

How To Start An Anarchist Commune (In 5 Easy Steps!)

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The days grow hot, O Babylon! 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!

–*Revolution*, Ferdinand Freiligrath, 1850, as quoted by the anarchist Hugo Kalmar in
The Iceman Cometh, Eugene O'Neill, 1946

Step 1

You are sitting in a shitty bar, in San Francisco, and your life also happens to be shitty. Most of the people around you are actual pieces of shit, and the few who aren't have shitty lives similar to yours. Why is your life so shitty? In part, it's because you don't even live in San Francisco, you just work here because this is the walled castle-city where all the money is, and over half of the people who seem to actually live in this dystopian hell-hole are miserable, dog-shit tech zombies.

This shitty bar you are haunting is your after-work bar, the place where you get drunk enough for the last leg of your commute, an hour long journey to the end of the train line, plus another half-hour bike-ride home. In this shitty bar, one of the few people who isn't an absolutely worthless piece of human filth is the bartender, who also doesn't live in San Francisco, they just work here. Sometimes you talk with them, but mostly both of you are too depressed to say anything meaningful. However, on this particular night, they hand you a newspaper and say it *seems interesting*. The title of the newspaper is *The New Era*.

Instead of look at the piece-of-shit totalitarian surveillance device (ie: smartphone) sitting by your half-empty alcoholic beverage, you instead read *The New Era*. Almost immediately, you begin to realize this paper is something you've never seen before. In the first article, you find this sentence: *The columns of this paper will be open to the discussion of any topic that tends to better humankind's conditions, and to give them the absolute freedom that is theirs by right, and that no generation, of the past, present, or future, may in any manner abridge*. The language is a bit odd, but you generally approve.

In the next article, you realize this *New Era* was printed as a way to bring people north to an anarchist commune in Washington State, about a 13 hour drive away. They have formed something called the Mutual Home Association, and its only objective is *to assist its members in obtaining and building homes for themselves and to aid in establishing better social and moral conditions*. In plain words, they state that *any person over the age of 16 years may become a member of this association by paying into the treasury a sum equal to the value of the land he or she may select... a sum equal to the taxes assessed against the tract of land he or she may hold and his or her share of the common expenses of construction*.

The moment some doubt about this whole scheme creeps into your thoughts, it instantly disappears when you learn that *all money received from membership shall be used only for the purchase of land. The real estate of this association shall never be sold, mortgaged, or disposed of. A unanimous vote of all members of the association shall be required to alter the article of incorporation. All certificates of membership shall be for life*. As far as you can tell, this commune is all about creating places to live for its members, cheaply, and with all its resources.

You read the next article, trying to figure out if this is actually just the front for some weird cult, but then you read this: *we believe that all natural opportunities should be absolutely free, and that land is the most essential to the maintenance of life and happiness of human beings. We have formulated a plan, whereby those interested in making a home for themselves with good surround-*

ings and at the same time place a small area of land outside the realms of speculation and its evil effects can do so. We propose to do this by incorporating as an association, so that all land may be deeded direct to the association, thereby putting it out of the power of any one individual, to sell, mortgage or dispose of the land, as might be done were there individual deeds.

This seems pretty reassuring, even if you are drunk, and you're even more enthusiastic when you see this very anti-cult sentiment printed in the columns: *a group of socialists here can have their officers, by-laws, rules, and any regulations they may choose, but they can not force their ideas upon others who think and act differently.* And so, knowing this is probably not a cult, but a bunch of people tired of paying rent, you happily read the final sentence of this article: *the more restriction you place upon the movements and desires of human beings, the greater the unhappiness of the people, and the more they will resent it.*

As far as you can tell, for around \$2,000, not even half of your life-savings, you can secure the right to build a house on two acres of land, which will be yours **for life**, and what's even crazier, these *New Era* folks will help you, given they have a saw-mill, meaning you won't need to buy lumber from Home Depot. It sounds fake for just one more moment, but then you see the prominent ad on the back page:

WANTED: *Printers, gardeners, shoemakers, and practical men and women in all the different trades, to unite their labors and capital in establishing industries under conditions that will retain for the workers the products of their labor. Such can be done by a number of families working under a co-operative system such as we present to you in this paper, study our principles closely, and see if it is to your interest to join those already here.*

These people don't write so good, which makes you trust them even more, and as luck would have it, you are in fact a gardener, or cultivator, given your job is at a high-end nursery where piece-of-shit tech-yuppies can buy expensive novelty plants for their luxury apartments. You are drunk, yes, you hate this fucking place, but you know you're not that drunk. You just know you want to move to this place immediately, especially when you learn its name: Home.

Step 2

Unfortunately, the anarchist commune described above no longer exists, at least in its anarchist incarnation. It still exists as an unincorporated community called Home, Washington, its population over 1,000 as of 2023. At its height as an anarchist commune, Home housed nearly 1,000 anarchists, spreading to both sides of a small inlet of the Salish Sea.

Home was founded in February of 1896 by three families: the Allens, the Veritys, and the O'Dells. All of them were white. Four decades earlier, the united indigenous had risen up against the colonizers only to be crushed by the US government, their leaders executed and their people consigned to reservations. The tribal band that originally inhabited Home, the S'hotl-Ma-Mish, were displaced to Squaxin Island, made a wide variety of promises by the federal government, and eventually found their fishing rights infringed upon by numerous fish canning operations run by white people.

In the entire history of Home, there's no record of the anarchists running a commercial canning operation, despite the commercial incentive. Rather than harvest salmon before it could reach Squaxin land, the residents of Home harvested the oft-maligned geo-duck, a penis-like mollusk that provides a huge mouthful of protein. They didn't sell geo-ducks commercially, they

simply fed themselves from the shoreline, and in this behavior they were much like the Squaxin tribe.

When it came to fish, numerous residents of Home testified to the abundance of trout in the creeks that flowed through the commune, so numerous that people caught them with their hands. One resident, who lived in a tree house, built a tent-platform below for his kitchen and dining room, a construction that stretched across a creek. Inside the platform was a dish-washing rack, and when it was full, he lowered the rack into the water so the trout could strip everything off the plates and silverware, leaving the rest to the current.

When it came to trees, the residents of Home acted much like every other colonizer by cutting them down, some for their own houses, some for the boilers of ferries, which was the only way to reach the isolated commune. While this article might reference Home as an *anarchist commune*, it referred to itself as *Home Colony*, and in regards to the extraction of lumber, the name is accurate. The residents of Home were colonists, and the community they left behind is still a town with roads that go in straight lines, forming a grid.

Back in the 1870s, the first white man to build a home here was Joe Faulkner, who *built a cabin at the head of the bay, which became a crossroads point for Indian and pioneer alike*. According to local historian RT Arledge, *the Bay was for many years a portage point for [the Squaxin] on their way to or from Herron [Island] on the west side of the Peninsula. Situated on this Indian traffic lane, Joe befriended many South Sound Indians [sic] who were traveling between Fox Island and Allyn. So meaningful was his friendship with his Indian friends that they frequently supplied him with the staples of life—Indian style.*

This strange narrative continues, explaining how *Indian Jim, for a while Joe's only neighbor, migrated with his several wives and offspring between Glencove and Joe's Bay. He was known to pioneers as a rather friendly fellow, who lived wherever his wives pitched his fur-lined wigwam [sic]*. Despite all the mention of *wig-wams*, it was highly likely that *Indian Jim* was a member of the Squaxin tribe, engaging in their ancient nomadic lifestyle. To be even more specific, it was likely he was part of the S'hotl-Ma-Mish band, who lived a nomadic lifestyle along what was dubbed Carr Inlet by the colonists.

As the current Squaxin tribal government states on their website, *our people gradually began to leave the [reservation on Squaxin Island] to take up permanent residence near their original homes. By 1862 the number of island residents had dwindled to 50*. It's unclear how old this *Indian Jim* was, but when he met Joe Faulkner in the 1870s, *he often invited him into his commodious quarters, where they dined upon saltwater delicacies.*

In their book *Early Days of the Key Peninsula*, historian RT Arledge writes that *a cove north of the entry to Joe's Bay was known as Indian Jim's Cove, where Indian Jim and his descendants lived in fur-lined huts. He was well known and respected by all*. However, this was not the only place that Jim resided with his family and relatives, and they all lived nomadically as their people always had, moving back and forth between Joe's Bay and Glencove.

According to this local historian, a German immigrant named Hans Nicholas Peterson came to the Salish Sea in 1882 and set up a logging operation in partnership with a local ferry boat captain. This operation first centered on the forest along the shoreline of Glencove, around six miles north of Home, they over-logged for profit in the typical colonial fashion, and it was here that Hans, or Nicholas, settled down with his wife Agnes in 1887. Along with their daughter Louise, this family did their best to live off the recently cleared land, especially after the financial collapse of the early 1890s, and when their failed logging venture was being dissolved, Peterson

was deeded 32 acres of land in Glencove as payment, and it was here that Peterson built *Indian Jim* and his family a house.

According to the same historian, Nicholas Peterson *built a log home for [Jim] at the sandspit in the area now known as Silverbow Farm. Indian women dried salmon, oysters and clams on the sandspit, "shooting the flies away, using evergreen boughs." Indians traded their salmon and berries for Agnes's bread—two loaves of bread for one salmon. Little Louise and Indian Jim's daughter, Suzie, became playmates.* Given that Louise only spoke German and Suzie only spoke her Southern Lushootseed dialect, they had no common language, and yet were friends.

This could only have been after 1887, likely in the 1890s, and according to this historian, *Indian Jim* lived his last days in that Glencove cabin, and after he died, his descendants continued living there, just six miles north of Joe's Bay. This is the closest any of the remaining Squaxin can be placed to Home when a bunch of anarchists showed up at Joe's Bay in 1896, right after the collapse of the US economy, all of them ready to create an anarchist community.

Four years later, in the November 28, 1900 issue of *Discontent*, the anarchist newspaper of Home, we learn that *eighteen of our residents went to [Glencove] to a dance on [November 18]. They were received with a glad hand and enjoyed themselves. Our people are always pleased to meet those surrounding us as it dispels erroneous ideas concerning us.* This appears to be the first instance of residents of Home going to Glencove, and it places them near the only known Squaxin settlement at the time.

Some months later, in the March 6, 1901 issue of *Discontent*, we find this entry in the local happenings column: *a party of thirty left Home on Friday evening [February 22, 1901] on the Typhoon, to attend a masquerade given at [Glencove]. To say that all had a good time would be putting it mildly. Mr. and Mrs. Peterson and daughter and Mr. Winchester know how to be hospitable, and they succeeded in making us have a great time.*

Not only did Mr. Winchester pass undetected as a woman the entire night, but two residents of Home wore suits covered with print of *the outside pages of the last issue of Discontent*. *Two very attractive suits indeed.* There is no mention of *Indian Jim* or his family in this column, but thirty residents of Home were at the location of the nearest known Squaxin settlement, and they had a really good time, apparently.

Later that summer, in the August 7, 1901 issue, we learn that twenty-five residents of Home went to a *hard times* part in the community of Vaughn, but to get there they went by way of Glencove, meaning they rode the red-flagged Adam's family launch to Glencove, docked there, then rode in wagons two miles through the woods to the other side of the peninsula, all while dressed as tramps and beggars for the *hard times* party, where the worst dressed man and woman walked away with a cash prize. In all this coming and going, they would have walked past the last known residence of *Indian Jim*, twice.

Nevertheless, it remains unclear what the original indigenous residents thought or felt about Home, nor is there any clear record of the anarchists meeting with tribal members, who were known to canoe across the Salish Sea in their traditional nomadic fashion well-into the 20th century, just like *Indian Jim*. It is known that the ferries that served Home also stopped at Fox Island, which was where some of the indigenous still lived nomadically, so it's highly unlikely there was no interaction with the local natives. Nevertheless, there's no record of any interaction with the tribes, and while the anarchist residents of Home didn't over-log their territory like Nicholas Peterson, they definitely cut into it.

The first tract of land for Home, amounting to 26 acres, was purchased for the price of \$182. In 2023 terms, this amounts to roughly nine months of wages for a single common worker. The founders of Home didn't pay all of this money up front, they paid \$20 a month until the debt was gone, and back in 1896, the wage of \$20 a month for a common worker was standard. In current money, these people paid the rough equivalent of \$20,000 for 26 acres of shoreline and primeval rainforest.

To be clear, acres of land can be purchased for \$20,000 in 2023 money, but not land on the water. It's not impossible for poor working people to create their own version of Home today, but there are far more economic obstacles, and independent or hereditary wealth can be immensely helpful in starting a commune.

For example, in addition to the initial 26 acres that made up Home, there was an additional purchase of a nearby 200 acres by a well-off Virginia farmer named Martin Dadisman, and he donated it to the Mutual Home Association with no expectation of any financial reward, allowing numerous people to create their own homes along the shoreline. Without this burst of independent wealth, Home might not ever have grown to house 500 families at its height.

There is no changing the fact that Dadisman was a white descendant of Virginia colonizers, nor that he moved to place called Home Colony built on indigenous land, nor that he purchased 200 acres of it with *agricultural wealth* from a former Confederate state. There is no full roster of residents who lived at Home, nor is there an easy way to determine if any indigenous people resided there as members of the Mutual Home Association, but if they did, their presence isn't readily apparent. Could there have been more efforts to bring the local indigenous into the fold? It appears that way, although it's not certain to what extent they might have, and more details about Home are emerging by the month.

Step 3

Charles Govan was sitting in a crummy saloon in the Barbary Coast, the *red-light* district of old San Francisco. Charles was stuck there, drinking his life away, living *a dissolute life*, but beneath the stupor of his alcoholism, he held onto two dreams: *to reform his habits and to print a newspaper*. While he sat in this crummy saloon, he noticed a newspaper on the counter, and when he grabbed it, the title read *The New Era*. After opening it, Charles read all about Home, and when he saw the advertisements for wanted printers, he left the saloon and made plans to bum his way north.

Charles was a *small, slender man, middle aged, his hair commencing to gray, looking...like a Catholic priest of French stock from New Orleans*. When he finally reached Home in late 1897, *New Era* was no longer in print, so he got together with Home founders George Allen and OA Verity and organized a new weekly paper. After acquiring an Army surplus field-printer and building a small shack to house it, Home inaugurated its second anarchist newspaper, *Discontent: The Mother of Progress*, first published on May 11, 1898. An annual subscription cost 50 cents.

As the editors explained in the first issue, *once more the **New Era** ventures to raise its head in the land of the lowly and proclaim its right to life and liberty. That is has been rechristened is a matter of small import, but as it has grown some while sleeping it might not be recognized by the old title, hence it has been given a new one*. In the second issue, the editors make clear that **Discontent** will fill out all unexpired subscriptions to the **New Era**.

Charles Govan seems to have been committed to recreating the type of newspaper which led him to Home, and in the second issue we also find an article entitled “Do You Want A Home?” Written by OA Verity, this article began, *while men and women are surrounded by conditions that are daily growing worse, making it harder for each to obtain a home that is worthy of being called Home, with the comforts that are justly due those who labor, thousands are turning this way and that in an earnest endeavor to better their own and their fellow man’s condition.*

In this call, we learn that in May of 1898, there were 48 residents of Home, 21 of them adults, and that their principle ideas were *that land should be free, and that occupancy and use should constitute the only title.* In the June 1, 1898 issue, we find another article titled “Our Home,” and in this text we find a clear description of how Home was both anarcho-individualist and anarcho-communist. As OA Verity described, *in our labors some work together, while others work at home beautifying their own surroundings. Freedom demands it to be so, for whenever the individuality of one is suppressed by the dictation of the many, just that much of the progress and development of that one is lost to the world.*

This article reveals that certain residents of Home pooled their labor, and from this labor *a street has been laid out along the waterfront, thus giving all free access to the water.* The article then concludes with the following lines: *our ideas give all freedom as far as we are concerned, and people may live communistically or separate at they may choose.*

The paper had many clear connections with San Francisco. Not only was Charles Govan recently in San Francisco among its local anarchists, but the writers FA Cowell and Al Klemencic were both based there, writing articles and mailing them north for *Discontent*. In that same June 1, 1898 issue, Al Klemencic penned an article titled “Revolution In Italy,” the most rousing in the entire paper.

Triggered by a dramatic rise in wheat prices, the whole of Italy rose up against the monarchy that May, and as Klemencic describes, *in Naples the people armed themselves, looted the stores, and destroyed government buildings. At Leghorn 3,000 strikers looted the stores and tried to burn the cathedral. The same proceedings took place in Pisa. In Naples and Luino the citizens tore down the jails and set the inmates free.* At the end of the article, Klemencic informs the reader that *all publications of a radical nature have been suspended by the government, and no official telegrams were given out for two days, showing plainly that the government is unable to cope with the revolution.*

Klemencic also donated a lot of money to *Discontent*, with that same issue recording a whole \$10 contribution from San Francisco, likely mailed in with his article. In the following June 8 issue, we find a short entry titled “News Stands Where *Discontent* Can Be Obtained,” and the only newsstand listed is the Paper Covered Book Store located at 1208 Market Street in San Francisco. In addition to this store, *Discontent* listed the meetings of the Italian Anarchist Club at 111 Trenton Street and the Anarchist Headquarters of San Francisco at 1274 Folsom Street.

In the June 29 issue, the paper introduced a new column titled “Home News,” an item which lasted for the entire print run of *Discontent*. That June 29 entry informed the reader that Home had added another paying member, bringing the population to 49, and there were currently 11 houses on the land, as well as a new team of horses.

By the July 13 issue, the population had jumped again, with the “Home News” column recording *85 people here—23 men, 25 women and 36 children.* As the authors explains, *those thinking of coming here must expect to work, as it is not an easy task to clear this land and get it ready for cultivation.*

As mentioned, Charles Govan never forgot finding *The New Era* in a grimy Barbary Coast saloon, nor how that tiny newspaper led him to Home, so each issue of *Discontent* began to feature directions on how others could get there. As described, *all those intending to make a visit will come to Tacoma and take the steamer Typhoon for HOME. The steamer leaves Commercial dock every afternoon except Saturday and Sunday at 2:30 o'clock. Leaves Sunday morning at 8 o'clock. Be sure to ask the captain to let you off at Home.*

In a subsequent entry, we learn that *Discontent* now had a new agent in San Francisco, one L. Nylén who lived at 25 Louis Street, and there is no further mention of the Paper Covered Book Store carrying *Discontent*. In that same entry, we also learn that Al Klemencic is listed as an agent for the paper, although he had left San Francisco and was residing at 75 Eagle House in Yokohama, Japan.

Between July and September of 1898, the writer FA Cowell moved to Home, along with JE Larkin and his family, as well as Martin Dadisman and his son Harry from Virginia. As mentioned above, Dadisman bought and donated 200 acres to the Mutual Home Association, and this appears to have been finalized by the October 28 issue, with an acre going for \$10, exclusively available to new members of the Mutual Home Association, along with an \$11 membership fee. Two acres cost \$21.

The November 9 issue reveals a 50 cent donation to *Discontent* by Julia Mechanic, an anarchist from Chicago, and below this is a round-up of Chicago lectures and recurring events. Below this is the full "Articles Of Incorporation And Agreement Of The Mutual Home Association," printed in every issue to draw more residents to the backwoods community of Home.

Months later, in the January 25, 1899 issue, we find an entry in the back page titled "From A Friend," and as he wrote to the editors, *I hope that you will see fit to publish a few lines from a friend who lived among you for five months. I wish to say something about the friends I left behind me. In the time I resided at Home City I learned the character of the people; it is noble and their manner plain. You are trying to develop yourselves and uplift humanity at the same time. You are small in number, have little money, but you possess a mighty big heart and a good will. At the present time you are living on the individualistic plan, and as I could not find enough comrades to begin a communistic house I left you.*

In that same issue, within the recurring "Association Notes" column (sometimes "Home News"), we learn that not only did a Home resident named CW Fox have rheumatism, he was also *quite a mechanic [and] harness maker, and saves us time and money.* In addition, we learn that the *logging group* sold over 30,00 feet of lumber to Captain Lorenz of the local ferry, who used it as fuel for his boilers. He paid this *logging group* over \$120, or \$4 per 1,000 feet.

Further down, we learn that *the new range for the first community home is here. It is a beauty, and is large enough to do the cooking for 40 people, but at present only two families are going into the home.* Finally, we learn that Al Klemencic, one of the *agents for Discontent*, was now listed as living on Alakea Street in Honolulu. As of the October 3, 1900 issue, he was still there, but by October 17 he had changed his address to P.O. Box 800, Honolulu.

From the "Association Notes" printed in *Discontent*, we can also see how prospective members of the Mutual Home Association would come to Home, such as *J. Schatz and comrade and little girl, of Denver, Colo., [who] are here on a prospecting visit.* A week later, we find that *Comrade Shatz, after making his family comfortable in their new home, left to follow his avocation as optician.*

Sadly, that April 26, 1899 column also reveals that Charles Govan, *our printer, while splitting wood last week, cut his thumb about half-off. He has since then received all kinds of advice about*

how to split wood, but thinks he knows enough to keep his thumb off the top of the block. This is one of the few times Charles Govan is mentioned, and it's even more interesting that he was never named, simply referred to as *our printer*.

Later that summer, in the June 7 issue, we learn that Emma Goldman was in town, and as reported, on June 2, *she arrived at Joe's Bay [Home] Friday evening, 9th inst., and an informal reception was tendered her at the home of Mary C. Parker by the people here. Saturday night she spoke at the school house [and]left here Sunday for Tacoma where a social was held for her benefit.*

In the weeks to come, the "Association Notes" began to feature the following statement beneath its often funny entries: *this association is simply a land-holding institution, and can take no part in the starting of an industry. All industries are inaugurated by the members interested and those willing to help them. Just now we have about 65 people here (men, women, and children). Streets are not opened yet, and we have no sidewalks. Those thinking of coming here must expect to work, as it is not an easy job to clear this land and get it ready for cultivation. The only industry established at present is logging, and that is very hard work. We are not living communistic.*

Weeks later, this last sentence was updated: *we are not living communistic as a body; only two families are living that way, but there is nothing in our articles of incorporation and agreement to prohibit any number of persons from living in that manner if AGREEABLE.* The two families mentioned were the Lark and Allen families *who are living communistic [and] have just moved into their new home. Allen just dug a well and only had to go ten feet.*

In the August 16, 1899 issue, we also learn that *all our young folks, from 70 years down to little tots, enjoy the Saturday evening dances,* something which would remain a tradition for years. At the time, the dances were held in the first school house, a small building that held over 20 pupils for class during their nine month term. At the end of 1899, the school-teacher was one Gertrude Mellinger, and the attendance had nearly doubled by February 1900.

It was also in February that Home was granted its own Post Office, first overseen by EC Miles, a writer for *Discontent*. By the end of the month, the Home population had increased to *75, 20 men, 18 women, 37 children.* After reaching a peak of 85 residents a year earlier, Home was now seeing a new influx of visitors and Association members.

One of them was James F. Morton, a friend and former Harvard classmate of WEB DuBois, and *he came to Home on Wednesday's [April 18, 1900] boat and that evening met a number of our people at the paper folding, which is the occasion of weekly gathering at OA Verity's home.* Just like Emma Goldman, the visiting Morton was given a reception *at the residence of Mary C. Parker, where nearly all the residents of the community were assembled.* After spending a few days in this anarchist village, Morton gave a lecture that Saturday at Home, followed by one in Tacoma at the Theosophical Society hall, after which he returned to Home.

In the same issue that related these adventures of James Morton, we find a short column titled "How I Felt At Home" by a visitor named George Swarz. In this article, Swarz recounts how he went to Home and *called at the school house. It was empty, but I opened the door and passed in. What I saw brought tears of joy welling to my eyes. On one wall was printed "TO THINE OWN SELF BE TRUE." And on another wall: "SELF GOVERNMENT IS THE TRUE GOVERNMENT"; while in front, over the platform, was the word "LIBERTY."*

It was around this time that Martin Dadisman *installed a 6 horse power engine in his launch which will provide local service. Speed 10 knots. First cargo 600 bricks from Fox Island.* In this entry from the "Association Notes," we learn that Dadisman, the wealthy Virginia farmer, traveled to an island where the local indigenous tribes still lived, and it's possible he had some interaction

while obtaining his 600 bricks from the Fox Island Clay Works. Later that year, he would name the launch *New Ideal*.

It's even more likely that Dadisman had interactions with the local tribes, given he had begun to make *a round trip to Tacoma every Sat. with his launch & passengers*. Likewise, in the June 6, 1900 issue we find out that *Gertrude Mellinger's rowboat is ready for the water, and it is very pretty. We all enjoy the evenings on the waters of the bay*. As mentioned above, the local tribes were known to canoe back and forth through this part of the Salish Sea, making it likely they interacted with the *Homeites*.

In this list of items, we also find a report on the late spring harvest: *strawberries, of course, and lots of them. But what do you think—new potatoes as big as goose eggs on June 1. Of course, this is earlier than usual for us, but with good cultivation we have very early gardens. We had green peas two weeks ago*. In a picture from Home, we can also find a giant guillotine over a box described as a *kale cutter*, a testament to the sheer amount of kale they were growing. By the end of June 1900, we find that *new cabbage and cauliflower are fine...strawberries nearly gone, but we have dewberries, red currants and red raspberries*. A month after that, they *commenced to use new green corn on July 29. Early this year*.

The August 8 issue featured an interesting item in the "Association Notes," likely informed by some recent experiences. As the author flatly stated: *we do not care to have any persons come here who are not Anarchists*. In the following August 15 issue, the "Notes" author wrote that *many times we have demonstrated here the falsity of the the idea that without a monetary compensation things "pro bono publico" would not be done. On Sunday we again had another example. Nearly all the men, women and children assembled with axes, rakes and scythes to clear up a part of the new park for a picnic ground. The water front of the park was given by MV Dadisman*.

On September 10, 1900, the Home school opened with Kate Cheyse and Gertrude Mellinger as teachers. Mellinger had been a teacher the year before, just as she had a *pretty rowboat*, while Kate Cheyse was *an excellent pianist who played the first piano to be brought to Home*. A month later, *the boys here decided to head off the school-desk trust by manufacturing the desks for our school themselves. They are putting up an adjustable desk and seat of their own invention, and are doing first-class work*.

Several issues later, GH Allen wrote an article titled "A Comparison" where he recounts how *the other day one of our school girls received a letter from one of her former schoolmates in Missouri and in it was written that two of the pupils were expelled from school for writing notes. The recipient of the letter in talking to me could not refrain from comparing the strict regime of the ordinary school and our own at Home...I am convinced that better and more natural boys and girls will be the product than those that have been cramped by the coercive and, for the most part, foolish restrictions of our common schools. Liberty is life and happiness. Coercion is death and misery*.

In the Halloween issue of *Discontent*, GH Allen revealed that *between 750 and 1,000 [issues of **Discontent**] are sent over the United states and a few to other countries*. A few weeks earlier, *Discontent* began featuring a back-page item listing various books and pamphlets for sale through the paper, and the first three were *God and the State* by Mikhail Bakunin, *Moribund Society and Anarchy* by Jean Grave, and *Anarchy* by Errico Malatesta. By the end of November 1900, the majority of the books related to birth control and sex, such as *Variety vs. Monogamy* and *Personal Rights and Sexual Wrongs: What the Young Need to Know* by E.C. Walker.

Up until the November 28, 1900 issue of *Discontent*, the anarchist Al Klemncic was listed as an agent of the paper in Honolulu, though after this issue that item vanished. In the following

issue, we find a \$1.50 donation from one *Discontented*, Honolulu, who is presumably Al Klemencic, presumably discontented in that colonial port town. Then, in the December 19 issue, he returns as a listed agent of the paper at PO Box 800, Honolulu. With his return, we find an accompanying "Letter From Honolulu."

In this letter, Al Klemencic wrote that he had *the pleasure of registering the formation of the following trade unions: Plumbers, painters, carpenters, stone masons, brick layers and sailors. There is now a movement on foot to organize the dock hands. Further on, he wrote that every Saturday night we have an open-air meeting, which, in my opinion, is the most efficient means of propaganda.*

It was from Honolulu that Al donated 50 cents to the wife of Gaetano Bresci, the anarchist who assassinated King Umberto I of Italy that same year. This donation is listed in the December 29, 1900 issue of an Italian insurrectionary anarchist newspaper called *L'Aurora*, published out of Spring Valley, Illinois by Giuseppe Ciancabilla and his partner Ersilia Cavedagni. In this item, Al Klemencic is in Honolulu with GA Luca, the Lambert brothers, S. Tomasello, and G. Somma, whoever they are. Everyone listed here donated 50 cents aside from Luca, who donated \$1.

As mentioned above, in addition to Al Klemencic as an agent of *Discontent* in Honolulu, there was also L. Nysten in San Francisco, who moved to 26 Lewis Street, the rural outskirts of the industrial city. In the January 30, 1901 issue, a third agent of *Discontent* was added, one H. Bauer, who lived at 73 Spring Garden Avenue, which at the time was in Allegheny City, not yet absorbed into Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Weeks before this new agent was added, on December 22, 1900, our printer Charles Govan was arrested and *fined \$75 and costs (total \$115) for publishing "Talks with Boys and Girls" by Henry Addis (advocating free love).* As one John G. Palmer explained in the February 27 issue, Charles Govan was *arrested on the old fake charge of mailing obscene matter. The matter complained of was published as long ago as last April, and would have been forgotten by this time if it were not now revived to gratify the spleen of an unprincipled preacher.*

Within two weeks, the Italian language *L'Aurora* newspaper run by Giuseppe Ciancabilla and Ersilia Cavedagni featured a brief write up of the event, recounting how *the local police days ago arrested the printer Govan of our English-speaking anarchist companion, Discontent, and put him up on \$700 bail because in a past issue of Discontent they found—guess what?—offenses against modesty and morals for having dealt in an article with the important issues of love and sex. How prudish these American magistrates are when it comes to printed matter! If instead it were fresh and tender meat, oh, then, their modesty would disappear!*

In the March 6, 1901 issue, CH Cheyse, husband of a Home school teacher, provided more context of what happened to Charles Govan. According to him, a post office inspector first traveled to Home and began asking a lot of questions, such as who was the printer of *Discontent*, and he left with a six month subscription to the paper. A few weeks later, *a strange craft was seen in our waters, and it was not altogether a surprise to us to find that it was the penitentiary launch, with a United States marshal aboard, to arrest one Chas. L. Govan for mailing obscene matter.*

Charles found out that a former friend of his from Atlanta, a priest, had received a copy of the paper as a gift, but as there was no indication Charles was involved (given he wasn't fond of signing his name), this priest reported the paper to the federal authorities, leading to Charles' brief incarceration. Everyone in Home banded together to bail him out, and when Charles went to his first trial date to plead not guilty, the judge ordered him to pay over \$100 dollars.

As we learn from this article, Charles Govan had *a house and lot in Home colony worth \$100.* Knowing this, the judge still levied his fine, but when Charles and his comrades returned from

Seattle, the residents *rejoiced in their coming, for tho' we could ill spare those dollars, we could less afford to lose our printer...Comrade Govan absent there would be no **Discontent**, for we simply cannot afford to pay a printer.*

Life briefly moved on at Home after this arrest. Martin Dadisman, who opened a little grocery stand at Home, sold all of it to Fannie Minor, *who will conduct business at the old stand until a new building can be erected.* Down the shoreline, *a new foot bridge was needed across the head of the bay, the old one having become worn out, and by voluntary labor the work was done. The old contention that public improvements would not be made if we had no government is childish. We have proven many times that this is not true here.*

That spring, just past the vernal equinox, *the beautiful weather of the past few days has started the peach and cherry buds to opening,* and the residents of Home were *busy plowing and planting for early garden.* As one writer related, *there are about 700 fruit trees in good growing condition on the acreage of our Home people. This gives us about nine trees to each person.* As all these trees were blooming, *a few salmon trout are being landed by our boys and girls. It will be but a short time until our people will be enjoying life upon the water, not alone in trolling for trout, but also in the enjoyment of congenial companionship.*

That same spring, Pytor Kropotkin spoke in Boston at a mass-meeting at Paine Hall, organized by the Boston Anarchist Group, and after recounting the tortures and executions anarchists have had to suffer, he justified retaliating against the capitalist dictatorship, concluding, *it is we who have the right to speak of violence, not they.* From the \$103.33 raised in Boston, exactly \$50 were donated to *Discontent*, specifically to off-set the \$115 fine levied on Charles Govan.

By the middle of May, there was *fine weather for gardens* and these Home gardeners were harvesting *onions, radishes, lettuce and spinach the past two weeks.* In the fields, where *the grass stays green the year round in western Washington,* the residents kept twelve cows, *but that is not enough to supply milk and butter for all our people.* As they plainly asked their readers, *how does a community of 80 people with two newspapers—one weekly and one a monthly—a school with two teachers, no churches, no saloons and no policemen, compare with what you have been used to?*

Another \$10 arrived from Kropotkin at the end of May, just as *Mary C. Parker lays claim to the first dish of ripe strawberries this season.* In addition, there were *green gooseberries and currants to eat—clover is about 18 inches in height—peas are in bloom.* The school house had closed for the summer, with Kate Cheyse and Gertrude Mellinger taking their respective *pleasure trips.* To celebrate, *the desks in the schoolhouse were removed and a dance held last night—the first one in the schoolhouse since the desks were put in. Dances will be more frequent during vacation.*

In the May 29, 1901 issue, we find a letter from Gertie Vose, debating whether or not she will move to Home with her son Donald. After living in rural eastern Oregon, Gertie and her son apparently went south to San Francisco where she helped the Isaak family publish *Free Society*, for which she wrote several articles. As she told the residents of Home, *I could put \$200 in some project any time that such work, or any other feasible plan, could be started for practical cooperation.*

While Gertie Vose was pondering her choices, a rich harvest was rolling into Home. As recounted in *Discontent*, that summer *raspberries are abundant and delicious,* and during a celebration at the home of the Allen family, *everything on the table, except sugar, salt, flour, and the like, was grown, raised or made right on the Allen homestead.*

In the August 7, 1901 issue, we find that Al Klemenic left Honolulu and returned to Yokohama, Japan, listing his address as the familiar 75 Eagle House. Meanwhile, as the fall harvest approached, *early corn has begun to ripen. The crop will not be large; but the quality is excellent.*

Out in the forest, *the huckleberry season has begun. The berries are abundant and delicious; and berrying parties are almost daily occurrences.*

Shortly after this description of *berrying* was published, the September 4, 1901 issue featured this troubling item: *the Tacoma Evening News has published letters in behalf of Home Colony from James F. Morton Jr., James W. Adams and CL Penhallow. Thus the attempt to injure us has resulted in valuable propaganda.*

By this point, James Morton had moved to Home and become primary editor of *Discontent*, and one of his lectures on anarchy in an apple orchard on Anderson Island triggered a printed backlash in the *Tacoma Evening News*, who described the leaders of Home as *vicious*. As mentioned, three residents of Home had their responses published by the paper, and all of this was in the local air when a Polish anarchist named Leon Czolgosz shot President McKinley on September 6, 1901.

Starting back in the March 22, 1899 issue, *Discontent* began featuring a small advertisement that read, *FREE SOCIETY, an advocate of Anarchist Communism. 50 cents a year.* First based in San Francisco, this paper eventually moved to Chicago, and it was in the office of this paper that an anarchist named Leon Czolgosz began asking for Emma Goldman. Soon enough, a warning was printed in *Free Society* about this Czolgosz, and a week later this Leon had gone and shot down President McKinley.

Everyone associated with *Free Society* was arrested after the shooting, along with Emma Goldman, and the repression spread east to Spring Valley, Illinois where multiple anarchists were also arrested. As fate would have it, the anarchists of Spring Valley were consistent contributors to *Discontent*, donating \$5 in the October 3, 1900 issue. In addition to the previous visit by Emma Goldman, the press had enough apparent connections to link Home with the assassination of McKinley, and the Tacoma press quickly began howling for blood, with the *Daily Ledger* calling to *exterminate the anarchists.*

As far as the September 11, 1901 issue of *Discontent* is concerned, there is no mention of the assassination. Instead, we learn that Gertie Vose has moved to Home and was *having her two acres slashed.* The tomatoes were coming in, the school opened for the fall, featuring Kate Cheyse as main teacher and Nettie Mueller running the kindergarten. As of this issue, there were no more agents of *Discontent* listed on the back page, nor were there advertisements for *Free Society.*

In the September 18 issue, printed shortly after McKinley died from his wounds, James Morton provided a front page article concerning the assassination, although the rest of the paper was dedicated to usual matters, such as Gertie Vose being joined by her father OB Vose and a journalist from the *Tacoma Evening News* named Mr. Wilcox spending *a day with us last week, investigating our beliefs and modes of life.* On the back page of that issue, we find the Spring Valley Group donated \$5 to their comrades at *Discontent.*

In contrast, the September 25 issue was almost entirely dedicated to the assassination, with the "Association Notes" carrying the following statement: *the Tacoma daily press has suddenly become exceedingly venomous on the subject of our little colony, and has been bringing all manner of "railing accusations" against us. Boiled down, and scareheads and epithets omitted, the sum total of all the charges is that some members of the community believe in Anarchy, and that Discontent has sometimes spoken disrespectfully of the government. Nothing has been found against the character of the people as peaceful, harmonious, hardworking men and women, whose energies are devoted to building up their own homes and to earning a fair living by honest labor.*

In the same columns, we learn that *Abner J. Pope's new house is practically completed, and is being occupied by O.B. Vose and Gertie Vose*. In the next week's "Association Notes," there is no mention of Gertie Vose and her dad, but Home resident James Larkin did warn that a *Loyal League has been formed in this county, having for its object "the annihilation of Anarchists and Anarchism."*

The day before this issue went to print, a launch pulled up at Home, carrying a US marshal and a postal inspector, there to arrest Charles Govan, James Larkin, and James Adams under the charge of *depositing lewd, lascivious and obscene matter in the mails*. According to Home resident Jack Adams, after the arrests, *Captain Ed [Lorenz] put up his two [ferry] boats for bail*.

As James Morton recounted in the following issue, *our comrades were taken to Spokane, Wash., as provided for in the warrant. Bail was fixed at \$1,000 each. This being furnished, our comrades were released, and are with us again. The trial will be held before Judge Hanford, of the federal court, in Tacoma, at its regular session, next February*. In the court documents, we can see that one Laura F. Govan paid the full \$1,000 bail for Charles, and it seems this was his sister, born in New Orleans in 1866, although little is known about her.

Two weeks later, in the October 16, 1901 issue, James Morton described *the incarceration on Heaven knows what trumped-up charge, of F. Ciancabilla [sic], editor of L'Aurora, published by the Italian Anarchists of Spring Valley, Ill*. On the back page, we find a rare mention of Charles Govan, who *spent several days, this week, at the Lindstrom home, on Anderson Island, likely on vacation*.

At some point that October, a mob of Loyal League proto-fascists chartered a ferry to Home with the intention of destroying everything they found, but as luck would have it, the pilot of that ferry was Captain Ed Lorenz, a long-time friend of Home. As one resident recounted, *Ed Lorenz took the party aboard and steamed out into Commencement Bay, where the boat developed "motor trouble" and sat quietly for several hours while the angry passengers calmed down. Then, being too late for the trip, he returned them to Tacoma and refunded their fares*.

The following issues of *Discontent* all bring up the assassination in some way or other, but there are many normal everyday items, such as the recounting of *a very pleasant gathering to dedicate the new print shop which has just been completed. Most of the Home people, and many of the neighbors, assembled in the neat little building which will be the future home of Discontent. O.A. Verity spoke the word of welcome, giving a brief history of the work of Discontent from the beginning of its publication to the present time. The remainder of the evening was given up to dancing, much to the enjoyment of the young people, from 72 down*.

As revealed in the November 13 issue, this new print shop was actually part of a larger structure, *16 by 24 feet, and two stories high, the material of which cost \$100, furnished by voluntary contribution and built by voluntary labor, equipped with an old Smith hand press*. This structure would later be known as Liberty Hall, and would stand as long as Home was an anarchist community.

In the December 4 issue, we learn that OB Vose bought out *the improvements on the acre formerly held by A.E. Losey, just as the next issue revealed that several new and substantial barns and sheds have been built during the past few weeks*. Additionally, the paper began running a regular item called "The Facts Stated," informing the reader of the charges against Govan, Larkin, and Adams and that *a defense committee has been formed, with headquarters at Home*.

In the December 18 issue, James Morton revealed that the paper was being held up at the post, and *under these circumstances, we are constrained to put forth a final urgent appeal, on behalf of*

the Defense Fund for our indicted comrades. Two weeks later, in the January 1, 1902 issue, Morton gave an update on their Spring Valley comrades, noting that *Comrade Ciancabilla has been fined a hundred dollars and costs, on the trivial lottery charge, trumped up as a pretext for holding him a prisoner several weeks, in the hope of finding him guilty of graver offense. His real crime, of course, is simply the unforgivable one of being an Anarchist.*

As reported in the January 8 issue, the school briefly caught fire, a wind storm ripped the old print shop from its foundations on Christmas Eve, and OB Vose went to Orgeon for a few weeks *on important business.* By that issue, the Home defense fund had raised \$298.75, and the trial had been pushed back to March 4, 1902.

The next week, James Morton wrote that he regretted *to learn that L'Aurora has been compelled to suspend publication, owing to lack of proper financial support. Comrade Ciancabilla has gone to Chicago, and associated himself with the propaganda work of Free Society.* In that issue, the Home defense fund had climbed to \$385.41, despite the intermittent censorship of *Discontent*, the main way Home communicated with the outside world.

This fund rose to \$451.85 by the next issue, just as the population of Home had reached 94, with 26 men, 25 women, and 43 children. As far as can be discerned, more people came to Home after the assassination, not the other way around, as one might expect. One of those new residents, OB Vose, father of Gertie Vose, eventually returned from his important business in Oregon in early February, 1902. It is unclear what he was doing there, but his daughter once lived in Oregon, which is where Emma Goldman first met Gertie Vose.

Below this item is another that informs the reader, *now that we are running off from 1,200 to 1,300 papers [in the new print shop] it takes four to five hours for three men to print each side. A labor-saving press is our next need, surely. The work on the paper is all voluntary.* As mentioned above, *Discontent* started off on a surplus Army field printer with a print run in the low hundreds.

In the February 12, 1902 issue, the back page mentioned that *Harry Winter has sold his improvements to Laura Govan,* and as the trial date approached, life continued at Home with its wholesome schedule, including a literary gathering to read aloud *News From Nowhere* by William Morris and the construction of a pile-driver for work on the waterfront, all labor voluntary. By then, the defense fund treasured by OA Verity had reached \$611.71, and in the next issue we learn Charles Govan took another vacation on Anderson Island, just across the sea from Home. His sister Laura Govan did not go with him.

It was raining hard at the end of February, the literary group was canceled in preparation for the trial, but everyone managed to gather for *an enjoyable dance at Harry Dadisman's last Saturday evening. It was arranged by the young people, but the "old folks" got wind of it, and all turned out and had a jolly time.* Even the cantankerous local butcher John Buschi, *who has been the subject of malicious police persecution in Tacoma, simply for selling Discontent and Free Society, made us a short visit this week.*

The trial began on March 4, 1902, and in the process Charles Govan was dropped from the indictment, as he was just an anarchist typesetter, not an anarchist writer. By March 11, the judge instructed the jury to find Larkin and Adams not guilty. While a separate case continued against the anarchist writer Lois Wasibrooker and Mattie Penhallow, the anarchist post-mistress of Home, the three men were free, and the defense fund had been exhausted down to \$40.37.

Unfortunately for Home, the schoolhouse completely burned down, forcing classes to be held in the Cheyse home that spring. Meanwhile, James Morton humorously wrote that *our Italian comrades must have been surprised to see La Questione Sociale and La Protesta Umana referred*

to as Socialist papers, in a recent issue of *Discontent*. If I had not set up the item myself, I should make haste to lay the blame on the long-suffering compositor [Charles Govan]. I must have been under some hypnotic spell, not to have noticed the error in proof.

As of the April 16 issue, the defense fund had only reached \$51.12, and by the next issue it was revealed that the Postmaster General had shut down Home's post office, the closure date set for April 30, 1902. From this point onward, residents of Home had to walk a mile to Lakebay for their mail, and this post office closure was aimed at Lois Waisbrooker and Mattie Penhallow, eliminating their easy access to communication and national support.

By the final issue of *Discontent*, the defense fund had raised \$55.78, with the trial now two months away. The April 30, 1902 issue was mailed from Home on the last day its post office was legally allowed to operate, and this final issue still carried the same "How To Get To Home" item, instructing readers on how to reach this isolated anarchist commune. Charles Govan printed this item for years, and the Home he came to changed his life forever, as you have just seen.

Step 4

Charles Govan was certainly seeking a home and better way of life, but he didn't simply move to the woods and drop out. He helped start a paper which quickly became a force in the international anarchist movement, one that spread as far as Yokohama, Japan, thanks to Al Klemencic. This paper was linked to the Italian anarchists in Illinois and New Jersey, just as it was hyper local and featured numerous articles about state laws passed in Olympia, the capitol city just 30 miles south of Home.

As mentioned earlier, there is no reference to the local indigenous in any of the documentation around the first five years of Home's existence. However, despite this lack of documentation, it is basically impossible that residents of Home had no contact with the local tribes, given how much both peoples lived on the Salish Sea, for food as well as transportation.

With that in mind, it's also important to emphasize just how emphatically *Discontent* was against the US colonial war against the indigenous of the Philippine Isles, a war that raged for the newspaper's entire print run. Numerous articles attest to this, just as the close involvement of Al Klemencic speaks greatly to the type of aid these anarchists sent to the insurgents of the Philippine Isles.

Several historians are still trying to reconstruct the particulars, but as Emma Goldman freely admitted in her 1931 autobiography, *I had worked with some of the members of the Junta engaged in underground activities to secure freedom for the Philippine Islands*. In her typical manner, Emma keeps her involvement vague, but as illustrated above, Al Klemencic moved between San Francisco, Honolulu, and Yokohama during the course of the war, and it is likely this was their famed gun-smuggling route, with the weapons staged in San Francisco before being sent off to the Philippines.

From the end of April to the beginning of June 1898, the great Emma Goldman was in or around the port of San Francisco, lingering there as troops began to stream across the Pacific for the invasion. It is highly likely she was coordinating this gun-smuggling route between her Bay Area lectures, and Al Klemencic was very much in San Francisco when Emma was there. By the time she arrived at Home on June 2, 1899, her comrade Al Klemencic was living in the port of Yokohama, just over 1,500 nautical miles from the Philippines. To make this story even more

uncanny, it is also likely that Haywire Mac, the famed singer of *Hallelujah*, *I'm A Bum* and *The Big Rock Candy Mountains*, was involved in the final leg of this smuggling network.

The point being, the *Discontent* that Charles Govan kept running wasn't a navel-gazing shit-rag from an irrelevant anarchist commune, it was actually an important part of a thriving, active movement that was killing king and presidents, just as it was running guns to opponents of the US imperial army. But just because the anarchists of Home were bound up in this hardcore anarchist network, that didn't stop them from obsessing over fruit trees, fishing for salmon, harvesting geo-ducks, or milling wood for their charming Victorian houses, some of which stand today.

The really juicy action is hidden in the shadows of Home's history, but out in the open were struggles people can relate to in 2023, especially regarding the kind of daily shit-work that emerges in communes or land projects or whatever you want to call them. For example, slaughtering and butchering an animal is not something many people want to do, nor do they want to deal with preserving that much meat, and this often doesn't square with those people's desire to eat that same meat.

In Home, this task of slaughtering and butchering animals fell on the shoulders of John Buschi, and big surprise, the guy was a notorious, angry grump. As the Home resident Toots Snyder recalls, *he was a big beefy looking man himself and he had a little shop back where Ed Rose lived up this little road and all the women came to buy meat from him and the meat was pretty ugly looking. It was usually a whole side of beef with very yellow fat and I can still remember the great big bloody meat cleaver for hacking off meat that he sold to the women. It was a place for the women to congregate. They would talk about recipes, and about the events of the day.*

Another Home resident, Radium Lavene, relates that *the Swiss butcher had a very disagreeable nature, and while all don't recall that he ever fought with anyone physically, he fought with all verbally. It resulted in him having to sell most of his meat away from Home to such places as the Glen Cove Hotel, near the closest known Squaxin settlement, or to the Delano Hotel, a resort two coves south built on land purchased from the Lorenz' of nearby Lakebay for \$2,500 in 1887.*

This animosity towards John the butcher took many forms. When he got his launch stuck on a rock as the tide was going out, no one at Home went out to help him, no matter how loud he yelled or how often he blew his horn. The next incident is much more extreme.

When repression and internal divisions were ripping Home apart after the *Los Angeles Times* bombing of 1910, the owner of one of Home's co-operative grocery stores, a notorious drunk and money-waster named John Engvall, sued the members of the Mutual Home Association in court and won a court order to be paid \$47 from each member, just as the judge ordered the members to each pay Nathan Levin \$42 for a loan he took out to save the now bankrupt co-op. Most of the Home residents paid in script, paid in kind, or worked off this debt in some other way, but some anarchists simply refused to honor the court's decision, being anarchists and what not. For example, the anarcho-syndicalist Jay Fox legally worked off his debt to Nathan Levin, being his friend, but he refused to pay John Engvall the court-ordered \$47 and legally lost his house to this corrupt, division-sowing parasite.

Another anarchist who refused to honor the court decisions was the butcher John Buschi, who paid neither Engvall or Levin. As recalled by Nathan's son Radium, *my mother [Bessie Levin] needed some money badly as Dad wasn't doing too well in his business in Tacoma—so being a direct-actionist mother took a .32 pistol which Dad kept in the house loaded with blank cartridges and called on Buschi. She told him that John owed her and Nathan \$42, and she was there to collect it.*

John turned white at the sight of this determined woman with a gun pointing at him and said that he intended to pay all along but didn't know that she needed it so badly. Then he suddenly dashed into his bedroom.

Mother reasoned quickly to herself that John also had a gun in his bedroom and that his bullets were not blanks—she decided that there was no time to lose in getting away. She ran as fast as she could to the road where fortunately Mr. Cooper was driving towards the store with his team and wagon...meanwhile thanking her lucky stars that John didn't shoot her while she was running.

Mother climbed aboard Cooper's wagon and on the way to the store she told him the story and handed him the revolver so that he could see that the cartridges were blanks. When mother returned home she felt like €2. She had not only risked her life but she had accomplished nothing. Would John sue her for threatening his life? Or would he just shoot her on sight? Mother spent a sleepless night.

But the next morning Phil Cohn, whose father was running the store then, called on mother to tell her that John Buschi asked the store to credit my mother with \$5.00 and charge it to him. It was only then that mother felt she could breath easier and that John was probably more scared than she was (that was all John ever paid though).

Just like Jay Fox, the butcher Buschi lost his house to the parasite Ingvall over \$47 dollars, and after nearly a decade of living at Home, the angry John Buschi moved just outside of the commune, to the previously mentioned house up the way where all the Home women liked to congregate, despite the vile temper of this butcher. Perhaps they liked him simply because he had been truly afraid of Bessie Levin and her .32 pistol, meaning he respected her.

In regards to other typical commune problems, Home also experienced waves of tumult because of non-monogamy, or *variety*, as they called it back then. For example, a Home resident named George Baker got into a romantic relationship with one Annie Carlson, and according to one Home resident, Annie was *sort of a women's libber*. She wore jeans when none of the other women wore jeans. According to the stories, George had *done her wrong* by sleeping with another woman and so Annie took the ferry to Tacoma and bought a gun. After that, she chartered a launch to come to Home, *burned two houses down* (presumably Baker's and his new lover's), then after that she *walked over that hill and shot* George Baker, although he didn't die.

As you can see, there was some actual gun play at Home, along with arson and dynamite blasts, and these divisions, whether sown by infiltrators, the residents, or the law itself, were ultimately the cause of Home ceasing to be an anarchist commune in 1919. The definitive blow was when the son of Gertie Vose, a worm named Donald, was lightly entrapped by a prostitute paid by the Burns Detective Agency and turned into a hyper-willing, well-paid snitch, ultimately betraying an anarchist dynamiter named David Caplan who was hiding out to the north on Bainbridge Island. A minority of Home residents had not only assisted lightly in the bombing of the *Los Angeles Times* bombing of 1910, they had also hidden David Caplan for nearly five years after the bombing. However, the actions of this minority had a major effect on Home, certainly leading to its dissolution.

Beyond the financial motivation for snitching out his anarchist community, Donald Vose also resented his mother, a notorious *free woman*. In the Eugene O'Neill play *The Iceman Cometh*, the character based on Donald Vose, a similar worm named Donald Parritt, goes on a rant about how Home was just *a lot of cranks and bums and free women [plotting] to overthrow our government*. He later admits that's all bullshit, saying *I didn't give a damn about the money. It was because I hated [my mother]*.

The real life Donald certainly hated his mother Gertie Vose, resenting her for disappearing whenever she felt like and raising him in this backwater rather than exciting Tacoma with its saloons, brothels, department stores, and red, white, and blue capitalism. In every picture, Donald is dressing up as modern as he can, not like the others of Home who still looked like Victorian settlers in their dress. In the group photo of Home he's raising a bottle as if it were beer, and in a photo with three others he has his hat brim lowered and cigarette dangling from his lips, certainly trying to look cool.

The phenomenon of home-schooled hippie commune kids of the 1970s threatening their parents to join the military (or actually doing so), was a common enough occurrence in the 1980s, and this wave of reaction led to the hippie-child-turned banker, the hippie-child-turned-cop, and the like. The residents of Home also experienced this with Donald Vose, but they also experienced other forms of reaction, such as students replacing the schoolhouse portraits of Bakunin and Kropotkin with portraits of Washington and Jefferson, two confirmed slave-owners.

There were two traditions established at Home which might have accelerated this trend. One was the creation of a Home baseball team, with matches between the men and boys. Charles Govan himself played right-field for the men, and as *Discontent* constantly bemoaned, the old fogeys kept beating the boys. The all-American tradition of baseball might have done more harm than good, and it was set up right after the McKinley assassination, acting as proof that people from Home were no different than people from Tacoma, which was certainly not the case.

Another act along these lines was the annual Fourth of July gathering at Home, for which people were ferried in from Tacoma and Seattle. While no one at Home believed in the state, this open gathering was for the general public to see to that everyone on the commune was actually as wholesome as apple pie, although one draw was the all night dancing in the woods. By linking this event with a patriotic holiday, the children of Home likely got weird, rosy-hued ideas of the grand old republic they were missing out on in the backwater of their anarchist commune.

One legacy Home left on the grander region (for some decades, at least), was the tradition of weekend dancing, often wild and crazy. People came to Home from miles around every weekend for these rowdy hoofing-sessions, first held in the school house, then in Liberty Hall, which became a bastion of not only anarchy, but dancing, and if Emma Goldman was in Home for a dance, it was likely she would have been *one of the most untiring and gayest*.

The end of Home as an anarchist commune is marked by the burning of Liberty Hall by some of the last of the anarchists to be ejected. After that, the land was individually claimed, the Mutual Home Association dissolved, but not every anarchist left, given some of them still owned their 2 acre plots. For example, the anarchist Phil Halperin built a new dance hall on his property in 1921, Harmony Hall, and in the promotional materials we find that the ferry-steamer *Sentinel* delivered people from the Municipal Dock in Tacoma all the way to the dock for Harmony Hall in Home, with the two round trips on the weekend, specifically for what was billed as *continuous dancing*. Additionally, at the bottom of Harmony Hall's promotional materials, we find they were printed by Charles Govan.

There was a strict zero-tolerance policy at Harmony Hall, and as was the case at every Home event, *anyone under the influence of liquor will positively not be allowed in the hall*. This was signed by *THE COMMUNITY*, meaning the residents of Home. However, not everyone in the region was thrilled that the anarchists were still going with their weekend hoofing, and Harmony Hall was burned down in the 1920s under suspicious circumstances. By that point, every small community

in the region had its own dance hall, and while Home lost Harmony Hall, it had another place to dance.

The residents of Home who ended up with Liberty Hall had it condemned and were going to sell it for the good lumber still standing. Before they could cash out, some pissed off anarchists torched the place, as mentioned above, and in its place rose Home Hall, which stood over and away from Harmony Hall. Unlike the ill-fated Harmony, the less anarchist Home Hall never suffered arson, and soon this place changed its name to the Peninsula Social Hall, complete with a pecan wood dance floor.

By the 1960s, paved roads had reached Home, and attendance at the Peninsula Social Hall dropped, given everyone could just drive to Tacoma for thrills over the recently replaced Narrows Bridge, the proverbial *bridge to nowhere*, if one is heading west. In 1970, the Social Hall closed for good and was torn down for salvage material.

Returning to the early days of Home, specifically the front page of the July 3 issue, we can find an article titled “Advantages Of Cooperation” that begins, *say, friends, did you ever stop and think what a wasteful drain the present system is upon your labor. Take, for instance, 10 farmers on 10 separate farms.* The author, OA Verity, then goes on to show a bunch of individualistic capitalist farmers paying \$13,000 total just to have their own things which they don’t share.

As he continued, *now, suppose [these farmers] were to unite on a tract of 100 acres and work cooperatively, the figures would stand about as follows,* after which he showed how those same 10 farmers could combine and spend \$6,800, *a saving of \$6,200 or 620 days per man at \$1 a day, or two solid years of labor, with better tools, barns, etc., and horses better fed, crops better cared for. Isn’t it worth your while to read up just a little on cooperation.*

This was the type of spirit that drew a lot of broke anarchists to Home, and oddly enough, OA Verity would end up seeing his daughter married to Charles Govan. Despite a considerable age difference, Charles, born in 1859, married Macie, born in 1884. To make matters even more alarming, Macie used to set the type for *New Era*, the paper that brought Charles to Home, and when he first met Macie, she was thirteen years old.

As far as Macy is concerned, there are only a few mentions of her in *Discontent*. In the October 10, 1900 issue, we learn that *Maggie Ultican, who was the guest of Macie Verity for the past three weeks, left for her home in Cosmopolis last Friday.* At the time, Macie would have been 16 years-old, the minimum age for being a member of the Mutual Home Association, and it’s possible she had her own house at that point, given she became well known as a talented carpenter.

After this, there is a brief item in the “Home News” for the September 4, 1901 issue, stating that *Macie Verity has returned from a brief visit to Tacoma and Deringer.* In the newspaper that followed, *The Demonstrator*, we learn in the July 3, 1903 issue that *Macie Verity, was has been working in [Tacoma] for the past three months, returned home last Saturday.* At the age of 19, Macie was off in the big city like many other young people, hoping to save enough money to be free. In fact, many older adults worked in Tacoma regularly, another common problem in communes.

In the April 13, 1904 issue of *The Demonstrator*, we discover that *Kate Minor and Macie Verity, who have been working in California for the past six months, returned home the first of the week.* There is no further mention of Macie Verity, although the vast majority of *The Demonstrator* is yet to be digitized from its current microfilm content, and its possible those issues will reveal when Macie married Charles, which seems to be in 1909.

Charles helped print *The Demonstrator* until 1907, after which he stepped down to be replaced by Laurent Casas, a comrade from San Francisco. In a 1910 census, Macie is listed as Macie Govan

alongside her husband Charles. They had a daughter named Opal who other children remembered playing with into the 1920s, and it seems that Macie was likely 25 when she married Charles, then almost 50 years old.

In the words of Toots Snyder, who gave this oral history on Home in 1978, *for those of you who don't know who Macie Govan was, her father was one of the early settlers—one of the 3 original—wasn't he Mr. Verity? Yes. She was Macie Verity and she married Charlie Govan who was a young [sic] printer and they had a little girl named Opal. Many of us played with Opal Govan. I can still remember Macie Govan's home-made ice cream, made from the snow.*

As Macie told the anarchist historian Paul Avrich in 1974, her husband *Charles Govan came out and printed **Discontent**. I was much younger than he was. He didn't know much about homesteading. All he knew was printing—a city guy. He went to Tacoma twice a week to take dancing lessons so we could go dancing together. We separated, and I came down with [my brother] Kenneth to Los Angeles.*

Shortly before he died, Charles Govan gave an interview to a journalist on December 5, 1937, and according to this article, he lived *alone on Home's hilltop, reading a good deal and being quite philosophical about life.* He told the journalist that *the stuff we printed in **Discontent** wouldn't raise an eyebrow today. Law doesn't mean much. It's public opinion and not law that puts a man in jail for expressing his opinions on paper. The tragedy of public opinion is that it is always trailing along in the rear of reasonable, progressive thinking. Thus, somebody is always the goat for any progressive step made by society.*

Two weeks after this interview, Charles Govan took sick and died after a brief battle on January 3, 1938. Macie never said a bad word about her husband, at most pointing out that he felt insecure about his ability to engage in the number one preoccupation of Home's young people: *continuous dancing.* While a 13 year-old Macie set the type which drew Charles to Home, while Charles sat in a crummy Barbary Coast saloon reading the product of her hands, neither of them could imagine how drastically their lives would change because of a little news rag called *The New Era.*

There is only one known photograph of Charles Govan and Macie Verity, taken sometime in the year 1900. It is a portrait of the Verity family house in Home, with six people standing in front of it. Charles is on the far left, standing on a plank walk-way with hanging laundry behind him. To his right is Mrs. Verity, and next to her is Macie Verity, then 16 years-old. Macie is smiling at the camera with her hands on her hips, while Charles stands there with his hands behind his back, a humorless expression on his face as he lingers on the plank walk-way, a city-slicker not wanting to dirty his threads. Everyone else in the picture is on the muddy grass.

Charles Govan was buried at the Greenwood Cemetery in New Orleans, his native city. His tomb rests in a collective plot emblazoned with the name BERTUCCI-SCHMIDT. Alongside his father James Govan, he now rests beside Dominick P Bertucci and his niece Laura Govan Bertucci, as well as one Gustav A. Schmidt Jr. Given her middle name was Govan, this Laura Bertucci was the niece of Charles, not his sister Laura who lived at Home.

Macie Verity married a man in 1926 named Carey G. Ballard, who had two children from a previous marriage. He died in 1939, and by then Macie's daughter Opal Govan had married a man named Homer Rogers, who she would still be with in 1947. That same year, Macie married Harry Cope, a shipyard steamfitter with five children from a previous marriage. In all those years, Macie only ever had her daughter Opal.

One of the few references to both Macie and her daughter Opal is from the *Report On The 4th Annual Home Picnic*, a reunion picnic of former Home residents held in Los Angeles at Westlake Park, or MacArthur Park, as it's now known. This report from the August 24, 1947 event was written on a typewriter by Radium Levin, or Ray Lavenne, and it reveals much about Macie and Opal.

As the text explains, the old mail-carrier of Home, one Vern Sweeney, came to picnic with a package. *The package? This was a bound volume of the complete file of "DISCONTENT" and "DEMONSTRATER [sic]." The volume was given to our project by Opal Govan Rogers and Macie Verity Cope...we are greatly indebted to Opal and Macie and we will take good care of this treasure and will display it with the volumes at future picnics. We missed Opal and Macie and their families at the picnic, but it was unavoidable as they left for Lodi, California for three or four month business trip. Macie too, re-married just a few months ago and we had the pleasure of meeting her husband and it is our opinion that they both picked fine help-mates.*

Less than a decade after the death of Charles Govan, his daughter and former wife presented their Home community with a full copy of his *magnum opus*, nearly a decade of printed anarchist material bound into a single volume, something Macie and Opal were clearly proud of. After a long life, Macie passed away in 1986 at the age of 101. Opal, born sometime around 1910, likely lived into the 21st century, with an unknown number of grandchildren.

Step 5

You are living in Victorian worker's housing in Oakland, only the year is 2023. There is no heat, you are freezing, and for the privilege of freezing in this Victorian worker's housing, you pay \$1,200 a month, for a room. The apartment you share, meaning the entire downstairs of this Victorian house costs \$2,400 a month to rent. According to everyone you know, this is a steal.

You know people who pay \$600 a month, some even \$500, but those situations usually involve either rent control or packing tons of people into old, freezing Victorian worker's housing from the dawn of the previous century. Given how cold everyone you know is in fall and winter and spring, you wonder if it might not be better just to go build a shack, get a membership at the YMCA for showers, and save that \$1,200 a month. You might do this were you not so exhausted all the time. From work. Which you have to do. To afford \$1,200 a month. Which is fucking stupid.

And then, out of the blue, you get actual physical mail from your crazy friend. Last you heard, they went to go live on some hippie commune, but people were saying they had their own house now, which is insane, because they were as fucked as you last you checked. In the brown envelope they sent you, there are multiple pictures of a lumber mill, stacks of lumber, houses in the woods, a woodstove with a fire, some sort of mill for what looks like corn, a giant garden, and boxes and boxes of produce, fruits, nuts, vegetables, and endless cans of preserved food, even salmon, by the look of it, which makes you hungry.

In the letter your crazy friend sent you, they claim you can buy into this anarchist commune for \$2,000 and have a home for life. People will help build your house, teach you mill lumber, to build a foundation, to frame out a cabin. The best time to move in is spring, for both farming and milling. It's also best to have dry weather during the construction of one's cabin, obviously. You read over the documents from this Mutual Home Association and none of it seems like a

pyramid scheme, the people there just want to be able to live without paying rent. Your sold, mostly because life in the city is so fucking shitty you can't take it.

You frantically share all of this with your room-mate, who is also your good friend, and by midnight you have both decided to break your lease, destroy your credit, and tell the landlord to go fuck themselves as soon as possible. Both of you have your own cars, which you both need for work, so after moving all your stuff into \$89 a month storage units, you both live in your cars. You park in the same spot, a ten minute drive from the YMCA, which costs \$40 a month for membership. The showers at the YMCA allow you to not smell horrible at your jobs, which are themselves horrible.

However, after working a month without forking over \$1,200 for rent, you basically have \$1,000 in your pocket, both of you, and you do this for two months. It's not horrible, actually, you drive to San Francisco on your days off and camp there, you stay in places like Sausalito, you see more of the land in which you live, which is bittersweet, given you've lived here for years. It's also bittersweet because you see everyday just how many people live in their cars, in a shack, in a tent, or on the ground. It's fucking horrible out here, and being a good capitalist subject makes no fucking sense.

And so after three months you and your friend drive up north to this place called Home, a place where it can't be any worse than what you're leaving, a place where it's likely much better. You don't know what's going to happen, but you remember how your crazy friend closed their letter, the one that made you drop everything and drive to Home. It was a line that made no sense, but makes more sense now.

It grows hot, O Babylon! 'Tis cool beneath thy willow trees!

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