

Henry George Newsletter



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Patrice McFarland, Lizzie Magie Phillips, Mike Curtis

ELIZABETH MAGIE PHILLIPS: The Real Inventor of "Monopoly"

When Patrice McFarland, a graphic artist and game historian from Averill Park, NY, attended the 1989 annual Allentown Toy Show, she had no inkling that she would uncover the first chapter of a fascinating untold story. Underneath a tattered early *Monopoly* set was the "implements box" from the original 1904 edition of Lizzie Magie's *Landlord's Game*, complete with playing pieces, game cards (each of which bore a quote by Henry George or some other prominent thinker, about monopoly, bigotry, ethics or economics), and a set of rules. There were, in fact, two sets of rules; one was the precursor of today's *Monopoly*, and the other was based on the Single Tax.

Ms. McFarland had heard of *The Landlord's Game* already. She, like many people, already knew that the popular folklore about the origin of the world's best-selling board game was a fabrication. The tale, which is still published with sets of the game, is that it was invented in 1933 by an unemployed Philadelphian named Charles Darrow, who longed to vacation in ritzy Atlantic City, on Boardwalk and Park Place. Probably no one would have questioned it had not Dr. Ralph Anspach, a California economics professor, marketed his game of *Anti-Monopoly* in 1973, and been sued by Parker Brothers for copyright infringement. (The case was not settled until 1982!) Anspach proved that the game we call *Monopoly* did not spring from the mind of Charles Darrow, but in fact had evolved from a game that had been played, and indeed was patented, almost thirty years before. That game was *The Landlord's Game*, invented by Elizabeth Magie, Lizzie to her friends, later Lizzie Magie Phillips. In all accounts she is mentioned as a follower of Henry George. Indeed, during the *Anti-Monopoly* trial, she was referred to by the plaintiffs as "a rabid single-taxer." That much of the true history on *Monopoly* has been generally known since the publication of Philip Orbanes's 1988 book *The Monopoly Companion*. Until recently, though, very little was known about the woman who invented *The Landlord's Game* (continued on page six)

WHAT IS BEING DONE:

Single Tax Synthesis Returns to Russia

Not since Leo Tolstoy advocated the single-tax on land values, has so much attention been paid in Russia to the Georgist paradigm. Not only is Soviet Union President Mikhail Gorbachev interested, so is Boris Yeltsin, head of the Russian republic. Many independent efforts have been taken to get the attention of economists, reformers, and officials in the USSR.

Recently, Claude and Dian Arnold of the Fairhope Single Tax Colony in Alabama travelled to the Soviet Union. Returning to Fairhope, they paid a visit to the New York Henry George School on October 22, 1990, where they recounted their experiences to the School staff and guests. (The group included Australian world-traveller and Libertarian Microfiche publisher John Zube -- who spent several days copying material from the School research library for microficheing). The Arnolds said they were able to talk a bit about George, and gave away a few copies of *Progress & Poverty*. A report on Claude and Dian's visit appears in the current *Georgist Journal*.

Another recent Georgist visitor to the Soviet Union was Heather Trexler Remoff, Ph.D., from Eagles Mere in Pennsylvania. Heather accompanied her husband Gene on a visit hosted by The Institute of World Economy and International Relations, designed to allow business executives to share their expertise.

While Gene gave official presentations, Heather gave away copies of a paper she prepared for the trip, "The Best of Both Worlds: A Proposal for a Free-Market Economy That Would Combine Elements of Socialist and Capitalist Systems." When asked by a visiting American executive and a Russian tourist guide "Are you a Marxist?" she explained, "...when it comes to my enthusiasm for a free market," to the executive, "I'm probably more of a Capitalist than you are. But," to the tour guide, "when it comes to land use, I may be more of a Socialist than you are."

"This exchange," she reports, "was followed by a lively discussion of land use attitudes and policies in the Soviet Union. By the way, these kinds of political and philosophical debates appear to be a common pastime in the USSR. The educational level of the people is generally very high...one of the great assets of a country blessed as well with abundant natural resources."

Although she explained the purpose of renting land from the community would be "...not to deny the people access to the land, but to guarantee them access," Heather now thinks people in the USSR would be more open to "privatizing the entire system, and then removing all taxes except those on land."

Given directions now being taken in Russia, it may be that Heather Remoff has indeed had an impact. Her last evening in Moscow was spent with a Russian economist who promised to give Heather's paper to Boris Yeltsin, a personal acquaintance.

The evidence is a report in the December 10th issue of *Commerzant: The Soviet Business Weekly*. (continued on page seven)

NOTE: Did any of our readers know Lizzie Magie Phillips? Do they have photos, or correspondence from her? Does anyone have a copy of *The Landlord's Game*? Or Lizzie's other games, *Mock Trial*, *King's Men*, or *Bargain Day*? Does anyone have information on the Washington, D.C. Henry George School, or the Women's Single Tax Club? Please help by sending any information you have to Patrice McFarland, Box 161, Averill Park, NY 12018.

SQUATTING IN NEW YORK

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city, which wants to rehabilitate the two buildings for homeless and low- and moderate income families." Don't take renovation into your own hands--let the city rehabilitate.

But the city has many hundreds of abandoned buildings on its hands. Why is it suddenly in a rush to renovate the ones that have already been refurbished by squatters? The former residents of 1724 and 1728 Crotona Park East have repaired walls, painted, cleaned, installed plumbing, and rewired. They are not wealthy people; all their savings have been invested in this project. Their presence has made a dangerous block considerably safer. They even left a deposit with Con Edison to have electricity (legally) turned on. The money has not been returned. Perhaps that step toward "legitimizing" their occupation was what finally precipitated the Housing Police's action -- enough, after all, is enough.

No, this is not the first time; similar evictions have taken place on the Lower East Side and in the Bronx, and more will come. The city government makes little attempt to conceal its contempt toward those at the bottom of its sinking economy. The U.S. Supreme Court has, at last, upheld the TA's ban on begging in the subways, but local courts have given the *Daily News* a go-ahead to place hawkers there. The hawkers are homeless. Two hundred papers a day is good change for them -- but they have precious little protection against possible hostility from striking *News* workers.

The *Times* story began: "After a three-hour standoff with the police and building officials, about two dozen homeless people were removed from the abandoned city-owned building they were living in...." Interesting. For one thing, according to other reports there were far more than two dozen people living there; fifty would be a closer figure. For another, in exactly what sense were these people homeless? They took a rotting, abandoned building and built serviceable homes there, and lived in them. They are homeless now, because they have been moved to welfare hotels and other forms of city-run "shelter" to be maintained in squalor at exorbitant cost to taxpayers. But as they were living in that Bronx building, which no one else wanted, and they had made livable by their labor -- in what sense could they be called homeless? Henry George would have an answer.

-- Lindy Davies

SAN FRANCISCO'S HARLAN TROTT DIES

Harlan Trott, longtime correspondent for *The Christian Science Monitor* and a former editor of *The Analyst*, the Northern California HGS newsletter, died recently.

Harlan grew up on the East Coast and captained a minesweeper in World War II, while his brother worked for Admiral Raymond Spruance, later Ambassador to the Philippines. After coming to the West Coast as a *Monitor* correspondent, Harlan was introduced to the ideas of Henry George by J. Rupert Mason, former President of both the School and International Union for Land Value Taxation & Free Trade. After "seeing the cat," his understanding of political economy increased. "It gave his work an additional insight," said one of his colleagues at the School. "His writings were penetrating and often courageous."

Harlan had many friends among members of the School, particularly Bob DeFremery and former Director Robert Tide-man. He introduced many people to key water issues, still prevalent in California today. His article, "Doing It the Wright Way" relating to the 1887 land value tax financing method for irrigation, appeared in *Frontier Magazine* and guided a number of people to "see the cat" in the water monopolists.

Harlan was the father of two sons and lived in Walnut Creek with his wife Eleanor.

--E. Robert Scrofani



At the New York HGS fall graduation & holiday party on Dec. 14th

ELIZABETH MAGIE PHILLIPS

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"After reading Phil's book, I had many unanswered questions," said Pat McFarland, "And I made a mental note to look for this *Landlord's Game*. Little did I know what it would mean when I found it!"

What she found was "much more than just a game. It was obviously the work of someone with tremendous intelligence and humor, and its purpose was to teach about economic justice. I really felt that there was a purpose in my finding this game, and that I had to tell Lizzie's story."

To that end, Pat has done quite a bit of traveling, and spent quite a bit of savings. She insists that she has no intention to challenge or discredit Parker Brothers, only to tell Lizzie's Magie's story; but the company did not rush to her aid. They answered her inquiry with a short note saying that her set was the only one known to exist. That could be so, for it seems that all the existing copies of *Landlord's Game* disappeared when *Monopoly* became a big hit in the late thirties.

Last August Pat acquired a big piece of the puzzle: she located a grand-niece of Lizzie Magie Phillips who supplied her with a journal and a number of photographs. The journal provided further evidence of Lizzie's wit, and showed that she was deeply involved in politics.

"The Single Taxors," wrote Lizzie Magie, "ought surely to win out, for they are the only people who have good grounds for their contentions."

Since then, Pat McFarland has been at work on the project every night, laboriously searching out details in the life of a true American original. She discovered that Elizabeth Magie Phillips was born in the 1860's, and was a game inventor (Parker Bros. published four of her games,) an actress, reformer, and teacher. She founded a Henry George School extension in Washington, D.C. in 1935, and was acquainted with Henry George, Jr., as well as other prominent voices for reform such as Frank Stephens, Joseph Dana Miller, and Upton Sinclair. She and her game were mentioned in Sinclair's book *A Cry for Justice*. Her father, a newspaperman, gave her a copy of *Progress and Poverty* in the 1890's. She remained a staunch Georgist for the rest of her life.

Pat says that she has, perhaps, eight months to go on her research. Her goal is a biography of Lizzie Magie Phillips which also brings to life the epic sweep of American history encompassed in the span of her life. To accomplish this she plans to use "not just words but many images." Indeed, she has already been approached about a TV movie based on Lizzie Magie. And, as a special appendix to her book, she and Philadelphia HGS Director Mike Curtis are at work on adapting Lizzie's old Single Tax game rules to the modern *Monopoly* set. Although that connection is what gives her project its mass-market appeal, Pat McFarland is convinced that the intriguing, enchanting story of Lizzie herself is what will truly strike a chord with the public. Next time: More on the story of Elizabeth Magie Phillips and the history of *The Landlord's Game*.