

GASTON HAXO

A faithful Georgist, whose life spanned many years and many events in the movement, Gaston Haxo died February 2.

A man of meticulous habits, he prepared his own obituary (the underlined parts filled in after his death), which is reproduced below:

"GASTON HAXO, age 92, died Feb. 2, 1980, Largo, Florida. Born Dec. 2, 1887 in Dieppe, France, a port on the Normandy coast. Brought up in St. Mandé, a suburb of Paris. Immigrated to New York in 1909. He worked for Wall Street stock brokers. He retired in 1958 and came to settle here from Long Branch, New Jersey in 1959. Member of the Unitarian Universalist Church. He has been active in the Land Reform Movement since 1912 and has authored several books and pamphlets. Widower since 1970. Survivors: Three nephews: Stanley Lange, Alfred Lange, James Lange. Also grandnephews and grandnieces. The body shall be taken to the College of Medicine in Gainesville."

This terse outline deserves to be filled in a bit. Mr. Haxo late in life took a trip to France where he explored his ancestry and concluded that he was related to a General Haxo in Napoleon's army, buried in the Père Lachaise cemetery in Paris.

Shortly after coming to America, Mr. Haxo was converted by Single Tax street-corner oratory outside the place where he was boarding. It was there that he met Oscar Geiger who later founded the Henry George School. They took part in the movement's activities, the New York State Single Tax League, the Single Tax Party, the Commonwealth Land Party.

His main occupation was bookkeeper. During the period 1937-1941, he worked for the Henry George School as bookkeeper and also launched and conducted the School's new correspondence course based on Progress and Poverty. (Frank Chodorov was Director at the time.) During this period he wrote a book, The Philosophy of Freedom, subtitled "A Study in Fundamental Economics Adapted from Henry George's Progress and Poverty." This was published in 1941 by Land and Freedom, a New York Georgist periodical. The book was welcomed by Georgists and the edition was soon sold out.

Mr. Haxo then took a war-time job which brought him to Africa. Because of military censorship he could not give out where he was. However, he wrote to his friends at Land and Freedom, "On the subject of censorship, my position is stated precisely on page 204, line 14 of The Philosophy of Freedom." On consulting that reference, we found it mentioned Nairobi, Kenya.

A later writing was America at the Crossroads (1973), a booklet that emphasized the land question. It is still in print.

Mr. Haxo had two main disagreements with Henry George. One was the interest question, and his article on the subject drew more responses than almost anything else. (One correspondent wrote a reply that could only be described as book length.)

Later in life, Mr. Haxo pondered the matter of land value taxation and concluded that this was not the right approach. In an article, "The Poverty of Our Progress," he pointed out that after 100 years land value taxation has not made significant advances and he contended that the emphasis must instead be on the land question. He decided in favor of Henry George's "Method 2", which was to declare all land public property and rent it out to private users on a bidding basis. (George discarded this method and went on to land value taxation.) Mr. Haxo also concluded that the rent should be distributed to everybody on a per capita basis.

Mr. Haxo's ideological opponent was the late Julian P. Hickok, who was about the same age and came into the movement at about the same time. The two, however, maintained friendly relations. Mr. Hickok thought that land value taxation offered a precise method and that it should be used.

Although well on in years, Mr. Haxo, living in St. Petersburg, Florida, continued to write, to correspond with Georgists, to travel to conferences. He even founded the Free Land League to promote his ideas and he composed still another (unpublished) recasting of Progress and Poverty entitled "Free Land Economics," emphasizing the free land idea.

In November 1979, Mr. Haxo moved in with his nephew, Stanley Lange, in nearby Largo, and continued his efforts. Toward the end he was preparing to promote the Free Land League with an appeal to the Georgist movement to join in a renewed movement based on free land. He was active right to the end, and he typed his own letters which were always clear and coherent. In the midst of his activities he died peacefully.

Most Georgists will probably not agree with Gaston Haxo in discarding the land value tax approach. He was undoubtedly right in saying that the land value tax movement has produced disappointing results, but it has made some progress and it does offer a leverage for introducing the matter and striving for more of it.

However, Mr. Haxo was right in emphasizing the importance of the free land concept. Land value taxation is, after all, only one approach to this main Georgist goal. And so Gaston Haxo's work stands as a needed ingredient in our movement.

The Henry George Institute has received much of Mr. Haxo's Georgist library, including copies of America at the Crossroads. We will be glad to send 10 copies to any one requesting it, plus a copy of his essay, "The Poverty of Our Progress." Send \$1 to cover mailing costs to the Henry George Institute, 55 W. 42nd St., New York, N.Y. 10036.