January 2009 and included works by Benjamin and Milton Avery. The Benjamin’s and Avery’s along with other artists and their families spent countless summers vacationing in Gloucester. The paintings on display were created in Gloucester throughout many years and showcased how the artists used the amazing environment that they enjoyed so much as their subject matter. These artists would immerse themselves in the landscape and spent their days and nights painting. Currently, Benjamin’s early works are considered to be the most valuable. Gershon’s largest pieces and those on black paper are also highly regarded. The gallery has sold a few large paintings in the \$100,000 range however the average price for a painting is between \$20,000 and \$60,000 depending on size, subject matter and when it was created.<sup>138</sup>

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<sup>137</sup> "The Foundation." Gershon Benjamin Foundation. 15 Apr. 2009  
<<http://00e06f2.netsolhost.com/foundation.htm>>.





The “awakening” has yet to fully take place and it is unclear with current economic conditions how the public will respond to Benjamin’s work in the future. Spanierman Gallery, like others of its kind, is driven by sales and profit. By taking part in the Free Acres Anniversary Celebrations, Spanierman Gallery and the Benjamin Foundation could partner with Free Acres in the creation of an experience providing deeper context that represents this artist and his work. By informing the public about an artist from two different perspectives, the community that supported him during his career and the organization and people that are now attempting to create awareness and recognition in the art world, the layered experience could provide the public with a rich understanding of Benjamin’s art and could help reach and inform a wider audience.

Many brilliant artists throughout history, although recognized in their time, have remained long and undeservedly forgotten, for one reason or another. A select few, however, have been fortunate enough to be rediscovered at a fortuitous future moment. American modernist painter, Benjamin held the belief that art should convey feeling and abstract ideas, rather than doctrine and content, while both borrowing and breaking away from art traditions.

## CHAPTER 7: COMMUNITY FOCUSED EVENTS – ANNIVERSARY/REFLECTION

Community focused events, “are events that primarily focus on the community in which they are held. These events tend to build social capital, foster community spirit and showcase local talent and culture. They are primarily coordinated by volunteers and the event usually operates

on a small budget.”<sup>139</sup> Developing and implementing these events fosters a sense of community and strengthens the relationships among members. Elizabeth Frazer speaking about community states, “on occasion or at such times members experience a centered and bounded entity that includes the self as such; they engage in exchanges and sharing that are personalized; the orientation to each other and to the whole engages the person and, as some are tempted to put it, his or her soul. It is from such occasions that ‘the spirit of community’ or ‘sense of community’ is achieved.”<sup>140</sup> An anniversary celebration should include activities that are fun and inspiring but also deliver meaningful messages that help strengthen the bonds of the community. Anniversary events can enhance cooperative spirit through shared celebrations and activities that build awareness. “When a human being turns to another as another, as a particular and specific person to be addressed, and tries to communicate with him through language or silence, something takes place between them which is not found elsewhere in nature.”<sup>141</sup> Communities must be tended to, cultivated, and fertilized if they are to grow and thrive. When the community comes together to reflect and celebrate their history a sense of aliveness and a growth in spirit occurs. The question then is, “how do you design for aliveness? Certainly you cannot contrive or dictate it. You cannot design it in the traditional sense of specifying a structure

<sup>138</sup> Interview w/ Curator Gina Greer, Researcher & Archivists, Katherine Bogden and Sarah Hardin at Spanierman Gallery, Feb. 2009.

<sup>139</sup> “A Guide for Planning Safe and Successful Community Events in Greater Taree.” 2007.

<sup>140</sup> Smith, Mark K.  
<<http://www.infed.org/community/community.htm#communion>>.

<sup>141</sup> Smith, Mark K.



or process and then implementing it. Still, aliveness does not always happen automatically. Many natural communities never grow beyond a network of friends because they fail to attract enough participants. Many intentional communities fall apart soon after their initial launch because they don't have enough energy to sustain themselves. Communities, unlike teams and other structures, need to invite the interaction that makes them alive."<sup>142</sup>

## THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN PLANNING & DESIGNING AROUND COMMUNITY

*(Based on Seven Principles for Cultivating Communities of Practice)<sup>143</sup>*

### 1. Design for Growth

"Design elements should be catalysts for a community's natural evolution. "Alive" communities reflect on and redesign elements of themselves throughout their existence. The key to designing for evolution is to combine design elements in a way that catalyzes community development."

### 2. Promote Dialogue Between Inside and Outside

Viewpoints Identify your topic and audience. Consider a partnership or sponsorship approach. Identify resources to support the event using advocates both within the community and beyond. "Good community design requires an insider's perspective to lead the discovery of what the community is about. But effective community design is built on the collective experience of community members. This requires more than community "input." It requires a deep understanding of community issues."

### 3. Encourage Different Levels of Participation

Find those willing to get involved both leading and supporting event goals. "Good community design requires an understanding of the community's potential to develop and steward knowledge, but it often takes an outside perspective to help members see the possibilities."

### 4. Develop Public/Private Spaces & Reflection/Discussion Opportunities

"Like a local neighborhood, dynamic communities are rich with connections that happen both in the public places of the community—meetings, Web site—and the private space—the one-on-one networking of community members. Public community events serve a ritualistic as well as a substantive purpose. Through such events, people can tangibly experience being part of the community and see who else participates. They can appreciate the level of sophistication the community brings to a technical discussion, how it rallies around key principles, and the influence it has in the organization. The key to designing community spaces is to orchestrate activities in both public and private spaces that use the strength of individual relationships to enrich events and use events to strengthen individual relationships."

### 5. Define and Focus on Value

What are the audience's relevant interests? What are their community values? What would your audience gain or take away from attending? Be clear on the objective and message. "Value is key to community life,

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<sup>142</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.

<sup>143</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.



because participation in most communities is voluntary. But the full value of a community is often not apparent when it is first formed. Moreover, the source of value often changes over the life of the community. Frequently, early value mostly comes from focusing on the current problems and needs of community members. As the community grows, developing a systematic body of knowledge that can be easily accessed becomes more important. Rather than attempting to determine their expected value in advance, communities need to create events, activities, and relationships that help their potential value emerge and enable them to discover new ways to harvest it.”

#### 6. Combine Familiarity and Excitement

“Lively communities combine both familiar and exciting events so community members can develop the relationships they need to be well connected as well as generate the excitement they need to be fully engaged. Routine activities provide the stability for relationship-building connections; exciting events provide a sense of common adventure.”

#### 7. Foster Dynamics and Rhythm of Community

Evaluate outcomes and follow-up. Keep community and participants involved to garner continued support from local leaders and neighbors. Continue educating the public and new members after the event about the community and its past and the opportunities of the present, to inform development in the future. “Vibrant communities of practice also have a rhythm. At the heart of a community is a web of enduring relationships among members, but the tempo of their interactions is greatly influenced by the rhythm of community events. The events give the community a beat around which other activities find their rhythm. The rhythm of the community is the strongest indicator of its aliveness. But finding the right rhythm at

each stage is key to a community's development. These design principles are not recipes, but rather embody our understanding of how elements of design work together. They reveal the thinking behind a design. Making design principles explicit makes it possible to be more flexible and improvisational.”

## CHAPTER 8: PROJECT OVERVIEW & GOALS

### PROJECT GOALS

1) To study “intentional” communities that have an arts based philosophy, particularly Free Acres Association, and to create an exhibition/experience that will help both the community and public, explore and share a unique cultural history through the context of Free Acres artist Gershon Benjamin's work.

2) By locating the exhibition in the community where the artist lived and worked, this project proposes a more effective and meaningful experience for all visitors. The community becomes the “object” or primary source material culture for visitors to experience art in its original context as opposed to discussing what “community” or contextualized art means abstractly in a museum setting.

3) To create a unique, meaningful experience within the community that fosters dialogue, connects to a wider audience, provides an opportunity to explore the dynamics of a community, meet with those who have made it home and preserves and passes along its history.





## PROJECT OVERVIEW

Focusing on how intentional communities are created, evolved and are influenced by artists, this exhibition, specifically focused on the community of Free Acres, will present an experience that brings people together to foster a sense of “aliveness” and spirit to help guide the community as it moves into the future. Celebrating its 100th anniversary, this project proposes Free Acres, at a pivotal moment in its history, function as a community museum hosting an experience that gives visitors a chance to celebrate, learn and share the history of the community in hopes of fostering spirit and interest for the next 100 years. Connection with a community allows an individual to connect to their own identity and foster a sense of belonging and in turn a community must also invite interaction to make itself alive and find its place in history and in the future. Free Acres is one of the few intentional communities started in the 1900s that still exists today and by preserving and celebrating its history with its community members and beyond, the spirit can be fostered and optimistically passed along to new generations giving them an opportunity to uphold and advance the communities mission. This experience showcases the history and power of people coming together and working through challenges to foster common goals and community spirit. Currently our nation is dealing with economic and social distress and has been looking to a new president who has put focus on working cooperatively in hopes of uniting the nation and beyond. Focusing on the importance of our social networks and the power of a group or “community,” this experience will be applicable to people outside of Free Acres interested in learning how to foster their own personal networks

and relationships, those interested in designing unique experiences around community, art and history and for members of other communities and institutions looking to celebrate and enhance their spirit, mission and sense of “aliveness.”

Adapting the principles for Cultivating Communities, these guidelines will help inform the design and development of this exhibition focusing on fostering interaction and dialogue among members and nonmembers, examining and reassessing community values and creating a rhythm from which the community can use as a guide forward. “The dynamic nature of communities is key to their evolution. But evolution is common to all communities, and the primary role of design is to catalyze that evolution”<sup>144</sup> It is critical that the community be involved with the development process as it provides a chance for its members, new and old, to come together to reexamine their values and goals individually and collectively. “The purpose of a design is not to impose a structure but to help the community develop.”<sup>145</sup> Especially relevant for a community like Free Acres, preparing to celebrate the past 100 years while hoping to gain a new sense of direction and spirit as it moves forward. Conducting focus groups and forums in the community, hosting online forums and discussions and implementing surveys would be an attempt at fostering the exchange of ideas and opening a dialogue between inside and outside perspectives throughout the development process. Allowing the development to come from

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<sup>144</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.

<sup>145</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.



multiple perspectives is the basis for creating a design that will be relevant and accessible to a wide audience while extending the goals of the community outward. “We used to think that we should encourage all community members to participate equally. But because people have different levels of interest in the community, this expectation is unrealistic.”<sup>146</sup> By creating a variety of opportunities for involvement, each participant will be able to find a role that suits their level of commitment and will be able to contribute to the experience.

Free Acres like many intentional communities has been fostered and supported by artistic members since its inception and it seems fitting to develop and design this community-based exhibition through the lens of an artist's work from the community. Community as Museum: Free Acres, NJ will strive to infuse community members and their knowledge throughout the entire process in attempts of establishing a strong connection to the environment where the artworks were created and where they are now displayed, while providing a meaningful experience and legacy for community members and others. This exhibition will strive to include participatory, educational and social experiences that promote discussion and reflection. The Free Acre definition of community focuses on the connection to land, the creative spirit, the arts, its people and their partnership. It becomes clear that the community, its environment and social dynamics, helped inspire and shape not only the children and families that grew up in Free Acres but also the artists and creative types whom in turn inspired and shaped Free Acres. The exhibition will provide a unique experience for the Free Acres 100th Anniversary celebration, allowing the community to act as the literal museum, with the exhibition being in the homes

and buildings of the community. This type of event could be altered in the future to present additional experiences in the community through a variety of lenses. Allowing the exhibition to function as a “living thing,” that continues in different forms and iterations will provide the community with continuous opportunities to look at their history through varied perspectives and viewpoints while revisiting and redefining the aspects that have made the community “alive.”

In concurrence with Free Acres 100th Anniversary, events and celebrations will take place during a weekend in June 2010. The focus of the Anniversary celebrations will be an exhibition in the community and will also include opportunities in conjunction that allow for large public discussions, intimate conversations, learning experiences, social networking, fun and exciting activities. This exhibition will explore Gershon Benjamin's artwork and his connection to Free Acres, the community where he lived and worked. The exhibition will act as a catalyst for understanding the history of the community and the context of the subjects that influenced the artist's work while promoting social interaction and dialogue. The exhibition will focus on an artist whose work is displayed outside the constraints of a typical art museum or gallery and instead viewed at numerous locations within the community in communal spaces and private homes where the work had been created and influenced. “The key to designing community spaces is to orchestrate activities in both public and private spaces that use the strength of individual relationships to enrich events and use events to strengthen individual relationships.”<sup>147</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.

<sup>147</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.



## CHAPTER 9: PAST FREE ACRES ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

**(1930)** • The 20th anniversary was celebrated Fourth of July weekend in 1930. The celebrations began with a pageant and also included an outdoor luncheon with lectures by various speakers, games for children, singing, folk dancing, sports, a spelling bee and a water carnival at the pool. The program was designed and created by Free Acres artists, photographer and writers. Illustrated by artist Will Crawford and Arthur Leon Moore the program included information about Bolton Hall and also discussed the early days of Free Acres. One contributor, Fred Scheff wrote, "A Little Journey Through the Colony" touching on all the special places in the community, which was accompanied by sketches. Also incorporated was an article about the children of Free Acres and a listing of the residents in 1930 with an accompanying photograph.

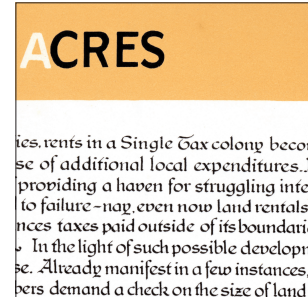
**(1935)** • To commemorate the 25th anniversary of its founding, Free Acres celebrated with aquatic sports, a theatrical program, games, the presentation of lanternslides predicting scenes and people in the past and of their day. Also printed was a small booklet. The cover was designed by Will Crawford and included a photograph of residents taken by William Armbruster.

**(1960)** • To commemorate the 50th anniversary the program included sketches and photographs by Free Acres artists, an essay on Henry George's theory, overview of the community including founding principles and a map of the property with corresponding leaseholds in 1960.

**(1980)** • To commemorate the 70th anniversary Free Acres planned a square dance, covered dish suppers,

musical performances, costume parade, water carnival, lectures and the play, *Gods of the Mountain* that had been written in 1910 and included the youngest and oldest members of Free Acres at the time.

**(2000)** • To commemorate the 90th anniversary festivities occurred on July 1st and 2nd in 2000. Harold Breene, a past resident let Free Acres enjoy this reunion at his Camp Riverbend located around the corner from the community. People came from all over the country and some were Free Acres Folk back in the 1920s. The accompanying newsletter remembered old friends, documented births and weddings, transferred leaseholds and contained pictures from the Free Acres archive. Also included, an essay on Frank Stephens providing the community with history about the person who the Free Acres meeting hall was named after and details of the prominent figure who lived in both Free Acres and Arden.



Free Acres Anniversary materials.





## CHAPTER 10: PROJECT DESIGN & PROGRAMMING

The footprint of the community would represent the exhibition floor plan and visitors would be led on theme based walking tours accompanied by tour guides throughout the streets and paths that wind together to form Free Acres. The tour would begin at the Farmhouse and an opportunity for introduction and discussion would take place and then small groups would travel into the community. A number of Free Acres residents have offered their time and expertise to lead tours, which could be developed around different topics related to Benjamin's work and its connection to Free Acres, appealing to a variety of participants. Visitors would travel to a number of locations and houses in Free Acres where Benjamin's work is displayed, enjoying his art and gaining a sense of the history and community spirit. Residents would also place on display other associated Free Acre memorabilia, photos and ephemera that would be shown and discussed depicting the community's history. Hearing oral histories from the "old timers" while enjoying art created by Benjamin, visitors would be exposed to how he found refuge, friends and subject matter for his work in Free Acres and dialogue in the "old bungalows,"<sup>148</sup> where Gershon wanted his paintings to be enjoyed and experienced. In conjunction participants from the Gershon Benjamin Foundation and Spanierman Gallery could be asked to participate and provide additional information about the current status of his art collection, the efforts and intentions of the Foundation and Benjamin's place in the art world. Providing this additional perspective from outside of Free Acres would help encourage the community of people collecting Benjamin's art to be a

part of this experience and share their perspectives in hopes of helping to create a larger "awakening" around Benjamin's expansive body of work and the community that supported him.

The exhibition would end with a culminating event at Camp Riverbend, owned by a past resident who owns Gershon Benjamin's work. This camp facility has been offered to the community to use for anniversary events to accommodate large numbers of participants. This event would bring everyone together to reflect on their experiences participating in the exhibition and give participants an opportunity to share their reactions to Gershon's artwork, their connections and interest in the communities' history and how they see these experiences facilitating growth and spirit in the Free Acres community and beyond.

"Lively communities combine both familiar and exciting events so community members can develop the relationships they need to be well connected as well as generate the excitement they need to be fully engaged."<sup>149</sup> Some examples of additional events and possible programming to support the exhibition and take place during the anniversary weekend could include a Founding Principles of Community event that would include a presentation and discussion about Henry George's philosophy and single tax principles. This type of event has occurred during past anniversaries and would be an overview and introductory event to explain the communities founding principles and history. In order to provide a viewpoint outside of Free Acres regarding the single tax model and establish a current perspective, a speaker or

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<sup>148</sup> Term used by Free Acreites for houses

<sup>149</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.



representative could be asked to participate from the Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, “organized as an operating foundation in 1925 to promote public awareness of the social philosophy and economic reforms advocated by Henry George (1839-1897), including the single tax on land values.”<sup>150</sup> The Foundation could provide both a historical and contemporary framework concerning the single tax approach and how it is applicable today. To end this event, a discussion about how Free Acres founding principles have been adapted throughout history and what they mean today would be relevant and give the community a chance to discuss the communities values in a group setting. Examining shared values, what they mean today and what can be done to foster them into the future will help encourage a sense of belonging and give the community a voice and renewed spirit while encouraging active participation. “The source of value often changes over the life of the community,”<sup>150</sup> and therefore must be reexamined and refined to keep members involved and connected. This might also be a good time to involve members of the other two existing single tax colonies, Arden and Fairhope and create a shared experience and on going partnership looking to each other as models for support. Such themes for exploration could involve artist Frank Stephens who spent significant time in both the community of Arden as well as Free Acres. This prominent figure could be discussed and explored by two different communities perspectives providing a rich history about his influences and ideals.

Another event could be a Remembrance Night, an event bringing members old and new together to discuss their memories and personal accounts of times past. The event



Free Acres Anniversary materials and street signs carved by artist Will Crawford.

<sup>150</sup> "What We Do." Robert Schalkenbach Foundation.  
<<http://www.schalkenbach.org/what-we-do.html>>.



would also invite the public to hear these oral accounts about the community from multiple perspectives. In hopes of continuing to cultivate the arts in the community an event such as, Celebration of the Arts could be developed to include art lessons and activities for children and adults and speakers and presentations on past and present FA artists. Free Acre resident Julie Martin offered to conduct a presentation and discussion group about Experiments in Art and Technology, a non-profit organization established to develop collaborations between artists and engineers. Martin's late husband, Billy Kluver along with artist Robert Rauschenberg established this organization and involved artists like John Cage, dancer, Merce Cunningham and pop artist, Andy Warhol. In conjunction with these structured events an opportunity for community members to view additional Free Acres artwork, archived materials, Free Acres book collection, current FA artist's work, assorted memorabilia and ephemera could be displayed for visitors to access during the weekend long Anniversary. One possible location would be in the Free Acres Farmhouse library and the materials would be accessible during these events and tours. Issues with climate control and security would need to be addressed and would be quite costly. However since this space is rarely used, it could be a wise investment to spend the time and money to create an infrastructure establishing a gallery space that could be open and available for public access during special events and by request. "At the heart of a community is a web of enduring relationships among members, but the tempo of their interactions is greatly influenced by the rhythm of community events."<sup>151</sup> By developing this space the community could establish an ongoing relationship with

past and current Free Acre artists and their work, Free Acres history through the display of memorabilia and act as a forum for ongoing events and a space to invite the public and new community members to experience Free Acres history.

This meaningful community experience explores and celebrates 100 years of history through the lens of an artists work, gives visitors an opportunity to understand the dynamics of the community by experiencing the land and being in direct contact with those who have made it home in hopes of preserving and continuing history. The exhibition will attract a wider audience interested in an experience with an artist's works and their interplay with the environment and community through dialogue and first hand accounts. The framework establishes an experience in the community in hopes of preserving and passing along its history to new generations. By displaying the works outside of the museum in an environment in the community, a rich story can be told by residents that establishes a context for understanding the dynamics that existed in the community in the past and present, providing a deeper understanding of the subject matter and brining people together to continue to develop and foster community spirit for the future. This exhibition and anniversary events are a way of reflecting back at Free Acres history in hopes of creating a rhythm and spirit to project forward into the future. These events are not celebrating an end but a beginning of renewed spirit, dialogue and growth as Free Acres enters its 2nd century.

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<sup>151</sup> Etienne Wenger, Richard McDermott and William M. Snyder.

<sup>152</sup> Sandy Ikeda. "Are Internet Communities Cities?" *The New York Sun*. 20 Aug. 2008. 13 Apr. 2009  
<<http://www.nysun.com/blogs/culture-ofcongestion/2008>





## CHAPTER 11: PROPOSED IDENTITY

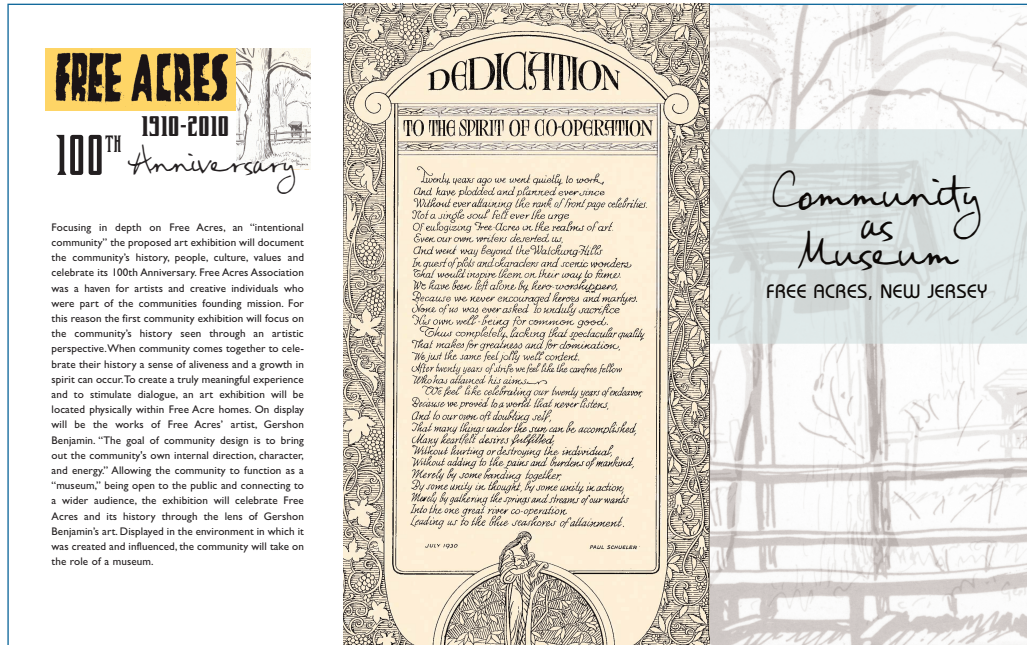
The design approach will be based on the concept of “lenses.” Combining interesting juxtapositions of imagery and text, the identity will include layering as a technique to represent a sense of varied perspective and layers of history. Images of artwork, photographs, illustrations and sketches created by Free Acre artists will be used in the design and development of the identity and materials as a way of providing another layer of history and meaning visually while paying respect and honoring the past.

Community  
as  
Museum

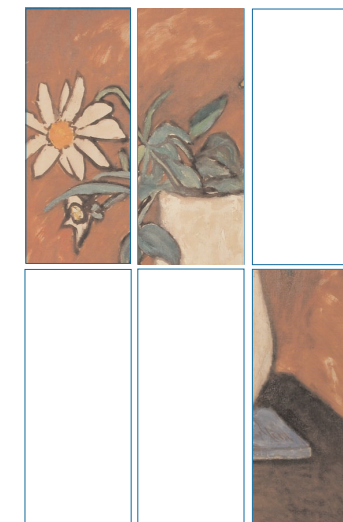
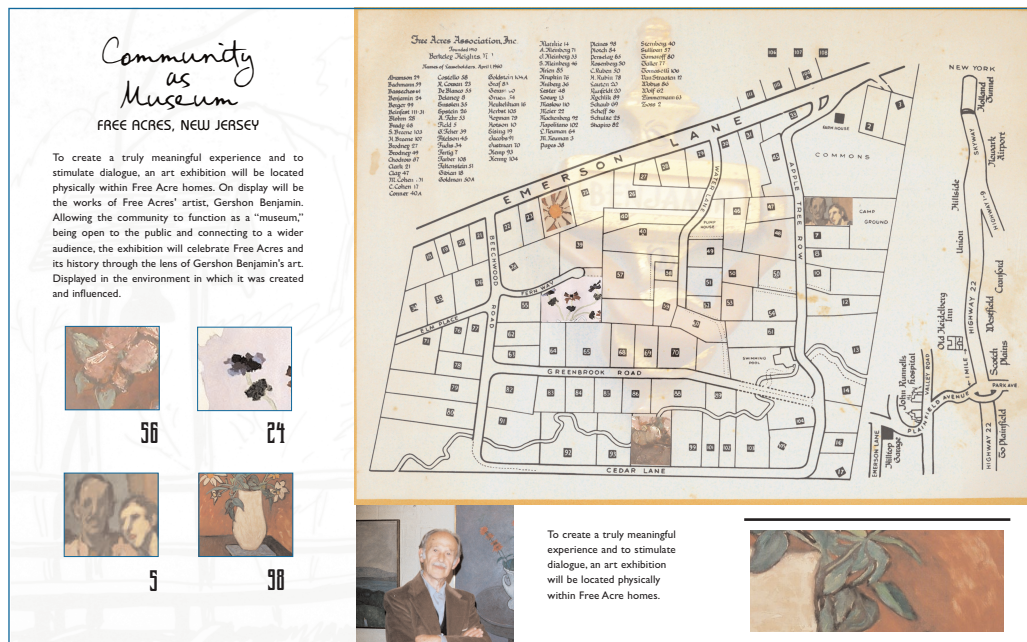
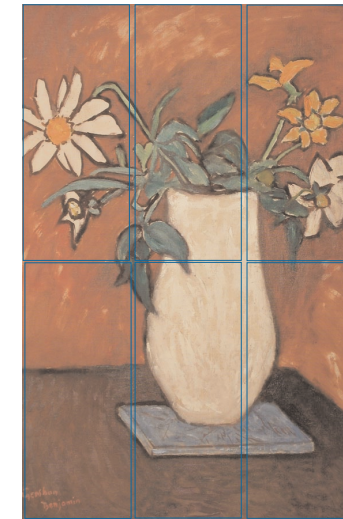
FREE ACRES, NEW JERSEY



## MAP HANDOUT: tri-fold brochure, 12.25" w x 7.5" h



## ACCOMPANYING PIECES PICKED UP AT EACH LOCATION



## SIGNAGE/WAY FINDING

As visitors travel in between homes they will have a chance to see the extraordinary, wooded environment of Free Acres and also learn about its history. In hopes of creating excitement and interaction, the design of the exhibition would include a map handout accompanying the tour and documenting the experience. In conjunction with the map handout, participants would gather corresponding pieces at each location along their journey, building and revealing the story as they travel. This experience provides a sense of interest and mystery. Design elements will be repeated in the signage located at each site. The structure for the signage at each location should be reusable for future events and would be on display for the month during the Anniversary events.

- Accompanying Materials: Signage for each Location



## CHAPTER 12: ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS & BUDGET

Virtual communities that exist on the Internet and social networking environments bring groups of people together in cyberspace for social and educational purposes. Able to reach widespread audiences this type of technology has become widely used, accepted as a supplemental form of communication between people that aren't face to face and used as a way of documenting conversations and information. In order to appeal and reach a wide audience this form of technology can be established to create additional experiences and environments by establishing forums, blogs and message boards that provide a place for dialogue and discussion from various participants that otherwise wouldn't take place. "Social interactions in the "real" world are constrained, but on the Internet they can run to infinity... with the Internet, everyone that has access to it is connected. There are no social, cultural and institutional barriers."<sup>152</sup> For this reason it is important to consider and implement aspects of this technology when looking to reach a diverse audience and perspective today.

- **Website/Blog:** Could be created to inform participants and community members about events, how they can become involved and a forum for sharing ideas. This virtual community can help foster the mission of the experience by reaching out to a wide audience beyond Free Acres and acting as an archive for supporting materials before and after the Anniversary events. This site could also be used as a structure and resource for continued development and preservation of Free Acres history presently and into the future for residents and nonresidents alike.



- **Oral History Archive:** Collecting oral histories and data in hopes of creating an accessible digital archive would be an ideal way to further the community goals and history through the voices of past and present residents. A number of group experiences from the Anniversary celebrations can be recorded and opportunities for participants to record their individualized, personal stories and memories could be undertaken and compiled.

- **Kiosk:** A kiosk could be set up at the farmhouse that would allow visitors and community members to find out the history of the leaseholds in the community and their previous and current residents. This computer application currently exists and could be formatted for use on site and if possible made accessible on the FA web site. This application provides a specific history about the people and history of the leaseholds in Free Acres and an interesting perspective that could be powerful in conjunction with oral histories from those residents that called those leaseholds home.

- **Virtual/Podcast Tour:** A virtual tour of the homes and journey through Free Acres could be formatted to be used on FA web site allowing the public not able to participate in person experience it virtually at their own pace. These tours also would serve as an archive documenting the events making the experience available after the anniversary celebrations are over. The technology used could combine still images with video allowing participants and community members to get involved with its creation by submitting their own pictures. In conjunction, this tour could be formatted for a hand held device, which would allow a visitor to experience the tour while traveling through the community.

## MAGNANIMOUS BUDGET

The Association pays for Free Acres anniversary celebrations based on a figure determined and voted on by the Anniversary committee. A separate line item in the 2010 budget will be created and applying for grants and corporate sponsorship has been discussed to help offset the cost. This magnanimous budget is a first attempt at creating a starting point for which the Anniversary committee can work from. These costs are only estimates based on the information to date and are subject to change.

### DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT - \$ 10,000

- Schematic Design
- Design & Development

### PRINT & PRODUCTION - \$ 5,000

- Announcement: estimated quantity – 300 pieces
- Map Handout: estimated quantity – 300 pieces

### SIGNAGE - \$ 5,000

- Freestanding signage at 5-7 locations

### TECHNOLOGY - \$ 5,000

- Web/Blog design, technology consulting and development of existing Free Acres web site

### PROGRAMMING & ADVERTISING - \$ 5,000

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### TOTAL - \$30,000



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