

STORIES of New Jersey

leased to residents on a perpetual lease. For occupying their homesites the people of Free Acres pay a yearly tax, or rent, to the Association. The Association, in turn, pays taxes to the Township of New Providence, to bear its share of the expense of public education, police and fire protection and general improvements. As improvements have been made, the tax rent paid by the landholders to the Free Acres Association has risen from about \$16 an acre to about \$70 or \$80. The rules of the Association require that no one can lease, or rent, less than one-half acre for a homesite.

The governing body of Free Acres is the entire membership of the Association, and it is known as the Free Acres Folk. Open meetings are held monthly where all the business of the Association is discussed. Trustees and committees for all public activities are elected annually from the membership.

The children attend grammar school in Berkeley Heights, and high school at the new Regional High School at Springfield. They are gathered up each school day by busses at the entrance to Free Acres.

Free Acres was originally begun as a summer colony. The settlers put up simple shingle cottages, many without cellars, and cleared only enough woodland to make room for their homes and for roads and paths. As transportation facilities improved many of the residents found the community life so pleasant and the woodland surroundings so congenial that they remained throughout the year, commuting to their daily work. Many people of wide reputation in art and literature have been members of the Free Acres Community. Some of these have given up their residence; others have remained and have contributed to the interest of the community life. The hand of an artist is evident in the attractive signposts and bulletin boards, the rustic benches and the general landscaping of the tract.

Just inside the entrance on Wood Road is the Henry George Common, a clearing in the woodland. Here is a rustic bulletin board on which Town notices are posted. At one side is an old farmhouse, shaded by a giant sycamore tree said to be about 200 years old. This spot is the community center: here are the libraries, one for adults and one for children, where meetings, lectures, teas, flower shows and other affairs are held. The old building is familiarly called "The Inn."

In front of the building a large outdoor pavilion has been built around a huge walnut tree that rises through the center of the floor and spreads its shadow over the entire platform. Here dances and outdoor meetings are held in the summertime. From this platform many men and women prominent in public life have lectured. On the end of the platform is a bell which is rung to call people to Town gatherings.

A gradually sloping lawn leads from the platform to a baseball field, an archery court, a tennis court and a playground with swings, rings and bars for the children. Near the center of the colony is a swimming pool surrounded by benches in the shade of towering old trees. Across the road from the swimming pool is an open-air



The Swimming Pool