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The William A. Hinds American Communities Collection

BY MARK F. WEIMER *

Men will not be content to live every man for himself. In work, in art, in study, in trade—in all life, indeed—the children of God, called by a Savior's voice, will wish to live in the common cause. They will live for the common wealth,—this is the modern phrase. They will bear each other's burdens,—this is the phrase of Paul. They will live in the life of Love. — EDWARD EVERETT HALE.

William A. Hinds lived for more than sixty years in the Oneida Community. His choice of this quotation for the title page of the 1908 edition of his *American Communities* well expressed his own commitment to communistic and cooperative living.

Born in 1833 and apprenticed to John Humphrey Noyes' brother-in-law, John Miller, at age fourteen in Putney, Vermont, Hinds became a part of the Perfectionist Putney Community in its earliest years. He remained associated with the Oneida Community, the successor community, through its entire existence as a communistic society. When the Community was reorganized as a joint-stock company in 1881, Hinds was chosen to be a member of the first board of directors. He afterwards filled the offices of secretary and treasurer, and president of Oneida Community Ltd., a position he held from 1903 until his death in 1910.

A member of the Oneida Community, Hinds played a prominent role as contributor to and editor of the *Oneida Circular*, as frequent superintendent of the Community's principal industries, and,

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throughout, as a leading member of the governing committees. At the advanced (for that time) age of thirty-four, he entered the Sheffield Scientific School at Yale and graduated with honors in 1870. A lifelong disciple of John Humphrey Noyes, Hinds was said to have committed to memory, on a wager for one dollar, the whole of Noyes' argument for "Salvation from Sin in this World", as printed on about forty octavo pages. His remarkable energy, inquisitiveness, and memory were cited often by his contemporaries.

The study of the history of American communistic societies was largely initiated in the Oneida Community as a result of Noyes' interest in communicating with other groups through the exchange of visitors and by the publication of reports in the Community's newspapers. In 1870 Noyes published his *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia: Lippincott), a survey of forty-seven communities deriving from the researches of A. J. MacDonald. MacDonald's manuscripts,¹ the result of extensive travel to communities and correspondence with founders and members of numerous groups between 1842 and 1854, had passed into Noyes' hands and provided him with rich primary sources for his study.

Journalist Charles Nordhoff issued in 1875 his *Communistic Societies of the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers). That work was based on the author's visits to communities and offered a more current and somewhat more detached view of communal societies than Noyes' work. Nordhoff was generally sympathetic toward these communal undertakings, seeing in them alternatives to the labor-oriented socialism that was gaining strength in his native Germany.

The year after the appearance of Nordhoff's work, Hinds was dispatched by the Oneida Community to visit many of the same communistic and socialistic societies and report his findings in the *American Socialist*, the Community's last serial publication. These findings were collected in 1878 and issued under the title *American Communities* (Oneida: Office of the American Socialist). Hinds' work was not intended to compete with the work of Noyes and Nordhoff; rather, he suggested that "thousands who might be glad to acquaint themselves with the results of practical Communism in this country can-

1. A. J. MacDonald, "Communities in the United States", Manuscript collection in Beinecke Library, Yale University (microfilm copy in the George Arents Research Library).



William A. Hinds (1833–1910).

not afford to purchase these large and comparatively expensive works” and that the availability of his book would possibly stimulate demand for those more comprehensive studies.

While not broadly distributed, Hinds’ work was, nonetheless, well received. Following the breakup of the Oneida Community, Hinds devoted his energies toward the business concerns of Oneida Community Ltd. However, he remained committed to the principles of communistic living and was most active in developing community organizations and structures to supplant those lost by the dissolution of the old Community. He also continued to gather information to revise and expand *American Communities*. Using the structured survey approach of a twentieth-century social scientist, Hinds contacted as many colonies as he could identify to bring his work “down to date”. Fortunately, a copy of this questionnaire survives in the Collection and is presented below. While most of the respondents were not systematic in providing answers to each question, the document

is both revealing of Hinds' own orientation and special interests and suggestive of the type of material that he received in reply.

American Communities Questionnaire

1. Name of the communistic or cooperative society described.
2. When and where was this society started?
3. How many members are there of each sex; also how many children under 15 years of age?
4. What was the nature of the site chosen?
5. What property does the society own, and what is its valuation?
6. Is the society in debt? If so, to what extent?
7. Has the society received help from outside sources?
8. Is the society incorporated?
9. What are the requirements for admission into the society?
10. What nationalities are represented in the society?
11. What are the industries of the society?
12. What are the hours of work?
13. Do they employ outside help?
14. What are the regulations respecting the distribution of the products?
15. What comprises the executive head of the community, and what is the form of government?
16. Do all members, male and female, have equal rights and privileges?
17. What are the rules of discipline?
18. Is the society on a religious basis? If so, what is the form of their belief?
19. If they are not on a religious basis, what is their attitude toward religion?
20. What is their attitude toward the relation of the sexes?
21. Has the society met with any losses, either from dishonesty in management, or from any other causes?
22. Can I obtain a copy of the constitution or of any other document which will help me to understand the principles of the society?
23. If the society has disbanded, please state as fully as possible



From Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1875).

the reasons for the action. Was there disagreement, or lack of funds?

24. Further remarks may be made on the other side of this sheet.

In 1902 Hinds published a new edition (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr), which he again expanded as the “second revision” in 1908. These extensions of his work, based on the results of his correspondence and survey of communities, enlarged its coverage to more than 140 communistic enterprises and secured its place as an authoritative primary source for information on American communistic societies before 1908. Other surveys have been prepared in this century carrying on the tradition established through the seminal work of MacDonald, Noyes, Nordhoff, and Hinds.²

2. From the important survey and census literature can be mentioned: Alexander Kent, “Cooperative Communities in the United States”, *Bulletin of the Department of Labor* 35 (July 1901): 563–646; F. A. Bushee, “Communistic Societies in the United States”, *Political Science Quarterly* 20 (December 1905): 625–64; Ralph Albertson, “A Survey of Mutualistic Communities in America”, *Iowa Journal of History and Politics* 3 (October 1936): 375–444; and Robert S. Fogarty, *Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980).

In 1982 the Oneida Community Historical Committee transferred to the Syracuse University Libraries the extant records of the Oneida Community including thirteen archival boxes of original research files developed by William Hinds for the revised editions of his *American Communities*. These files include his correspondence with individuals and communities, together with those documents which he received in connection with his questionnaire. A list of communities for which there is material is appended. This collection is an important and largely untapped resource available to those interested in the history of nineteenth-century communistic societies in America.



Adonai Shomo Corporation, or Community of Fullerites (1861–1897),
Petersham, Worcester County, Massachusetts

Altruist Community (1907–1911), Sulphur Springs, Jefferson County,
Missouri

including:

Mutual Aid Community (1883–1887)

Amana Society, or the Society of True Inspiration (1843–1932), Ebenezer,
Erie County, New York; and Amana, Iowa County, Iowa

Aurora Community (1856–1881), Aurora, Marion County, Oregon

Bayside Communistic Colony, Bayside, Long Island, New York

Bethel Community (1844–1880), Bethel, Shelby County, Missouri

Bishop Hill Colony (1846–1862), Bishop Hill, Henry County, Illinois

Brook Farm (1841–1847), West Roxbury, Norfolk (now Suffolk) County,
Massachusetts

Brotherhood of the New Life (1851–1900)

including:

Mountain Cove Community (1851–1853), Mountain Cove, Virginia
(now West Virginia)

Amenia Community (1863–1867), Amenia, Dutchess County,
New York

Brocton Community (1867–1881), Brocton, Chautauqua
County, New York

Fountain Grove Community (1876–1900), Fountain Grove,
Sonoma County, California

Buena Vista Colony, or Great Western Co-operative Home-Building Association
(1901?–1919), Buena Vista, Colorado

Celesta (1852–1864), Celesta, Sullivan County, Pennsylvania

Christian Commonwealth Colony (1896–1900), Commonwealth, Musko-
 gee County, Georgia
 including:
 Right Relationship League, Chicago, Illinois
 Christian Cooperative Association (1898–1902?), Clay Center, Clay
 County, Kansas
 Christian Social Association (1899–1904), Saronia, Wisconsin
 Civic Brotherhood Church, Washington, D.C.
 Colorado Cooperative Company (1894–1910), Nucla, Montrose County,
 Colorado
 Co-operative Association of America (1900–1906?), Lewiston, Andro-
 scoggin County, Maine
 Co-operative Brotherhood, or Burley Colony (1898–1908), Burley, Kitsap
 County, Washington
 Co-operative Christian Federation (1902), Christadelphia, Benton
 County, Oregon
 Cooperative Commonwealth of Idaho (1898?)
 Cooperative Industrial Colony (1899?–1901?), Milner's Store, Camp
 Creek, Georgia
 Co-operative Union (1901), Ocala, Florida
 Cosme Colony (1901–1902?), Paraguay, South America
 Dansville Sanitarium—see: Our Home on the Hillside
 Davisite Kingdom of Heaven (1867–1881), near Walla Walla, Walla
 Walla County, Washington
 Doukhobor (1899–), Transcaucasus, Russia; and Manitoba, Canada
 Eclectic Phalanx—see: Virginia Phalanx
 Eden Society (1907–1908), Baxter Springs, Cherokee County, Kansas
 Ephrata Colony, or the Solitary Brethren of the Community of the Sev-
 enth Day Baptists (1732–1770), Ephrata, Lancaster County, Pennsyl-
 vania
 Equality, or Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth (later reorga-
 nized as Freeland) (1897–1907), Equality, Skagit County, Washing-
 ton
 Equality Industrial Association (1899?–1901?), Pottawatomie County,
 Oklahoma
 Esoteric Fraternity (1893?–1907), Applegate, California
 Fairhope Industrial Association (1895–present), Fairhope, Baldwin
 County, Alabama
 Farist Community (1870?), Monticello, Minnesota
 Farmers and Mechanics Co-operative Association (1870?), Missouri
 Farmers' Incorporated Co-operative Society (1889–1902?), Rockwell, Iowa
 Freedom Colony (1897–1905), Fulton, Bourbon County, Kansas

Freeland Association (formerly Equality, or Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth) (1901–1907), Whidby Island, Island County, Washington
 Friendship Community (1872–1877), Buffalo, Dallas County, Missouri
 Fullerites—see: Adonai Shomo Corporation
 Gibbs Cooperative Colony (1901–1905?), Gibbs, Santa Cruz County, California
 Golden Life Community (1904?), Independence, Minnesota
 Great Western Co-operative Home-Building Association—see: Buena Vista Colony
 Harmony Co-operative Industrial Association (1906?), East Assiniboia, Canada
 Harmony Society (1805–1814), Harmony, Butler County, Pennsylvania
 including:
 New Harmony, Posey County, Indiana
 Helicon Hall Colony (1906–1907), Englewood, Bergen County, New Jersey
 Holy Band (1903?), Maysville, Brown and Adams counties, Kentucky
 Home Employment Co-operative Company (1894–ca.1906), Long Lane, Dallas County, Missouri
 Home Industrial College (1901), Devers, Liberty County, Texas
 Hopedale Community, or Fraternal Community, No. 1 (1842–1867), Milford, Worcester County, Massachusetts
 House of David (1903–1928), Benton Harbor, Berrien County, Michigan
 Hutterite communities
 Icarian Community (1847–1895), Nauvoo, Hancock County, Illinois, and Iowa
 Industrial Brotherhood (1898?), Maine
 Jerusalem, or the Society of Universal Friends (1788–1820), Jerusalem, Yates County, New York
 Kaweah Co-operative Commonwealth (1885–1891), Tulare County, California
 Kinderfarm—see: Ozark Kinderfarm
 Koreshan Unity—Estero (1888–present), Chicago, Cook County, Illinois; and Estero, Lee County, Florida
 Labadist Colony (1683–1727), Cecil County, Maryland
 Labor Exchange Colony—see: Freedom Colony
 League of Brotherhoods (1900), Syracuse, Onondaga County, New York
 Le Claire Village (1890–1918?), Edwardsville, Madison County, Illinois
 Life Culture Society (1904), Los Angeles, California
 Martha's Vineyard Cooperative Colony (1906?), Vineyard Haven, Massachusetts

Mennonite and Moravian communities
 Model City Colony (1899?), St. Joseph, Berrien County, Michigan
 Mutual Home Association, or the Home Colony (1898–1921), Carr Inlet,
 Pierce County, Washington
 New Harmony—see: Harmony Society
 New Jersey Cooperative Association (1901–1904?), Campgaw, Bergen
 County, New Jersey
 Newllano Co-operative Colony (1917–1938), Newllano, Vernon Parish,
 Louisiana
 Niksur Co-operative Association (1899), Lawrence (now Wahkon), Mille
 Lacs County, Minnesota
 Northampton Association of Education and Industry (1842–1846),
 Broughton’s Meadows (now Florence), Massachusetts
 Oneida Community (1848–1881), Oneida, Madison County, New York
including:
 Putney Community and other Perfectionist branch communes
 Ora Labora Community, or Christian German Agricultural and Benevo-
 lent Society of Ora Labora (1862–1868), Bay Port, Huron County,
 Michigan
 Our Home on the Hillside, Dansville, Livingston County, New York
 Ozark Kinderfarm (1901?–1906?), Licking, Texas County, Missouri
 Point Loma, or the Universal Brotherhood and Theosophical Society—
 see: Theosophists
 Rappists—see: Harmony Society
 Reunion Community, or the True Family (1866–1870), Oronogo, Jasper
 County, Missouri
 Right Relationship League—see: Christian Commonwealth Colony
 Rochdale Cooperative Association of Missouri (1900?), St. Louis, Missouri
 Roycrofters (1900–1915), East Aurora, Erie County, New York
 Ruskin Cooperative Association (1894–1899), Tennessee City, Dickinson
 County, Tennessee
 St. Nazianz Colony (1854–1874), St. Nazianz, Manitowoc County, Wis-
 consin
 Shalam (1884–1901), near Dona Ana, Dona Ana County, New Mexico
 Skaneateles Community (1843–1846), Mottville, Onondaga County, New
 York
 Snow Hill Nunnery, or Seventh Day Baptist Church of Snow Hill (1798–
 1870), Snow Hill, Franklin County, Pennsylvania
 Social Reformers Cooperative Emigration Society (1843)
 Society of Women in the Wilderness (1694), Pennsylvania
 Southwestern & Western Co-operative Farm, Manufacturing, and Trans-
 portation Colony (1901?), Star, Nebraska

Spirit Fruit Society (1899–1908), Lisbon, Columbiana County, Ohio; and
Ingleside, Lake County, Illinois
Straight Edge Industrial Settlement (1899–1918), New York, New York
Theosophists (1898–1942), Point Loma, San Diego County, California
Topolobampo Bay Colony (1884–1894), Topolobampo Bay, Mexico
Trappists
United Family (1896?), Worcester, Worcester County, Massachusetts
Vegetarian Colony (1901?), Highland, New York
Virginia Phalanx (1845–1850?), Gilmer County, Virginia
Wisconsin Co-operative Union
Wisconsin Phalanx (1844–1850), Ceresco, Fond du Lac County, Wisconsin
Women’s Commonwealth, or the Sanctificationists (1874–1906), Belton,
Bell County, Texas; and Washington, D.C.
Zion City (1893–1906?), Chicago and Zion City, Lake County, Illinois
Zoar, or Society of Separatists of Zoar (1817–1898), Zoar, Tuscarawas
County, Ohio