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Collection 1953

Joseph and Mary Fels
Papers

1840-1966 (bulk 1905-1944)
11 boxes, 5 vols., 5.4 lin. feet

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Abstract

Joseph Fels (1853-1914), son of Lazarus and Susannah Fels, was a social reformer and philanthropist who used the wealth supplied by the success of his family's Philadelphia-based soap business to promote the single tax movement and various land reform experiments. Advanced by Philadelphian Henry George, the single tax movement proposed that all taxes be abolished except those on the value of land. Joseph Fels devoted much of his life to persuading others of the redeeming value of the single tax and traveled and wrote extensively to support this belief. He funded several experimental labor colonies and vacant lot improvement projects in America and England and in 1909 he established the Joseph Fels Fund of America and a commission for its administration to bring the teachings of Henry George to fruition in North America. Mary Fels (1863-1953), who was born in Bavaria but grew up in Iowa, worked alongside her husband to assist in his philanthropic efforts and often traveled with him in this regard. After the death of her husband she wrote an account of his life and work, which was published in 1940. She also became very involved in the Zionist movement in Palestine and funded many social and philanthropic experiments in that region.

The correspondence and printed materials in this collection provide a wealth of information related to the progress of the single tax and land reform movements in various countries from the 1890s until the 1950s. The United States and England are the two countries most extensively documented. Mary Fels's correspondence includes some documentation of her philanthropic work in Palestine and her decisions regarding the continuation of her late husband's charitable works. While Mary and Joseph Fels are primarily represented, several other notable intellectual and political figures recur as correspondents throughout the collection, including Daniel Kiefer, chairman of the commission of the Joseph Fels Fund of America; Newton D. Baker, mayor of Cleveland from 1912 to 1916 and secretary of war under President Wilson from 1916 to 1921; George Lansbury, member of Parliament and Cabinet minister; and Frank Smith, divisional commander of the London Salvation Army and Labor Party member of Parliament. The collection also contains a few original photographs of Joseph and Mary Fels. This collection was assembled by Arthur P. Dudden, a Bryn Mawr College professor who used the materials while researching Joseph Fels. Dudden's book, *Joseph Fels and the Single-Tax Movement*, was published in 1971; approximately two boxes of Dudden's notes for this work are also found in the collection.

Background note

Joseph Fels was born at Halifax Court House, Virginia, on December 16, 1853. His parents were Lazarus (1815-1894) and Susannah (Freiberg) Fels (d. 1876), Bavarian citizens who married in 1842 and left for the United States in 1848. They settled for a while in Halifax Court House where Joseph, the fourth of seven children, was born and where Lazarus sold household wares (Abraham, Bertha, Barbara, Maurice, Samuel Simeon, and Rosena were the names of Joseph's siblings). The family then moved to Yanceyville, North Carolina, where Lazarus became owner of the town's general store and later postmaster. He acquired a considerable amount of land in Yanceyville and in 1855 he renounced his Bavarian citizenship in a North Carolina court of law.

Joseph enrolled in school in Yanceyville, and during the last two years of the Civil War attended a boarding school in Richmond, Virginia. Exhibiting the traits of an entrepreneur from a young age, he established a kite repair and sales shop in his basement at the age of fourteen.

The family moved to Baltimore, Maryland, in 1866 where Fels and Company was established by Lazarus and his son, Abraham, for the manufacture of fancy soaps. At the age of sixteen, Joseph left school and joined the family business, but when it failed, he became a commission salesman, selling coffees for the firm of Festor and Sellman. Joseph and his father also became Baltimore representatives for two Philadelphia toilet soap houses, William T. Marks and Charles Elias and Company. In 1873 the family moved to Philadelphia and Joseph soon established connections to the city's oldest toilet soap house, Thomas Worsley and Company. Three years later Joseph acquired Thomas Worsley's company and renamed it Fels and Company of Philadelphia. Joseph's father and brothers were employees of his company and in 1881 Lazarus Fels and Samuel Simeon Fels were elevated to junior partners. Maurice Fels became a partner of the firm in 1907 and eventually assumed the posts of vice-president and director. Abraham Fels's connections to the family business were sporadic; he spent much of his later life pursuing his own tea merchandising and poultry raising ventures.

Mary Fels was born March 10, 1863, in Sembach, Bavaria, to Elias and Fanni (Rothschild) Fels (Joseph and Mary's identical last name can be traced to the same region of Bavaria). The family came to the United States in 1869, settled first in Missouri and then later in Keokuk, Iowa. Mary was the youngest of five siblings, whose names were Bertha, Wilhelmine, Nathan, and Raphael. Eighteen-year-old Joseph Fels met Mary during a business trip to her hometown of Keokuk when she was just nine years old. Over the course of subsequent visits, he developed a deep affection for her and persuaded her family to allow him to play a formative role in her education and upbringing. He arranged for her to attend St. Mary's Academy, a Roman Catholic convent boarding school in Notre Dame, Indiana. Joseph and Mary became engaged in 1879 just before her graduation from St. Mary's and were married on November 16, 1881, in Keokuk. The couple moved to Philadelphia to live with Joseph's family and eventually were able to move into their own home in 1883. That year their first and only child, Irvin, was born. The infant died less than a year later and Mary vowed never to have another child. After the death of her son, she transformed the Fels home into a

salon, which attracted the likes of musicians, writers, and intellectuals, while Joseph intensified his absorption in his business pursuits.

In 1894 Joseph Fels acquired Charles Walter Stanton's formula for soap when he purchased Stanton's mismanaged soap company. The soap was remarkable for its ability to cut through grease and grime due to the presence of a benzene solvent called naphtha. A successful marketing campaign ensued and brought about a dramatic increase in the sales of the soap. Eventually Fels and Company discontinued production of all other varieties of soaps and concentrated solely upon Fels-Naptha (the first "h" dropped for commercial convenience).

In the late 1880s Mary and Joseph Fels joined the Philadelphia chapter of the Society for Ethical Culture, and in so doing became acquainted with many renowned figures, including the Camden, New Jersey, poet Walt Whitman, painter Thomas Eakins, orator Robert Ingersoll, and sculptor Sidney More. Also around this time Joseph was introduced to Henry George's theories on the causes of poverty and his solution, the single tax. In his article, "The Single Tax and Why We Urge It," published in 1890, George wrote:

When we tax houses, crops, money, furniture, capital or wealth in any of its forms, we take from individuals what rightfully belongs to them. We violate the right of property, and in the name of the State commit robbery. But when we tax ground values, we take from individuals what does not belong to them, but belongs to the community, and which cannot be left to individuals without the robbery of other individuals.

The theories of Henry George, like those of John Stuart Mill, Adolf Damaschke, and Franz Oppenheimer, concern land rights and the need for their reform, but unlike socialist theories, do not completely dismiss private ownership and private enterprise. George believed, however, that no increase of productive power could permanently uplift the masses if wages did not increase proportionately with growth and if the natural increase in the value of the land benefited a select few. The land, posited George, belonged to all, and the increase in its value came as a result of the work of community in the form of material progress and population growth. As such, there must be recognition of the common right to land, including its resources, and secondly, all taxation must be abolished except a single tax upon land values, which would ensure that every person benefited from its revenues, not just the land owner and speculator.

While Fels-Naptha was enjoying unprecedented success, in 1893 major business failures and the collapse of the stock market triggered a national depression. Vacant land cultivation was proposed as a remedy in Philadelphia. Originated in Detroit by the city's mayor, Hazen S. Pingree, vacant land cultivation was a way for jobless men to make use of disuse in order to feed their families. In 1897 the Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association was founded by fifty citizens, Joseph Fels among them. The association was assisted by the Philadelphia Society for Organizing Charity in processing applications and in completing background checks for potential participants. Land was donated from public and private sources and accepted or rejected based on soil quality. Workers were supervised by Robert F. Powell, an experienced surveyor. Fels gave

generously to the association and also supported the establishment of school gardens to provide practical training to young people. He became convinced of the need to rework the system of land ownership and he sought out projects that experimented with solutions.

Fels provided financial assistance to the Fairhope single tax colony in Alabama, a community founded in 1894 upon the theories of Henry George, and later also provided assistance towards the building, equipment, and maintenance costs for Fairhope's School of Organic Education. Marietta Johnson, a teacher from Minnesota, founded the school in 1907 and its curriculum embraced the education of the whole student—mind, body, and spirit—and consisted of music, arts, and folk dancing classes, in addition to traditional subjects. Increasingly, Fels subordinated his soap business to his passion for social reforms and used the company's profits to fund his philanthropic interests, thus leading to tension among the Fels brothers, who all had a stake in the company's finances.

Prior to 1901, the population of England had not been introduced to Fels-Naptha soap. That year Joseph Fels moved to England with his wife, Mary, with the intention of expanding the market for his product. At first he devoted most of his time to establishing the company's new enterprise and ensuring its success, but once sales began to rise he again devoted his energies to his social and philanthropic interests. Even while abroad, Fels maintained his ties to Philadelphia, which he would make clear by introducing himself as "Joseph Fels of Philadelphia and London." While living in England, he supplied the Philadelphia Public Baths Association, which maintained public baths for the poor, with free soap and he also made the Felses' West Philadelphia home available to the Young Women's Union, which used it as the summer vacation home for Jewish working girls. In England, he funded several brief experimental labor colonies, such as those at the Landon Farm Colony (1904) and Hollesly Farm (1905), in an attempt to alleviate the problem of England's vast population of unemployed. Fels's experiment at Nispell's Farm at Mayland (1906) was a remedy for the unemployed combined with an attempt to distribute land to those desirous of farm life, but unable to own land under England's system of landlordism. Ironically, the industry of the workers and Fels's capital investment drove up the values for neighboring lands, thus blocking possibilities for further expansion and profit.

Fels realized that his experiments could not provide mass relief for England's unemployed, so he turned once again to vacant land cultivation. In 1907 he helped found the Vacant Land Cultivation Society of Great Britain, which was established to obtain free use of land from public authorities and private owners in order to prepare it for cultivation by the unemployed and to provide necessary instruction and supervision, together with seeds, tools, and fertilizers. In 1912, after four seasons of cultivation, the Society held 520 plots on sixty-five acres of land. Joseph valued the publicity generated by the project, but desired success on a grander scale. He continued to travel extensively promoting the teachings of Henry George and advocating the single tax, most especially in Canada, Germany, Denmark, and Sweden.

Always interested in the activities of other social movements, Fels observed the Fifth Congress International Convention of the Russian Social Democrat Workers' Party (RSDRP) in 1907 in London. That meeting would be the party's last before the Russian Revolution of 1917. Before the close of the convention the party exhausted its funds, but an interest-free loan of £1,700 from Joseph Fels provided relief. The loan was granted upon the condition of a signed receipt by all delegates of the convention and upon repayment by January 1, 1908. Many of the signatures on the document, copies of which are included in Series 3b, are pseudonyms and Lenin, who presided at the meetings, did not sign. The deadline for repayment was not met and although Joseph agitated for reimbursement, this was not achieved during his lifetime.

In response to the decline of the single tax movement in America following the premature death of Henry George in 1897, Fels launched the Joseph Fels Fund of America and a commission for its administration in 1909 to bring George's teachings to fruition in North America. George had died of a cerebral hemorrhage at the age of fifty-eight while in the midst of his second mayoral campaign in New York City. Fels endowed the Joseph Fels Fund of America with \$25,000 per annum for five years, established a similar organization in England, and contributed funds for related organizations in countries such as Canada and Denmark. The American commission's members included Daniel Kiefer of Cincinnati, Jackson H. Ralston of Washington, D.C., Lincoln Steffens of New York, Frederic C. Howe of New York, Carrie Chapman Catt of New York, Charles H. Ingersoll of New York, George A. Briggs of Elkhart, Indiana, and A.B. Du Pont. From 1906 to 1912, he also supported the Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) in its search for potential Jewish homelands, but did so with the hope that the new colony would be established upon the principles of Henry George. His relationship with ITO leader, Israel Zangwill, soured when both parties realized that they were not striving toward the same goal.

In December 1913 Joseph and Mary left England and returned to America. Later that month, after years of disagreement regarding the management of their jointly-held company, Joseph and his brother, Samuel, consented to an arbitration of the assets of Fels and Company, which was undertaken by Louis Brandeis. The tangible assets of the company were appraised and divided and the partnership was amicably transformed into a corporation.

Joseph attended the Fourth Annual Joseph Fels Fund Commission and Single Tax Conference in Washington, D.C. in January 1914 and afterwards returned to Philadelphia where he and Mary stayed with Earl and Anna Barnes at 3640 Chestnut Street, the former residence of the Felses. Joseph grew ill during their stay and died on February 22. He was sixty years old at the time of his death.

During Joseph's lifetime, Mary Fels often worked alongside him to advance the many causes in which he believed and after his death she professed her continued support of those causes. She also became an advocate for the arts and for education and prison reform. She later moved to New York City and there served as editor of *The Public*, a weekly publication "devoted to Democracy." In 1916 she dissolved the Joseph Fels Fund Commission, substituting its work with that of the new Joseph Fels International

Commission to Promote the Single Tax, its headquarters in New York City, and the National Single Tax League, chaired by Daniel Kiefer, with its headquarters in Cincinnati. Abroad, however, the many British single tax organizations previously supported by Joseph suffered as a result of Mary's decreased financial patronage.

Later in her life, Mary became increasingly devoted to the Zionist movement and to her internal religious awakening. She journeyed often to Palestine and intertwined her interest in a Jewish homeland with her interests in the single tax and land reform movements; she supported agricultural communities in Palestine, established the Bne Benjamin Co-operative Bank in 1922 in Tel Aviv for the benefit of pilgrim colonists of Palestine, and founded the Aaron Aaronson Agricultural Fund for the purchase of agricultural implements and vital improvements on the land. She purchased large tracts of land for agricultural use, in addition to vast plots in the Valley of Jordan. She also served as a trustee of the Palestine Development Council of New York City. In 1925 Mary established and assumed the presidency of the Joseph Fels Foundation, an organization that advanced the causes of Zionism and promoted "knowledge and economic enlightenment in the field of land taxation and general taxation," "the awakening of religious and spiritual thought," and "human betterment."

Mary was repaid by the Russian Trade Delegation in 1922 for Joseph's 1907 loan to the RDSLP. She died May 16, 1953, in New York City at the age of ninety. In 1964 Fels and Company was acquired by the Purex Company and ceased to exist as an independent company.

Arthur P. Dudden, a Bryn Mawr College history professor for over forty years, conducted an extensive amount of research for his book, *Joseph Fels and the single tax movement*, which was published in 1971. Dudden collected resources from a number of institutions, including the British Library of Political and Economic Science, the Zionist Archives in Jerusalem, and Stanford University, and traveled to Denmark on a senior Fulbright research grant to conduct research on Joseph Fels's work and affiliations in that country. He donated his research materials to the Historical Society of Pennsylvania in 1968. Dudden was born in 1921 in Cleveland, Ohio. He served as an aviation machinist in the Navy and later attended Wayne State University, eventually obtaining his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan.

Scope & content

This collection provides a wealth of information related to the progress of the single tax and land reform movements in various countries from the 1890s until the 1950s, particularly in the United States and England. Joseph Fels's correspondence in Series 1a, dated from 1897 to 1914, is a record of his relentless, eloquent, and oftentimes witty advocacy for the single tax and land reform movements, which was often sent to and received from very influential men all over the world, including Prince Peter Kropotkin, George Bernard Shaw, Booker T. Washington, and J. Keir Hardie. The correspondence in Series 1b, dated from 1899 to 1918 and consisting mainly of copies of letters that Arthur P. Dudden procured for his research on Fels, is a record of the progress of the movement after Joseph Fels's death; the main correspondent is Daniel Kiefer, chairman

of the commission of the Joseph Fels Fund of America, although a wide range of other perspectives and personalities are also present. The printed materials in Series 4 consist of four boxes of magazines, newspapers, news clippings, flyers, and pamphlets related to the movement published from 1894 to 1965 in many different countries. There is scant information concerning Fels and Company other than minimal correspondence and a few documents related to problems that arose as a result of Joseph Fels's priorities lying outside of the business world.

Mary Fels worked alongside her husband in many of his philanthropic undertakings and after his death she carried on his work and explored new directions. Her incoming correspondence in Series 2a contains letters from many important intellectual and political figures and discusses a wide range of social issues. The correspondence in that series also contains an outpouring of consolatory letters upon the death of her husband, which document the deep and far-reaching effects of his life's work. Mary Fels's outgoing correspondence in Series 2b, which ranges from 1905 to 1952, is written primarily to her close friends Anna and Earl Barnes and George and Bessie Lansbury. The correspondence in this series provides a record of her travels, as well as a concise documentation of her philanthropic affiliations in Palestine, which were carried out with the help of her friend, Rifka Aaronsohn. There is also some correspondence related to Mary Fels's decisions concerning her husband's charities after his death.

Series 5 contains several photographs of Joseph and Mary Fels.

This collection also contains two boxes of Arthur Dudden's preparatory materials for his 1971 published work, *Joseph Fels and the Single-Tax Movement*. Dudden's research primarily related to Fels's single tax work in Scandinavia, his 1907 loan to the Russian Social Democrat Workers' Party, Fels family genealogy, and to Fels's relationship with Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) leader Israel Zangwill. Materials include notes, correspondence related to his research, printed materials, and original indenture and American citizenship documents belonging to Joseph Fels's father, Lazarus Fels.

Overview of arrangement

Series I	Joseph Fels, 1881-1940, n.d.	
	a. Correspondence, 1881-1914, n.d.	11 folders
	b. Single tax movement correspondence, 1899- 1918, n.d.	12 folders
	c. Writings and speeches, 1910-1940, n.d.	4 folders
	d. Memorials, 1914-1915, n.d.	4 folders
	e. Miscellaneous, 1904-1912, n.d.	2 vols., 1 folder
Series II	Mary Fels, 1881-1952, n.d.	
	a. Incoming correspondence, 1907-1944, n.d.	11 folders
	b. Outgoing correspondence, 1905-1952, n.d.	5 folders
	c. Miscellaneous, 1881-1926, n.d.	11 folders
Series III	Arthur Dudden research materials, 1840-1966, n.d.	
	a. Scandinavian reference materials, 1910-1963, n.d.	5 folders
	b. RDSRP reference materials, 1905-1966, n.d.	9 folders

	c. Miscellaneous, 1840-1966, n.d.	11 folders
Series IV	Printed materials, 1894-1965, n.d.	3 boxes, 16 folders
Series V	Photographs, n.d.	1 folder

Series description

Series 1. Joseph Fels, 1881-1940, n.d. (Boxes 1-3)

a. Correspondence, 1881-1914, n.d.

The eleven folders of Joseph Fels's incoming and outgoing letters are primarily a record of his relentless advocacy for the single tax and for land reform issues. He often wrote quite eloquently and persuasively to lawmakers and other men of influence in various countries encouraging them to seriously consider the philosophies of Henry George. In a three-page letter to cereal mogul C.W. Post, Joseph advised Post to study George "for the improvement of your own intellect... and the good of your own soul." Fels's letters document his world-wide travels to promote his beliefs and discuss politics and social circumstances in various countries, most especially the United States and England.

Many letters to and from Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) President Israel Zangwill discuss the establishment of potential new Jewish homelands in various countries. Fels and Zangwill also often exchanged witticisms and in one playful August 1909 letter from Zangwill, he included several rhyming advertisements he had composed for the Fels Company. These included:

The cats no longer lick their young
For soap has superseded tongue,
Since genius on the planet flung
Fels-Naptha

and, with a bit of sardonic historical reference:

The germs, dismayed, in every land
Are marching with a German band
In order to denounce and brand
Fels-Naptha

In September 1913 Fels responded to a critical letter from Zangwill, who sensed that the reasons for their interest in ITO were dissimilar. Zangwill was upset that Fels viewed ITO as an opportunity simply to exercise land reform and Fels stated in his reply, "I am not very much to blame if I believe in equal opportunity for all men, and not merely for the Jews!"

Other incoming letters to Fels are from notable figures such as Woodrow Wilson (January 27, 1913), socialist and novelist John Spargo (November 14, 1913); ambassador and editor W.H. Page (July 12, 1913); J. Keir Hardie, mine labor leader and founder of Britain's Independent Labor Party (1897); and member of British

Parliament, Josiah Clement Wedgwood (August 2, 1913). In a March 1909 letter from George Bernard Shaw, Irish dramatist and critic, Shaw expressed his opposition to Fels's beliefs, most especially the socially-curative properties of the practice of agriculture. Shaw, writing from Algiers, questioned: "How you, who have prospered by the blessed and beneficent work of making men's clothes clean... can deliberately set to work to make their clothes dirty as agriculture alone can do, passes my understanding. But it is always the same: the lunacy of country life always attacks the manufacturer first... If you want more, come out and let us argue it to a finish in the desert." Another argumentative letter from Shaw in this series is dated from March 23, 1909.

There are also many letters to close friends of the Felses, Earl and Anna Barnes, an American couple with whom Mary and Joseph became acquainted during their time in England. Earl was the head of the Department of Education at Stanford University in California from 1891 to 1897 and the author of several books on child study and childhood education. He had left Stanford and moved to England with his wife in order to present a series of public lectures and to engage with British educational reformers. In 1902 the couple returned to the United States for the continuation of Earl's lecture series. Upon their return the Barnes took up residence in the Fels home at 3640 Chestnut Street in Philadelphia and received financial support from the Felses. In an April 1909 letter to Earl Barnes, Joseph Fels wrote, "I don't need all the money I've been squeezing out of those who go down to the tub in suds." Fels openly expressed his affection for Earl, as in a letter from April 1907: "I'm not ashamed to say that I felt like crying a bit because you're not here now to laugh with us."

There is no correspondence between Joseph and Mary Fels save a single letter from "Mollie" dated 1881 and sent from St. Mary's Academy in Indiana, in which she wrote to "Joe" about her lessons and her impressions of her instructors and classmates.

After his exposure to Robert Ingersoll's book *Crimes against Criminals*, Joseph became an advocate for several men he believed were wrongfully imprisoned. These included William MacQueen, who served time for inciting a riot during a silk mill strike in Patterson, New Jersey, in 1904, and William Bloomfield, a.k.a. Gypsy Cortez, who was sentenced to sixteen years in prison for murder, but was eventually released by the Ohio Board of Pardons. Joseph's correspondence contains letters he wrote seeking clemency for these men. After Joseph Fels's death, Gypsy Cortez wrote to Mary Fels and sent her a photograph of himself. His letters and the photograph can be found, respectively, in Series 2a and Series 5.

Joseph's correspondence contains little direct information regarding the business affairs of Fels and Company, other than to indicate that he used the proceeds to further his social experiments and to invest generously in his friends. However, a July 1913 letter to Marshall E. Smith, the past recipient of a \$40,000 business loan, revealed that Joseph's generosity eventually caught up with him and compromised

his position within Fels and Company. In this letter, Joseph apologized for having become upset with Smith when the two met to settle the loan, but explained why:

It was not until I had overdrawn on my account by several hundred thousand dollars and had really been unfair to my brother and partner in doing so (and, I might add too, had even risked my own standing in the firm) that I came and spoke to you about your paying me some of this money. If I had not been in such low water when in Philadelphia, I would not have come to you.

In an October 1913 letter, Samuel Fels discussed the need for revising their business partnership and Joseph's reply, written on the reverse of the letter, stated his willingness to do what was right and fair. A December 1913 affidavit by Samuel Fels concerning the corporate reformulation of Fels and Company is with the miscellaneous papers in Series 3c.

In another letter related to Fels and Company, Joseph responded to an accusation of unfair labor practices made in *The New York Call*. The editor had published the article "Calls Joseph Fels Negro Exploiter," which claimed that the conditions in which Fels and Company's soap boxes were manufactured were slave-like. In his March 1911 letter, Joseph defended his company by writing that he had no control over the practices of the company that supplied their boxes, but furthermore, that his investigation into the box-making factory's labor practices revealed them to be quite fair. He retorted:

Where does the ink which you use in printing the Call come from, and do you see that the workers in this ink factory have good wages, fair conditions of labor and short hours? ... What control have you over the conditions of the news-boys who sell the Call in the street of New York City, and can you possibly see that these people live under the right conditions?"

b. Single tax movement correspondence, 1899-1918, n.d.

The materials in this subseries consist largely of type written copies of letters Arthur Dudden may have procured for his research, and so have been separated from the materials in series 1a.

Four folders contain typewritten copies of letters and some documents regarding the Fairhope, Alabama, single tax colony. Letters are both to and from Joseph Fels and are dated from 1899 to 1910. Included is a copy of an October 1907 letter from Fels to Booker T. Washington that asked Washington to visit Fairhope and to consider making some changes to his own "negro colonies" in Alabama. "I beg that you will stop and think about the matter from this point of view, and then put on your hat, and go to Fairhope," Fels wrote. There is also a copy of a January 1909 letter from Fels to Marietta Johnson, director of the Fairhope School of Organic Education, that advised her against admitting students from nearby locations so as to maintain the value of relocating to the confines of the colony.

The remaining materials in this series comprise seven folders and consist primarily of type-written copies of correspondence concerning the affairs of the single tax

movement. Correspondence is mostly dated after the death of Joseph Fels. There are many letters both to and from Daniel Kiefer, chairman of the commission of the Joseph Fels Fund of America, which discuss meetings, finances, and tactics for presenting the single tax in various states. The letters also contain insightful reflections on the movement from its members. In an April 1915 letter to Daniel Kiefer from David Gibson, publisher of *The Ground Hog*, Gibson stated that he decided not to devote his entire life to the cause because, "I find that men who devote their attention exclusively to reform soon become fanatical and impractical. I even noticed it in the latter days of Joseph Fels's life." In a March 1915 letter to Kiefer, R. Bedichek replied to his own question: "Do you know the single greatest fear I have concerning the movement for the Single Tax in the United States? It is the fear of its becoming a cult. It is the fear of its promoters being too intellectual, in too easy circumstances... Lead us not, oh Lord, into mutual admiration societies." There is also some correspondence both with and indirectly regarding Mary Fels, who remotely exercised control over the Joseph Fels Fund of America.

Several pieces of correspondence document problems that arose during Kiefer's tenure. Around June 1916 a squabble began over the National Security League between Keifer and Bolton Smith of Memphis, Tennessee, which is documented in the letters during that month. Keifer's views on the National Security League conflicted with those of Smith's, who was both a Single Taxer and a member of the National Security League. Smith criticized Keifer for using the Fels Fund as a platform on which to air his personal views and withdrew his contribution to the fund in protest. Kiefer's resignation from the chairmanship of the National Single Tax League and the discontinuation of the post are announced in September 1918 under official letterhead. No explanation for the resignation is indicated. The new posts and the men assigned to them were also announced, which included new president Professor Lewis Jerome Johnson of Harvard.

A vast amount of printed materials related to the single tax movement can be found in Series 4.

c. Speeches and writings, 1910-1940, n.d.

This subseries includes a number of pamphlets authored by Fels, including "Unearned Increments: Soap, Cows and Land" and "A Business Man's Religion." There are also several copies of articles, as well as a number of essays regarding the single tax and land reform issues, some with revisions. Titles include "Landlordism in Philadelphia," "France and the Land Question," "Progress of the Movement in Great Britain," "Some Wise Words on Canada," "The Broad Case Against the Land Taxes (a Reply by Joseph Fels)," and "How Poverty Can Be Abolished," published in the May 1914 issue of *National Magazine*. There are also copies of an address entitled "Franklin and Freedom," which was delivered by Fels before the Poor Richard Club of Philadelphia in January 1910, and an invitation for an address by Fels on the subject of "Getting Rich Without Working," stating that "Questions and discussion upon the Henry George movement will be invited by the speaker."

d. Memorials, 1914-1915, n.d.

Materials in this subseries include biographical accounts, posthumous articles on Fels's life and work (including one from a Copenhagen publication in March 1914), addresses made during memorial ceremonies, and memorial ceremony pamphlets that were published in many different countries. These include Dr. Henry Berkowitz's speech at Fels's funeral on March 3, 1914, Earl Barnes' speech upon a tree planting in Fels's honor at the National Farm School, a speech by Lily Montague of the West Central Girls' Club in London, a former recipient of funds from Fels, and "Joseph Fels In Memoriam," a piece written by Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) leader Israel Zangwill.

e. Miscellaneous, 1904-1912, n.d.

There is one folder of miscellaneous third-party correspondence in this series, which contains copies and original letters mainly from Earl Barnes, in addition to a couple of copies of letters from George Lansbury to Walter Coates. There is also a nine-page letter from 1909 "to whom it may concern" from William Bloomfield, a.k.a Gypsy Bill Cortez, which recounted the story of his mistreatment at the Ohio State Penitentiary.

Two scrapbooks, 1904 to 1908 and 1907 to 1912, contain clippings, respectively, of British current events as they relate to land reform and unemployment issues and of international vacant land cultivation news.

An unlabeled address book that presumably belonged to Joseph Fels contains the names and mailing addresses for many of Fels's correspondents, including Frank Smith, Daniel Keifer, and Upton Sinclair.

A visitors' book presumably for the Fels's country house in England, 1906 to 1908, contains columns for the name, residence, arrival, departure, and remarks of their guests.

Series 2. Mary Fels, 1881-1952, n.d. (Boxes 3-5)

a. Incoming correspondence, 1907-1944, n.d.

The eleven folders of Mary Fels's incoming letters are written primarily by several devoted friends, among them Newton D. Baker, lawyer, mayor of Cleveland (1912-1916) and secretary of war under President Wilson from 1916 to 1921; Walter Coates, Joseph's personal secretary and joint-executor of his estate; George Lansbury, leading member of the English relief organization the Popular Board of Guardians, editor of the *Daily Herald*, and Member of Parliament and Cabinet minister; Rifka Aaronsohn, Mary's legal representative in Palestine and wife of Alex Aaronsohn; and Frank Smith, Labor Party member of the English Parliament. Their letters to Mary offer insight on a wide range of political and social issues of the period.

Many consolatory letters from people in various countries were sent to Mary Fels upon her husband's death in February 1914, including Prince Peter Kropotkin, the Russian anarchist, intellectual, and exile, who praised Fels's "deep, intelligent interest" in his fellow human beings and his desire to help others become

independent. Several appreciative letters in 1914 from Gypsy Bill Cortez praised Joseph Fels for his assistance in obtaining Cortez's freedom from prison and included a detailed retelling of the events that led to his imprisonment.

There are also a number of letters from friends and admirers in response to Mary Fels's work "Toward the Light," published in 1927, which was a collection of her reflections on Judaism and the path toward oneness with God.

Other notable correspondence includes a July 1914 letter without signature that recounted days spent at boarding school with Mary Fels and three letters in 1940, 1942, and 1944 from President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's secretary that gratefully acknowledged receipt of Mrs. Fels's letters and pamphlets she sent to the president, one of which was entitled, "The Struggle For Justice." A December 1939 letter from Frank Smith was written just hours before his death and scrawled in a very shaky hand. This letter was supplemented after his death by another letter from his caregiver, which stated the details of his bronchial illness and his unhappiness with his uncompleted work on J. Keir Hardie, founding member of the English Labor Party.

b. Outgoing correspondence, 1905-1952, n.d.

The five folders in this subseries are primarily addressed to Anna and Earl Barnes and Bessie and George Lansbury. The subject of these letters is a mixture of politics, outpourings of affection, and descriptions of Mary Fels's extensive travels. She often mentioned the activities of her husband, who occasionally added a line or two into the letter. In one undated letter written from "Dunnington, Alcester, R.S.O.," she wrote about her attraction to a man who was her and her husband's invited guest. This same man pledged his love to Mrs. Fels and her husband's response, written on the letter in the mock brogue he often employed was, "Eh, and how and because and why is thes wife of me boosam 'a inditing epistles to streinge men, of love, and wishes and sighs, and weeping?—And she a expecting of me to pye the postage and furnish the pyper to help contribute to the undoing of me own 'appiness."

There is a small amount of correspondence regarding Mary Fels's handling of the philanthropic funds espoused by her husband after his death. An April 1914 letter to the Joseph Fels Fund Commission of Cincinnati discussed the issues involved in granting a renewal of her husband's pledge, to which she had not yet committed. In this letter she wrote, "I do not want to give money alone; I want to give myself to this cause of justice, as my husband gave himself." In a December 1916 letter to an unnamed Danish correspondent Mrs. Fels informed this person about the new organization of the Joseph Fels International Commission, the new "central headquarters for Single Tax propaganda," with branches in various countries. The *Single tax movement correspondence* in Series I also contains correspondence to Mrs. Fels and to others regarding her involvement with the movement after her husband's death.

There are just a few outgoing letters regarding Palestine; however, they provide a great amount of information in a very straightforward manner. In a letter to Rifka

Aaronsohn in December 1926, Mary discussed in length her decision to end her affiliation with the Bne Benjamin Bank after it had departed from her original vision as a “credit institution for the young farmers of the colonies... run at little expense, and holding to the spirit of the old pioneers.” Mrs. Fels also alluded in this letter to unfortunate side effects this endeavor had on Rifka. In a four-page letter to the Central Committee of the Farmers Union of Judea and Samaria in Palestine, also in December 1926, Mrs. Fels summed up the history of her interest and actions in Palestine and blasted the Union for its defamation of the Aaronsohns. She wrote that, “generations to come will stand aghast at your blindness and ignorance.”

In a peculiar letter from November 1926, Mrs. Fels responded to a friend who had informed her of his interest in trying to reach her late husband by a medium. She wrote that she had no interest in reaching her husband this way, as she felt assured of communication via other methods: “I can conceive of no communication save by the light that may be turned toward me from the greater light into which he has gone; that light to reach me according as there is light in me to draw it toward me, by virtue of God’s law of gravitation.”

c. Miscellaneous, 1881-1926, n.d.

This subseries includes book reviews of Mary Fels’s published works *Joseph Fels: His Life Work* and *Toward the Light* and biographical profiles of Fels. In the miscellaneous folder are printed materials regarding her philanthropic undertakings and a report card from St. Mary’s Academy in Indiana dated 1881; Mary received her lowest marks in penmanship and “fancy work.” There is also one folder of materials related to Fels’s work in Palestine, which includes printed matter and her own notes and writings. One other folder in this subseries contains her speeches and writings on a variety of topics including American politics, the single tax, and the formation of the Joseph Fels International Commission.

Series 3. Arthur Dudden research materials, 1840-1966, n.d. (Boxes 5-7)

a. Scandinavian reference materials, 1910-1963, n.d.

Two of the five folders in this subseries are comprised of copies of correspondence primarily between Joseph Fels and Signe Bjørner, leading Danish proponent of the single tax, regarding the activities and finances of the Danish single tax organization Joseph founded in Copenhagen. Translations for most of the letters are included. There is some correspondence from others, including letters after Joseph’s death from Signe Bjørner to Mary Fels and to others affiliated with that organization.

The remaining folders contain printed materials related to the Danish single tax movement and to Fels’s activities in Denmark, some translated, some not. Also included are two letters to Arthur Dudden with advice regarding his research, a pamphlet from the 1925 League of Justice Conference in Copenhagen, and copies of two Danish newspapers.

b. RSDRP reference materials, 1905-1966, n.d.

Included in this subseries are four folders of Arthur Dudden’s notes on the Russian Social Democrat Workers’ Party (RSDRP) and three folders of copied pages from a

Russian text whose translated title is “Convention Minutes of the All-Union Communist Party, 5th Congress of the RSDRP.”

The miscellaneous folders contain paper and film negative copies of the original promissory note from May 1907 for the amount of £1700 “generously granted without interest” by Joseph Fels to the RSDRP. The document contains over four pages of signatures made by the delegates of the Fifth Congress; Lenin, who presided over the meetings, did not sign. Also included is a translated copy of a September 1908 letter to Joseph Fels from the Foreign Bureau of the Central Committee of the Social-Democratic Party of Russia, which requested an extension on the 1907 loan and explained the political and economic situations that necessitated the extension (the original letter in Russian is contained in Joseph Fels’s correspondence in Series 1a). There are also copies from a printed source of Lenin’s letters in Russian to F.A. Rothstein in 1908, a few call slips, and several articles and newspaper clippings on the topic of the RSDRP.

c. Miscellaneous, 1840-1966, n.d.

Two folders contain information concerning Joseph Fels’s relation to Judaism and Jewish Territorial Organization (ITO) leader, Israel Zangwill. One of these folders contains printed materials on these topics and a research paper from a Bryn Mawr student in 1961 entitled “American Jewry: European Transplant.” The other folder contains correspondence regarding Dudden’s research.

Three folders in this subseries relate to Arthur Dudden’s research concerning the Fels family. The folders contain a variety of material related to Joseph’s parents, Susannah and Lazarus Fels: type written copies of their correspondence, an original document of indenture between Isaac and Lazarus Fels in 1866, an original signed certificate of American citizenship for Lazarus Fels, and type written copies of Isaac and Susannah’s marriage certificate and various other official Bavarian documents. There is also biographical material related to Samuel Fels and information pertaining to Fels and Company, including a copy of Samuel Fels’s 1913 affidavit stating the facts of the formation of the corporation. The folders also contain Dudden’s notes and correspondence with various people regarding the Fels’s genealogy.

The remaining six folders in this subseries contain printed materials and notes related primarily to Joseph Fels’s philanthropic work in England, with vacant lot cultivation, and with the Ethical Society of Philadelphia. There are also two published reports summarizing the research of Arthur Dudden, one in the 1953 *Year Book of the American Philosophical Society* and the other in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* in 1955.

Series 4. Printed materials, 1894-1965, n.d. (Boxes 7-11)

This subseries contains an extensive amount of magazines, newspapers, news clippings, flyers, and pamphlets related to the single tax and land reform movements in various countries, although England and the United States are the best represented. Periodical titles include *The State Journal*, *The Bulletin*, *Joseph Fels Bulletin of America*, *The Square Deal*, and foreign titles such as *L’impot Unique* and *Bodenreform*.

Also included in this series are various British government documents and reports related to unemployment in London, published information regarding taxes in various locations, Philadelphia included, and among the materials in the *miscellaneous* folders are an article by Earl Barnes published in 1914 entitled "Woman's Place in the New Civilization," a 1912 exhibition catalog of the Tolstoy exhibition and museum, and a small undated price list of toilet soaps made by Fels and Company with illustrations.

Series 5. Photographs, n.d. (Box 11)

This series contains two photographs of Mary Fels (one 5"x7" and one 11"x14") and two 11"x14" photographs of Joseph Fels, in addition to a couple of reproduced photographs. There are also photographs of Gypsy Bill Cortez, Joseph Fels in Denmark, and a group photo of Mary Fels at a Henry Ford conference.

Separation report

The following materials have been transferred to the library:

Joseph Fels and Meyer Lissner's correspondence (microfilm) from the Stanford University Library collection.

Joseph and Mary Fels's correspondence with Israel Zangwill, 1906-1914, microfilm, from the Jewish Territorial Organization collection, Zionist Central Archives, Jerusalem.

Joseph Fels's correspondence with Dan Bjorner, microfilm, unknown source.

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Casson, Herbert N., *Thirty Great Lives*. London: The Efficiency Magazine, n.d.
En Verdenstankes Vaekst I Vort Folk, Copenhagen: NYT Nordisk Forlag-Arnold Busck, 1934.

Everyman, Sept./Oct. 1913-Jan. 1917.

Fels, Mary. *Joseph Fels: His Life Work*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1920.

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Jyske Samlinger Tidsskrift For Danmarks Historie, Universitetsforlaget I Aarhus, 1958.

Land Values, vols. XII-XV: 1909-1914, London.

Land Values, Nov. 1911- Apr. 1919

The Public, July 1911-Dec. 1919.

The Single Tax Herald, nos. 1-37: Sept. 1915-Aug. 1917.

The Single Tax Review, vols. 13-18: Jan./Feb. 1913-Nov./Dec. 1918.

Related materials

At the Historical Society of Pennsylvania:

Samuel S. Fels Papers, Collection 1776

Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association Records, Collection 1440

At other institutions:

George Lansbury Papers, British Library of Political and Economic Science

Meyer Lissner Papers, Collection M0070, Stanford University Library

Bibliography

Dudden, Arthur Power. *Joseph Fels and the single tax movement*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1971.

Subjects

Biographers – 20th century
Charity – 19th century
Charity – 20th century
Clemency – United States – 20th century
Detergent industry
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England – Economic conditions – 20th century
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Bloomfield, William
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Dudden, Arthur Power, b. 1921
Fels family
Fels, Joseph, 1854-1914
Fels, Lazarus, 1815-1894
Fels, Mary, 1863-1953
Fels, Samuel S. (Samuel Simeon), 1860-1950
George, Henry, 1839-1897
Hardie, James Keir, 1856-1915.
Kiefer, Daniel, 1856-1923
Kropotkin, Petr Alekseevich, kniaz, 1842-1921 – Correspondence
Lansbury, George, 1859-1940
MacQueen, William
Shaw, George Bernard, 1856-1950 – Correspondence
Smith, Frank, b. 1854
Steffens, Lincoln, 1866-1936 – Correspondence
Zangwill, Israel, 1864-1926

Bryn Mawr College – Faculty – 20th century
Fels and Company
Jewish Territorial Organization
Joseph Fels Fund of America
Philadelphia Vacant Lots Cultivation Association
Rossiiskaia sotsial-demokraticheskaia rabochaia partiia
Stanford University – Faculty – 20th century

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None.

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Box and folder listing

Series 1. Joseph Fels. a. Correspondence

Folder title	Date	Box	Folder
Correspondence	1881-1906	1	1
Correspondence	1907	1	2
Correspondence	1908	1	3
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Correspondence	1911	1	6
Correspondence	Jan.-July 1912	1	7
Correspondence	Aug.-Dec. 1912	1	8
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Correspondence	July-Dec. 1913	1	10
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Series 1. Joseph Fels. b. Single tax movement correspondence

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Correspondence	Aug. 1908-Jan. 1909	2	1
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Series 1. Joseph Fels. e. Miscellaneous

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Series 2. Mary Fels a. Incoming correspondence

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Incoming correspondence	1928	4	1
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Series 2. Mary Fels b. Outgoing correspondence

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Series 2. Mary Fels c. Miscellaneous

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“The Life of Joseph Fels”	n.d.	4	12
“The Life of Joseph Fels”	n.d.	4	13
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Series 3. Arthur Dudden research materials a. Scandinavian reference materials

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Series 3. Arthur Dudden research materials b. RSDRP reference materials

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<i>L'impot Unique</i>	Oct. 1911-Feb. 1913	9	16
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Series 5. Photographs.

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