

FROM ARDEN TO DREAMTIME: Land Trust Update

Dreamtime Village, in Viola, Wisconsin, solicits various levels of membership, open to anyone outside the Village itself: "Our village is simultaneously local, regional & global." Like other Community Land Trusts (CLTs), the purpose of this Village is to effectively take "real estate off the market (& cut off private ownership) for the purpose of protecting it from both ecological & economic abuse - especially speculation. The land will be held in stewardship for the common good of those who use it, users paying an 'economic rent' (lease fee) equal to the annual value of the land." (For

further information, write to: Dreamtime Village, Rt. 2, Bx. 242w, Viola, WI 54464)

Dreamtime Village will actually be one of the lessees of the Driftless Bioregional Land Conservancy.

The DBLC is affiliated with a wide-reaching CLT organization called Fair Share Land Conservancy, started by Mr. Jubal Stucki. We had suggested last year that Dreamtime founders contact the School Of Living in Pennsylvania for information and assistance in setting up their CLT. In turn, SOL put the Dreamtimers in contact with Jubal. Information is available from Jubal at 3030 Sleepy Hollow Rd., Falls Church, VA 22042 (Tel. 703-237-7507).

"Noble Deeds" is the title of a lengthy article by Joel Russ in the April 1992 issue of *Harrowsmith*, a Canadian journal. Thyson Banighan recounts his spiritual awakening - in an encounter with a huge sea turtle: "It rolled sideways, and I looked into an eye that I will never forget. It was as ancient as ancient could be." Russ translates the experience into eco-ethics: "Nobody owns the Earth. We are mere stewards, with obligations to both the living planet and its creatures." "Noble Deeds" gives a good survey of the Canadian land trust scene, tracing the idea itself back centuries to most aboriginal peoples, and more recently, to Henry George: "According to Robert Swann, president of the E.F. Schumacher Society... the idea of community land trusts in the United States dates back to the civil rights movement in Georgia. The aim then was to provide farmland and housing for impoverished blacks. A critical early influence on the movement was the work of Henry George, who argued in *Progress & Poverty*... that the cost of land is a major cause of poverty. His solution? Tax the land but not the buildings on the land. Today, some 130 community land trusts in 38 American states deploy a version of that idea."

Russ also quotes Jean Hocker, president of the Land Trust Alliance in Washington, DC, that the land trust movement has doubled in the past ten years. In 1991 there were 900 land trust societies in the US, over 800,000 supporters, and 2.7 million acres of land. The 1991 LTA conference drew 700 participants, 45 of which were from Canada.



The Bluebird

These figures encompass both community and conservancy land trusts. As the article points out, for example, land trusts can be used to protect land for agriculture in some places like West Virginia, or from agriculture in other places like Iowa. The issue is "not unfettered

development vs. absolute protection" but "environmentally sound development - an interesting shade of grey."

The Canadian focus ranges from a neighborhood land trust on Ward's Island, off Toronto, to the work in British Columbia by Turtle Island Earth Stewards (Box 39077, Point Grey, RPO, BC, V6R 4P1 Tel. 604-736-9221). Thanks to friend Ian Young of Toronto, who sent the article to us from Banff.

Another magazine, *The Smithsonian*, in their May '92 issue, goes on at length about one particular land trust, the single-tax community of Arden: "Frank Stephens saw a vision of Utopia in the single-tax theory of Henry George and set out to make it come true in rural Delaware." Arden is named after the enchanted forest in Shakespeare's *As You Like It*. "It is a joyous spot on literature's map, and in the early 1900s a merry band of



The Homestead

American dreamers put an Arden on the map of Delaware. It is there today, tucked among the suburbs of Wilmington, an oasis of idiosyncrasy."

The "dreamers" who first peopled Arden sound very much like those who are now starting Dreamtime in Wisconsin: "Its citizens have been people of ideas - poets, novelists, playwrights and actors; painters, sculptors, metalsmiths and potters; Socialists, Communists, pacifists and anarchists; promoters of Esperanto, advocates of free love, and (in the words of one early resident,) conservatives who had no ideas at all."

Henry Wienczek has given us an intriguing story of the early history of Arden, enriched with many photographs of Arden throughout its history, and portraits of George, Stephens, and other notables. This is no dry history, either. We read about the interface of free love and



The Lodge

single-tax, and single-tax and pacifism. Frank Stephens was active in all three causes, and he and his son were even arrested for opposing US involvement in the First World War: "With the coming of World War I, Arden and the whole

single-tax movement were split on the issue of pacifism. Daniel Keifer Sr., an Arden resident and pacifist, was removed from the chairmanship of the national single-tax organization. Stephens' son Donald spent nine months in jail for refusing to serve. He was nearly joined by his father." Stephens had been tried for trying to interfere with the war effort when he verbally attacked a Liberty Bonds saleswoman: "You are sending our soldiers abroad to be murdered!" Stephens was acquitted.

Wienczek brings history up to date. He quotes Arden resident Mike Curtis, director of the Philadelphia Henry George School, and gives a few statistics on Arden. Annual land-rent, for example, is about \$720 for a quarter-acre lot, "subject to adjustments according to the desirability of the lot's location." With only two part-time employees, all community activities are run by well-organized volunteer committees. "In the words of one resident, 'It's the purest democracy you can get.'" - Mark A. Sullivan (Editor's note: Drawings are from "The Arden Book", a booklet issued in 1975 for Arden's 75th anniversary celebration.)