

CHESTER TIMES – April 13, 1911

BEAUTIES OF ROSE VALLEY – Remarkable Progress of a Pretty Hamlet in Lower Providence Township and Some of Its Interesting Features

Rose Valley, near this city, which ten years ago was a dream in the minds of two men, is now a very solid actuality, reports the Philadelphia Record in a recent issue. Then it had a population of eight people living and working in two old remodeled mill buildings, now there are some 60 souls who belong to its coterie. These live in a score or more of charming cottages and stately mansions scattered over the grounds. And, besides, there are a large number of unaffiliated people, who, attracted by the beauty of the place and the social atmosphere, have built country homes in an outer ring around the estate. This has grown from eighty to three hundred and fifty acres. The scenery included within these precincts is of undeniable loveliness and charm.

In the country around Philadelphia there are many scenes of wider prospect, some of great picturesqueness of single incident, but it is doubtful whether there is anywhere more varied in so small a compass. It has mountain characteristics in miniature. There are budded knolls and dells between; foothill ridges with varied outlines and high heaving hills behind; three little tarn-like lakes, a long stretch and then a doubling curve of the Ridley Creek in the middle of the picture. There are forest-clad slopes, great trees in clusters, curving roads with bridges, gateways and hedges. And all these details are visible from nearly all the houses which dot the grounds and which themselves have either been transformed by some Aladdin touch from old farm houses and barns or are new erections whose architecture is admirably suited to the surroundings.

NAMED BY BISHOP WHITE – Rose Valley proper is a rather wide, irregular winding ravine opening from the Ridley Valley. It was given its name by Bishop White early in the last century from the profusion of wild roses which decked its wood-clad slopes, some of which still flourish. Bishop White sent his family here during the prevalence of one of the yellow fever plagues in Philadelphia, while he remained in the city to administer to the sick and dying. The old stone house in which he lived has been restored and remodeled.

The Rose Valley transformation has been the work of Messrs. Price and McLanahan, architects. It might be said that in a spiritual sense John Ruskin begat William Morris, and William Morris begat these gentlemen. Being engaged in large architectural work they found it impossible to secure the co-operation of artisans who possessed at once training and individuality. Mill and machine work had crushed out all originality in such men. They were driven, therefore, to the study of methods for reviving hand and brain work. The underlying principles of their colony were thus the same as Ruskin enunciated and Morris carried into practice. These were, first, the gathering of workers into little guilds for mutual stimulation under terms of social equality, and second, the transfer of operations into the country where the surroundings would be healthful and inspiring. Something of the same kind was attempted back in the forties by the Brook Farm enthusiasts of New England.

REVERSING THE TRAVEL TIDE – Messrs. Price and McLanahan have in contemplation the removal of their main office from the city to Rose Valley. On a knoll in the center of the place, overlooking two pretty little lakes, a building is to be erected for their force of draughtsman. Here they can work under ideal conditions and on the hill

slope can experiment with the various forms of gardening and plant life which are the concomitants or architecture.

This move opens up a pleasing suggestion of people in the future going down into the country every morning to business. The stream of travel may be reversed. In these days of telephones and swift transportation there seems to be no reason why newspapers should not be published in sylvan dells or stock exchanges have their habitat on wooded heights. In the latter case, in the intervals of calling quotations, the bulls might graze on their native fields and the bears retire into their natural rocky dens.

Owing to the demand for houses the old mill, which was originally used as a guest house, has been transformed into three residences. A row of very old-fashioned cottages opposite has been made over with but little alteration into quaint dwellings in a semi-circle at the head of the valley five or six elaborate country homes, with tile and cement walls and red tiled roofs are being built.

One of the most interesting features of the valley is a group of pretty cottages built entirely by the hands of the owners. To illustrate the initiative and independence of the place these young men should have a front place in any record of the colony. They are: Will Roberts, himself a bookbinder, and his wife, an illustrator; William Walton, superintendent of architectural construction; John Bissetter, head draughtsman for Price and McLanahan; Henry W. Hetzele, teacher in a manual training school and Henry Troth, a landscape photographer, whose work is familiar to readers of the magazines. John Maene, the master carver of the woodworking plant, lives in an old house on the hill top, surrounded by a vineyard which recalls to him his home in the south of France. From his hand came the grotesques and gargoyles of our University buildings. Mr. and Mrs. J.R. Black, metal workers in silverware and jewelry, live in one of the old, but now transformed cottages.

PAWNEE BILL WANTED PANELS – Mr. Stephens, artist, and student of Indian life, with his wife, Mrs. Alice Barber Stephens, the well-known illustrator, live in a large house on the top of the hill in the rear of the valley. This dwelling was originally a barn, but has been remodeled and added to, until what with its size and artistic treasures, and collection of Indian relics – probably the most valuable place in America – it would take a long time to describe. Mr. Stephens was asked by Pawnee Bill to paint decorative panels for the latter's house in Oklahoma.

Other artists of the place are Mrs. Shaw, who lives in the old Bishop White's house, and who was a pupil of Whistler for some years.

Mr. Schoen, whose inventions of the steel car and the compressed steel car wheel, may almost be said to have revolutionized modern transportation, has a large manor house looking dwelling. Here he lives all the year around. He has built an office and workshop for metal work on the slope below his house. He has also planted a good many acres of orchards.

All told, indeed, the colony has about two thousand apple trees, seven years old, and about 1500 are to be set out this year. Grapes, too, are grown in large quantities, and the colonists do not hire people to gather them and make them into wine, but do it

themselves. Adjoining the Schoen house is some rather remarkable garden architecture, real Italian pergolas and a tank tower which has brought praise from judicious critics.

The homes of the two leaders of the colony – Will L. Price and Hawley McLanahan- are separated by the whole width of the valley. Both are old houses remodeled. That of Mr. McLanahan, which stands in the very forefront of the picture, has charming views both of the valley of the Ridley and that of Vernon Run, which flows through the central ravine of the place.

A considerable number of people have built homes neighboring the Rose Valley domain. Among these are Rev. Anna Shaw, president of the American National Suffrage League, with whom resides Miss Anthony, niece of Susan B. Anthony; Albert Cook Myers, who is editing the definitive collection of the works of William Penn, W. K. Mitchell, William Wright, Nathan Kite and J. Haines Lippincott.

In the landscape of the Rose Valley domain the attractions of water are very apparent. The Ridley, flowing under the shadow of its wood-clad hill, furnishes a good stretch of boating and two of the Vernon run lakes are large enough for boating and skating. A third, Lotus Pond, is covered in summer with lilies and lotus plants.

There is not even wanting a ruin for the embellishment of the place. The walls of a large, old burned-out mill are standing, and enwreathed with vines and overshadowed by trees, give a note of contrast to the bright new life of the settlement.

The central hearthstone, as it were, of the valley, is the Guild Hall. This, an old mill, is not yet remodeled externally, though it is expected that work will be taken up on it soon. The interior, however, has been changed, and that entirely by the hands of the Rose Valley people themselves. They have laid down the new door, plastered and stained the walls, built the stage, constructed benches and furniture and generally made the building suitable for their purposes. There is something of the charm, the zest of a desert island existence in all this; a reversion back to first principles, if people wanted things, they proceeded to make them with their own hands. It is really a heartless way to hire everything done.

The auditorium of the Guild Hall is about eighty by thirty feet and will seat three hundred people. There is plenty of local talent, musical and dramatic, in the place. They give plays and regularly produce two light operas each year. Many concerts are also given. The place is the club room and assembly hall of the association. The art coterie forms a sort of folk-mote. They meet to discuss business, form plans decide on entertainments. Every one, men, women and children has a vote for all are concerned. The necessary funds for the purpose of this internal government are raised partly by the proceeds of the various entertainments. The social life of the place really centers in the Guild Hall. People can give parties or entertainments there. Most of the meetings wind up with a dance and they don't like the Shah of Persia, hire somebody to do their dancing for them. They even make their own posters, and as these are done by Mrs. Stephens and Mrs. Roberts and Mrs. Shaw, they are pretty certain to be works of art.

Several days in the year are celebrated by the whole colony. At Christmas the Guild is decorated and a great tree is loaded with presents for all the children of the place. At Halloween there is a grand fancy dress ball, and remembering the artistic talents and

treasures of the members of the coterie, there need be no doubt that these spectacles are really worthwhile. The costumes are accurate and valuable. The Charter day of the association is June 17, and on the Saturday nearest that date a festival is given, picnic or garden party fashion if the weather is favorable; in the Guild Hall, if conditions do not permit outdoor entertainment. There is an open air theatre where a play is produced on such occasions, water sports are indulged in, and at night the lakes are decorated with lanterns and colored lights and there are lectures or readings.

Vernon Run is dammed to supply power to pump artesian water to the highest points in the valley. The water is pure and cold and does not need icing. Moylan station is a short half mile from the settlement and the Darby trolley line runs through it.

WHAT IT STANDS FOR – Without advertising, blowing of trumpets, or charlatanism the Rose Valley Association has made a step forward in the vexed human problem of today. Something has been done, and example has been set. The artistic taste which saw in the hideous huddle of old mill and farm buildings with their squalid surroundings originally at this place the possibilities of the present little landscape paradise, which presided over the transformation of the old, and dictated the building of the new structures, may indeed be highly praised. Yet this is after all a small part of the matter. A rich man might presumably do as much elsewhere. He might even start a plant of some kind and place a number of workers in comfortable surroundings. But to give a soul to such a creation, to give it cohesion, to inspire enthusiasm in the breasts of all who are concerned – this is quite a different affair. Apparently it has been done, apparently all the members of the association feel they are having the time of their lives, that they are eating their white bread, as it were. No matter what the artistic product of the enterprise may be, it is a great achievement for such an association to have fostered independence and good fellowship among its members, and to have enabled them to get so much out of their lives. And the artistic product as far as can be judged by the architectural work in evidence at the place itself, is distinctly a success in getting sane and original and American homes.

NEW MODES IN ODD SKIRTS AND BLOUSES – “I thought I used remarkable judgment in my trousseau,” said a bride the other day, whose wedding finery had, indeed, seemed to include everything that taste and beauty and comfort demands. “I had gowns and coats and tailored suits and morning dresses and negligees and all the rest of it. But in my rash young foolishness I absolutely tabooed any odd skirts or waists. And would you believe it, my dear, but there were scores and scores of times when I needed nothing in the world so much as just a separate skirt and waist – times when I didn’t care to wear my suit skirt because you know how much more quickly they begin to show signs of wear, anyhow, than the coats; times when the little wash morning dress is too informal and the foulard frock too dressy, or when everything else in one’s wardrobe needs a stitch here or a fresh stitch there. Take my advice and stick to the odd skirt and blouse like a sister.”

There you are. There’s no getting away from it, these trig, practical, comfortable garments are here to stay apparently till the crack o’ doom. So, let’s see what new ideas the shops are offering us this season for wear during spring and summer months.

Perhaps there is just one thing a woman won’t do to be in fashion, and that is break her neck (though, indeed, some of them have almost hobbled away to join the angels), so

that on account of this fussy notion of hers, the newest skirts are considerably wider about the bottom. They are by no means voluminous, however, 2 ¼ to 2 ½ yards being the favored width. They must above all be cut on straight lines and allow the wearer to present the narrow silhouette that is the keynote of the present styles.

Into some of the skirts are cleverly introduced a couple of small pleats in the back or front panels or in the side gores which give added freedom of movement without in any way affecting the style of the garment.

Many of the skirts are trimmed with wide folds of the same material put on four or five inches from the bottom, and some models show a revival of the high waistband with the waistline about two inches above the normal. For later wear the silk skirts will be much worn, but just now the worsteds, serge, voiles, and panamas in black and blue particularly, are in demand. Quite a few nobby styles are shown in grey mixtures, and the hairline stripes are also returning to favor.

The veiled effects that were so universally employed for the winter blouse have been carried over for the spring, with only slight modifications in materials and styles. Lighter weight fabrics, of course, are desirable for the foundations of these dressy little blouses and silk mull, net and china silk, with chiffons, marquisettes, net, or any of the transparent materials for veiling them, make up most attractively. They are often very simple in design, the only ornamental touch being in the lace collar and, perhaps tiny undersleeves. One charming model intended to be worn with a blue tailored suit was made in the popular and becoming style with sleeve and blouse in one. Over the foundation of white china silk was laid a flowered chiffon with a white ground over which were scattered tiny nosegays in soft shades of blue and green and rose color. Over this again was chiffon matching the blue of the suit, which was also used to form narrow pleated frills, about the white lace collar and at the elbow above the narrow, lace undersleeve. In the more elaborate blouses are seen rayer effects and many sailor collar developments carried out in colored chiffons contrasting with the waist material.

The lingerie waists are filmy with lace – two, three, as many as five kinds of lace are sometimes used on a single model. Lawn, batiste, marquisette, and voile are the favored fabrics. The comfortable and youthful Dutch neck will be much seen this summer, while the peasant sleeve, in three-quarter length takes precedence over all others.

Pleatings give a chic touch to the semi-tailored waists. These are often edged with narrow lace and outline the front or side opening of the waist. One waist had a frill of real lace that not only outlined the front closing, but followed the yoke outline on the left side from the shoulder to the middle front.

The tailored models show no radical changes. They are made usually with pleats down the front and back, and sometimes with broad pleats over the shoulders. Invariably they have long sleeves with the straight, stiff cuffs, though now and then one sees a soft, turnback cuff on some of the embroidered waist. Hand embroidering is in very good style. It may be most elaborate and carry but a variety of designs on the collar, cuffs and front pleat, or it may be a single scalloped finish for the side or front fastening.