

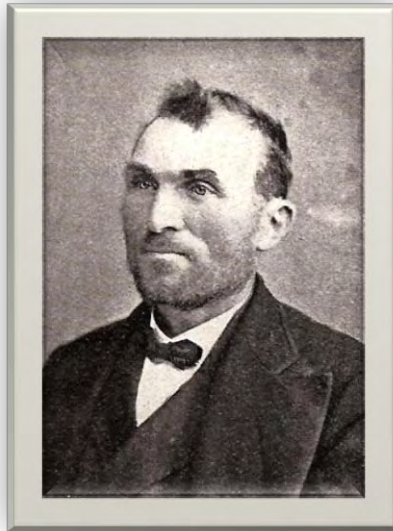
In Memory Of

GEORGE BOECK

Issued by

HIS CHILDREN

1835-1904



George Boeck

George Boeck was born June 15, 1835, in Brensbach, Hessen-Darmstadt, Germany. He graduated at the head of his class from the common school at the age of fourteen, after which he was apprenticed to learn blacksmithing in a neighboring town. He was about seventeen when he had learned his trade and was looking about for an opening to get on in the world.

At that time the emigration from that part of Germany to America was very heavy. The air was full of rumors of fine opportunities in the New World, so he with his brother Henry joined the tide of humanity crossing the Atlantic, arriving at Pittsburgh in the summer of 1852. He was so full of vigor and ambition he had no trouble in finding plenty of hard work to do. After three years of this in a foundry, he began to feel that there ought to be some way for getting on better. However, what then to him seemed the pressure of population have no chance, so he again joined the westward march of civilization, this time settling in Peoria, IL where in 1858 he was married to Theresa Juelg.

The responsibility of a family caused him to again feel that he was not having the full scope of freedom and independence for which he yearned. The same conditions that impelled him to make the other two moves now took him, in 1860 to Nebraska, which was then a territory. He bought a farm near Plattsmouth and there built what was then considered a very comfortable home, which was just after its completion, destroyed by a prairie fire. This happened in the fall of 1863. He and his small family were almost destitute, and it was at this critical time that his friends and neighbors showed their loyalty. They were all struggling as he was to make a living, but it took them a few days only to collect a sum of money with which to give him a start again. He was deeply moved by this expression of good will, but declined to accept a cent of it, saying that so long as he had strength and a pair of hands he did not need help.

His means of subsistence on the farm having been destroyed, and the calamity overtaking him at a time of the year when he could produce no more, he built a small blacksmith shop and soon had more than he could do shoeing mules and horses for those who passed that way en route to the gold fields of Colorado. His business increased and he continued at it until 1868, when he began to feel the effects of the very hard work. Thinking to escape this and be able to make a more comfortable living, he bought a farm seven miles from Plattsmouth. Here, instead of more comfort, he found the grind of hard work even greater than elsewhere.

It was in 1880 that someone sent him a copy of "Progress and Poverty." With keen realization of the prevailing and unjust order of things, and after such a life of unceasing toil, his mind was in a state to fully grasp the Single Tax Philosophy. It seemed to him such a splendid possibility that he wanted to tell everyone with whom he came in contact about it. Although he met with many discouragements and rebuffs, and at times his enthusiasm seemed daunted, he never lost hope. The great truths of Henry George's philosophy were Mr. Boeck's religion. Everywhere in nature, said he, we have proofs of an all-wise Creator, but owing to our misappropriation of His bounties we have greed and arrogance on the one hand, struggling and misery on the other. And until we give everyman an opportunity to stand alone, this will continue.

The pressure of land monopoly again made it impossible for him to do for his Large Family of eight children as he wanted to, so in 1889 he sold his farm, which his thrift had made one of the finest in that part of the country, and bought more land near Iowa Park, Texas he also bought ground and built a comfortable home for himself and wife and the younger children in town, two of the older sons working the farm. Two years of effort convinced him that he had been the victim of land speculators, for owing to the drouth they had not in those two years made enough to pay expenses, so when a man who had gone south for his health approached Mr. Boeck with a proposition to trade

his Texas land for a farm in Nemaha County, Neb., he was very glad to get back to the state which for thirty years had been his home. The venture in Texas was a great loss financially.

When he again found himself on a farm in Nebraska he set about in the only way by which he had ever procured anything, hard work, to regain what he had lost. In his advanced years, being then 60, this was too much for him. He had, however, always been a self-willed man, and despite the protests of those nearest to him he continued the work which broke down his health and eventually caused his death.

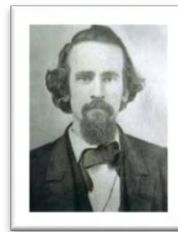
He went to Kansas City in January, 1904, that he might procure better medical treatment.

The happiest hours of his last days were those spent with his Single Tax friends, some of whom he had met at the Single Tax conference in Omaha in 1889.

Mr. Boeck was at one time interested in Fairhope¹ and visited the colony site very soon after it was selected. Being used to a rich prairie country, however, he could not see any agricultural possibilities on a poor soil covered with forest and chiefly on this account lost interest in the undertaking.

George Boeck died April 8, 1904. His wife, a son and a daughter were with him when the end came. His remains were taken to the home of his brother in Plattsmouth, where the funeral services were held in charge of the Rev. Dr. H.B. Burgess. In compliance with his wish that a Single Taxer should deliver the funeral address, that service for the dead was performed by the Hon. J.J. Points, after which the remains were laid to rest in Oak Hill cemetery.

This, and this alone, I contend for:
That he who makes should have;
that he who saves should enjoy.
I ask for the poor nothing whatever
that properly belongs to the rich.
Henry George,
Single Tax League Economist



¹ Fairhope is located at 30°31'35.018" North, 87°53'44.473" West (30.526394, -87.895687). According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the city has a total area of 11.0 square miles (28.5 km²), all of which is land. Its elevation is 122 feet (37 m). Fairhope was founded in November, 1894 on the site of former Alabama City as a utopian single tax colony by the "Fairhope Industrial Association": a group of 28 followers of economist Henry George who had incorporated earlier that year in Des Moines, Iowa. Their corporate constitution explained their purpose in founding a new colony: "to establish and conduct a model community or colony, free from all forms of private monopoly, and to secure to its members therein equality of opportunity, the full reward of individual efforts, and the benefits of co-operation in matters of general concern." In forming their demonstration project, they pooled their funds to purchase land at "Stapleton's pasture" on the eastern shore of Mobile Bay and then divided it into a number of long-term leaseholds. The corporation paid all governmental taxes from rents paid by the lessees, thus simulating a single-tax. The purpose of the single-tax colony was to eliminate disincentives for productive use of land and thereby retain the value of land for the community.

The faith and the Ideals of George Boeck, as revealed in the address at his grave, at Plattsmouth, Nebraska, April 10, 1904,
by Mr. J.J. Points.

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fullness thereof.”

In the presence of the living and of the dead, the clergyman, under the authority of his church, has addressed the throne of grace, asking mercy for him who has departed and, as becomes his office, has offered words of comfort to those who remain in sorrow.

In reverent sympathy for all that the church has done or may do in presenting its ideal, in assuaging grief, in dispensing charity, in enforcing the precepts of the Master, in preaching duty and in confirming the belief in immortality, let me say at once that my task is a different, though not a hostile or discordant one. I stand before you without authority from the church to present her doctrine and I bear no commission to minister at her altars. It is my office to present to you today some glimpses of the religion of humanity, of the philosophy of human freedom, as he conceived it and wrought for it whose body we are about to consign to the earth. It would ill become me, a mere layman, on this beautiful Sabbath day, set apart by the prevailing sentiment of our country as a day of rest and religious observance, to present myself before you, an unbidden guest, to mar the harmony by a discordant note. My presence is in answer to the special request of one whose tongue is henceforth silent, and, as one may not content with the dead, so, in response to such command from such a source, my answer must be, in the words of the apostle, “Woe is me if I preach not the gospel.” My faith is firm that he who speaks for justice and who advocates freedom, even for the most despised, bruised and battered specimen of the race in whom the Creator has placed his own image, acts in harmony with the noblest religion that has ever blessed the world.

Permit me, then, to present the problem as it was conceived by our departed friend, the question of the sphinx, as old as civilization, if not so old as humanity itself.

Why is it that as man emerges from barbarism into the light of a higher intelligence, he finds a shadow treading at his heels and growing darker with each step of progress? *Why is it* that, as governmental functions grow in complexity, the burdens of the toiler increase out of all proportion to the benefits conferred by political organization? *Why is it* that, in the most powerful nation of modern times, whose boundaries are great oceans of the earth, and in which the soil is so fertile, the climate so varied and the surface so extensive that it might maintain in comfort, if not in luxury, the total population of the world, one-half of the inhabitants are without homes of their own? *Why is it* that in the metropolis of that nation more than nine-tenths of its inhabitants do not own a single square foot of the surface on which they spend their useful and laborious lives? *Why is it* that in the same metropolis the starving beggar, most of whose life has been spent in performing or in seeking honest labor, asks alms of the idler who never produced a useful article in all his life? *Why is it* that the toiler, under the law, is losing self-respect, freedom and hope, while the oppressor, above the law, is losing character, responsibility and human sympathy? *Why is it* woman, the mother and moral mentor of the race, by tens of thousands, in our large cities, is able to keep soul and body together only through the humiliation of the one and the dishonor of the other? And finally, *Why is it* that little children, the future hope of the republic, innocent of the social wrongs which they are powerless to right, die like flies for want of air, water, clothing, shelter, sunshine and food?

This riddle is presented by Henry George, the founder of the philosophy professed by the man who sleeps before us, as follows: -

Why is it that, as population increases and civilization advances, there are in all places and at all times, three attendant phenomenon, viz: -

1. An advance in the rent of land?
2. A fall in the interest on money?
3. A fall in wages?

And the answer is that the social ills of which I have spoken are the necessary result of the monopolization of the most productive land by a few, to the exclusion of the great mass of humanity from a participation in the benefits that come from ownership and use.

According to the philosophy of Henry George, called the Single Tax, the remedy for these ills is the abolition of all taxes on personal property, and the collection of land rents instead for the use of the public.

You have a right to ask me what rent is, what claim the public has to collect and expend it, and in what way humanity will be benefited by such a system. You shall have, briefly as it may be given, my answer to these questions.

Rent arises only after the most desirable land of a community has been reduced to possession, population having become comparatively dense. Rent is the estimated value of the privilege of occupying and using a particular tract of land in a community and it makes no difference whether the object of the occupant be production, exchange, professional service or mere social enjoyment. Carey's idea, therefore, that rent is the price paid by the individual for the privilege of being in or near the societary current, is substantially correct.

The rent of a given tract of land, estimated for a number of years, becomes the selling price of that tract and, so great is this value in the large cities of the world, that a bare acre of land in London or New York City, even though the owner has never gathered a crop from it or erected a building upon it, is worth many millions of dollars. Near the heart of what is now the city of Chicago, a section of land was originally set apart for educational purposes. Portions of this section were sold from time to time by an improvident board of education until a few years ago, when but a single block remained, and the annual rent from this alone amounted to about \$100,000,000. It can be easily shown that if the whole of this section had been retained until the present time the income would probably be sufficient to maintain the schools of that great city without the levy of an additional dollar. One of the most beneficent laws ever passed in our state is that prohibiting the further sale of its school lands. There is thus provided constantly increasing revenue as the state increases in population, and the principal can never be lost or destroyed. You will observe that land value is never the sole product of the owner, but that it is always the product of the community and that it is the result of the competition among individuals who wish to be in or near the societary current. As you comprehend that these values are created by the community and not by the individual, so you will understand that the community has the right and that the individual should not have the power to appropriate these great and ever increasing revenues.

Since the benefits to accrue to society from the adoption of the Single Tax system are not the result of the mere shifting of the burdens of taxation from one set of shoulders to another, permit me now to indicate to you some of the advantages that must, of necessity, follow the adoption of our principles.

In the first place this system would facilitate the acquisition by the wage earner and the less wealthy business man of comfortable homes and on much more favorable terms than is possible under present conditions. The lands of a given community might be placed upon the market and bids invited from those seeking leases for a term of years, the highest bidder taking the lease in any particular case, the title owner having the preference when the bids are equal. In the case of improved lands, all

improvements, such as houses, trees, fences, ditches, plowed ground, etc., should be liberally appraised and the successful lessee, before taking possession should be required to pay to the owner the appraised price. Rent, the anticipated profit, having been paid to the community, the lessee could secure only such income as would arise from his personal industry, foresight, enterprise and skill. Such lessee would only take just enough land to furnish him a comfortable home or to supply room for the conduct of his business and the employment of his capital. Under such conditions land speculation would be unprofitable and speculative land values would cease to exist. The holder of idle land would be compelled to abandon it to the community or to improve it speedily and thoroughly in order to secure an income that might exceed the rent. Land would be held only for us, and that use would tend to become the highest and best that could be devised by human judgment. Vast tracts of idle land would fall to the community owing to the unwillingness or the inability of the owners to improve them, and the home seeker would not only have the advantage of cheaper sites, but would procure these by small annual payments and at the same time be relieved from the burdens of all other taxes, direct and indirect.

In the second place, the wages of the laborer would be speedily increased. The first influence to bring about this beneficent result would be the necessity resting upon the holder of unimproved land of bringing that land up to a high state of productiveness in order to secure an income from it. This would almost immediately increase the demand for labor of all kinds and wages would as quickly advance in obedience to the economic law of supply and demand. But the second and chief influence in this direction would be the enfranchisement of the laborer himself. For, under the new system, the laborer would have the option of becoming his own employer upon his own land or the employee of another at specified wages. And what would determine his choice? In response to the invitation to become the employee of another, the laborer with an alternative will decline unless the wages offered shall be nearly equal in value to the value of the product of his own efforts upon his own land. Under present conditions, while shut out from access to natural opportunities, the laborer has no alternative but starvation for himself, and in many cases, for his helpless children and dependent wife,. Though recognizing the fact that his day's product is worth six dollars, the wage earner, whose only legal alternative is death, accepts one and a half dollars as full compensation for his day's toil and presents the difference, four and a half dollars, to his employer as profit. It is by this system of exploitation that monopolists are able to accumulate those immense fortunes which are fast becoming a menace to our republic and which have long been a source of corruption and oppression throughout the civilized world. Knowing these facts, there is not to-day a single monopolist or willing beneficiary and advocate of the present system between our two oceans who is not a sworn foe to our system of philosophy. If freedom and self respect are desirable conditions for every citizen of a just government, then surely we have made out our case for the laborer.

In the third place, the new system would afford an extraordinary stimulus to the production and equitable distribution of all kinds of personal property. As affairs are managed now, a man no sooner builds a house, sets an orchard, gathers a crop or collects a herd, than the assessor swoops down upon him and, in the name of the state, confiscates a goodly percentage under the form of taxes. The successful evasion of taxes on personal property by wealthy citizens and the shifting of the burden to the poorer classes, has made our system of taxation a farce and a by-word. The removal of all taxes from personal property would afford such an inducement to production as the world has never known, and when coupled with the right of access to nature's storehouse of raw materials, would usher in such an era of real prosperity for all who are willing to work as fancy can scarce conceive. For, be it remembered that human happiness, to the extent that it is dependent upon wealth, looks to personal property rather than to land, the latter being but the source from which personal property is drawn. In personal property is found all that appeases hunger, that clothes the body, that shelters from the weather,

that ministers to culture and develops art. The new political economy therefore looks to the interest of the consumer, well knowing that when his powers are maintained and his rights protected all subordinate interests will be amply rewarded. The consumer is universal humanity, and when government turns him over, bound hand and foot, to become the victim of rapacious monopoly, it has ceased to be a friend of justice or a guardian of freedom.

In the fourth place, the tendency of our philosophy, when fairly applied, will be to reduce the price of all useful articles to the line, or nearly to the line, of the cost of production. This result will also be in the interest of the consumer and will contribute largely to the equitable distribution of all wealth. Tariff walls will crumble, and that robber system miscalled protection, which has contributed so powerfully to the enslavement and impoverishment of our citizens, will disappear as a nightmare, and, in their intellectual waking, men will wonder that they regarded the hideous dream as a benign reality. Manufacturers will no longer be able by concerted action to raise the price of a product twenty-five or fifty per cent in a single day and without reference to the cost of production. Production will be general, exchange will be free, competition will be as keen among sellers as among purchases, and the chief, if not the only element in the price of an article, will be the cost of production.

In the fifth place, the new system will do much to deprive the usurer of his present maleficent power of confiscation. Land will cease to be a security for loans for the reason that the full value of land will be paid to the government, year by year, in the form of the single tax, and nothing will be left for the usurer. Great sums will be withdrawn from investment in land securities and will seem investment in production or in personal property securities, this reducing the rate of interest. At the same time, for reasons already presented, there will be much less need for borrowing than at present. Wealth being more ample and equitably diffused, there will be less need of that medium whose chief function is to purchase wealth, and money will be secured by sale of that which is superfluous rather than by borrowing on the security of that which is needed.

And last, but not least, is our claim that the introduction of our system would speedily lead to the abolition of war among the nations adopting it. Modern wars are largely waged for the purpose of acquiring territory or extending trade, and for such purposes wars are never justifiable. Revolutions are never justifiable in a nation whose citizens have the right of suffrage. War is endurable and the soldier defensible only for the purpose of maintaining order at home or repelling invasion from abroad. The volunteer who serves for these ends is the only soldier that is entitled to honor or recognition from his fellow citizens. He who adopts war as a chosen profession and who enters the army in the time of peace, who consents to suspend his own judgment of right and wrong, who agrees to become the hired assassin of those whose motives he may not question, and who is willing, at the command of one he does not love, to murder one he does not hate and with whom he has no personal or political quarrel, stands at the zero point of moral degeneracy among men. The ruler who places the soldier above the citizen and would inoculate the inhabitants of his country with the itch for military glory, is an anachronism that belongs neither to humanity nor to Christianity. The pretense that wars are the method of Providence is a current blasphemy that can have its spring only in atheism. The claim that wars are waged for the purpose of extending civilization and teaching other nations the art of government, is an argument that falls only from the tongue of hypocrisy and impresses only the brain of folly. The assertion that war is but a modification of a necessary and universal law of evolution called "the survival of the fittest," through the operation of which the inferior man must be displaced by the superior man, is an appeal to science in the interest of Satan. Remember, my friends, that in all the Master's vineyard there is but one type of "superior man," and that is the man who, in all conditions of prosperity or adversity, in all vicissitudes of good report and ill report, steadily refuses to build himself up upon the unrequited toil, the misery or the subjection of his fellow man.

We affect to pity the Hindoo mother whose cruel superstition inspires her to cast her babe into the jaws of the greedy reptile that inhabits her sacred river, the Ganges. But what of ourselves? We stand by the river of time which, throughout its whole course, from its mysterious springs under the mountains of antiquity, is infested with a type of monster more repulsive in mien, more insatiable in appetite, more merciless in conquest than was ever bred in tropic waters. In recognition of his power, we offer him tithes of anise, mint and cumin, even to the extent of robbing our posterity of its patrimony. To honor this monster, its devotee not only accepts poverty and surrenders freedom, but places as a sacrifice upon its altars the children begotten of his body. The inferior Hindoo calls his divinity a gaval, but the superior Saxon calls his a soldier.

But our philosophy is constructive and not destructive, and by opening everywhere the doors of trade, and by taking away forever the power to rob the toiler, it will make war at once unprofitable and impossible.

Thus, my friends, in response to the command, I have presented to you, as fully as the time would permit, the philosophy of freedom as expounded by the great thinker, Henry George.

The Single Taxer does not present his system as a panacea, but he does believe that it strikes effectively at the fundamental wrong of society. While he recognizes other ills, he believes they are incidental to the one great wrong or that they are trivial in comparison. Though he believes that desperate diseases require radical remedies, he asserts, against the Socialist, that the ills of society are due to monopoly and not to machinery, and he declares that universal competition, when attended by universal freedom, can not harm the weakest member of the race.

Let no one present make the mistake of supposing that our philosophy is the mere protest of ignorant discontent against intelligent enterprise. It is growing more rapidly than any other proposed reform with the possible exception of Socialism. Already, in a modified form, it has been adopted in New Zealand, the most justly governed country in the world to-day. Already more than one hundred from among the most populous cities of Great Britain have petitioned parliament for permission to tax ground rents for the benefit of their respective localities. Our proposed system makes its appeal to the just and the intelligent of the whole world, and from no other class does it seek converts or expect support.

My acquaintance with the dead was not intimate nor of long standing. He was present at the Single Tax conference held in Omaha during the Trans-Mississippi Exposition of 1898, and it was there that I learned to appreciate his character and his zeal. As he comprehended thoroughly the principles of our philosophy, I knew him to be an industrious and intelligent investigator. As he proclaimed his faith on all proper occasions, I knew him to be a man of courage. Few of us appreciate how much it costs in social and business relations to stand for a truth while it is unpopular, misunderstood and misrepresented. Few of us recognize the fact that truth finds a congenial home only with the minority by whom she is first discovered deep within the tangled jungles of human experience. And when recognized and accepted by the majority, it is too often her sad fate to meet betrayal and outrage in the house of her professed admirers.

If devotion to the ideal be the index to character, our departed friend has responded nobly to the test. And so, for a time, we give to him our farewell.

It is often said of Henry George that he was a dreamer. No more glorious tribute is ever paid to any of the sons of men. The architect must dream his dream before the builder can present it in all its perfection of form, color and usefulness. It comes, hence, that the world owes all that it has in the way of achievement in the past, in the way of opportunity and liberty in the present, in the way of aspiration and hope for the future, to the dreamer. It was a dreamer who, at Bethel, on his way to Padan-Aram, with the sky for a shelter and a stone for a pillow, saw the messengers and received the promise. It was a dreamer who, unconscious of his future glory in Egypt, or his coming power to bless his father's

house, saw the sheaves of his brethren making obeisance to his own. It was a dreamer who slew the Egyptian oppressor and led a nation from bondage to an independence and a glory which he knew he was not to share, in a land within whose borders he might not set foot. And yet, because he preferred to suffer among his own rather than be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, we may well say of him:

This was the bravest warrior
That ever buckled sword;
This the most gifted poet
That ever breathed a word;
And never earth's philosopher
Hat traced with golden pen,
On deathless page, truths half so sage
As he wrote down for men.

And, finally, it was a dreamer who looked down from the cross in the final agony upon a few disheartened followers, too uncertain for action and too fearful for a profession of their faith. And yet, for that pale dreamer, at the distance of nineteen hundred years, millions of men would lay down their lives.

So, when your work is done, when your name is a memory, a history, an inscription, no one will pay you a higher tribute than when he says of you, as men now say of Henry George, "He was a dreamer."