



Haverford Township Historical Society

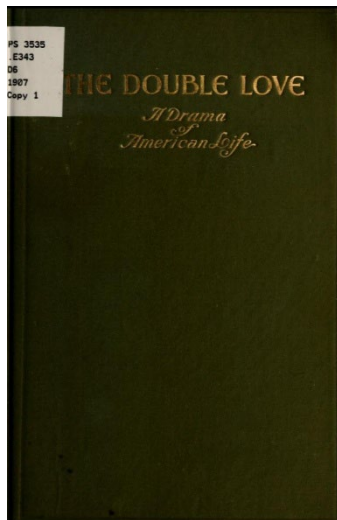


Hidden in Haverford: A Tragedy in Five Acts



In 1907, a 28-year-old Philadelphia native and University of Pennsylvania graduate named Arthur Dougherty Rees published his first play; a five-act, 85-page tragedy about a woman named Margaret, torn between two lovers.

The work was titled “The Double Love: A Drama of American Life,” and was published by the Philadelphia-based John C. Winston Company. The original copies were bound by a simple dark green cover with a gold leaf title, which would have been pressed on by a heated brass die affixed to a machine.



This artifact, found in Havertown, is almost certainly one of the original dies used in stamping those copies.

Shown atop this page in its mirrored state (the original is backward so it presses forward), and here overlaid on the original cover, this die’s size and unique title and subtitle fonts align perfectly with images of the original copy.

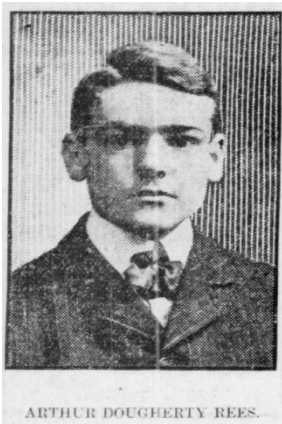
Almost.

If you look closely at the die, you will notice the word “The” is removable, fitting into the rest of the piece like a puzzle. It causes an alignment discrepancy on that word when overlaid

with this specific image of the cover. This could indicate that the die was damaged on that portion at some point during production, and just that word—rather than the whole item—was replaced before continuing, slightly altering the spacing on subsequent copies. It also could have been purposeful, to easily create an abbreviated or alternate title.

As for Rees' tragedy, it was, well...tragic.

Written in Shakespearean language and in iambic pentameter, the play was reviewed mostly unfavorably by newspapers across the country, with one critic stating, "the story as a story is ridiculous, and as a play is simply impossible," and another calling it an "attempt to make a poetic drama out of some rather recalcitrant elements of American life."



Credit: The Philadelphia Inquirer

Rees wrote five plays and ultimately made quite a national name for himself as a lecturer, giving talks on history, politics and literature around the country. He continued to write as well living to the age of 83 before being tragically killed by a car in New York City.

Modern reproductions of "The Double Love" made after his passing seem to suggest a warming to the work over time, with some descriptions referring to it as "culturally important." Either way, this die, uncovered from its inexplicable resting place in Havertown, is a unique representation of early 20th century American literature, industry and local life.

Hidden in Haverford tells local history stories through the lens of artifacts either found in or associated with Haverford Township. If you have such an artifact that you would like to be considered for this series, please contact HTHS volunteer Kenny Ayres at kayres8@gmail.com.