
Professor Karl J. R. Arndt has spent nearly a quarter of a century collating the scattered resource materials of the Harmony Society and interpreting them in readable fashion. He was uniquely qualified for this task by his linguistic proficiency, scholastic training, theological background for proper prospective, and — most important asset of all — intense interest in the subject.

It happens that the Harmony Society, from its beginning to its dissolution, has rarely if ever before been viewed objectively. The large bibliography of the Society demonstrates pointedly that writers about it either accept and defend or totally condemn George Rapp and his people. Prior to the publication of this volume there were several other books titled The Harmony Society. In 1866 Aaron Williams wrote a series of essays in defense of the Society at Economy (Ambridge), Pennsylvania; in 1904 John A. Bole's dissertation, The Harmony Society, written for the University of Pennsylvania, was published; in 1943 John S. Duss, a former trustee of the Society, privately printed The Harmony Society, a Personal History; and in 1954 Christiana F. Knoedler produced her study, The Harmony Society. But each of these cited publications is scant in historical research and the objective quality.

Meanwhile, public interest in the story of Rapp and his associates was evident from 1785 onward. During this entire period, writers attempting to deal with them generally depended upon conjecture as their principal resource. Basic manuscript material was cloaked in difficulty of location. The German script of the data was exceedingly difficult to master. Contemporaries were baffled by the language barrier. It was almost impossible for strangers to comprehend the sincerity of the Harmonists and of their motives. There was much natural suspicion of communitarianism and Christian communism. To compound the problem there still are the ever-present overtones of dictatorial leaders, the complexities of vast land management, philanthropic gestures, extensive commercial enterprises, secreted hordes of wealth, enforced celibacy, legal entanglements and at the dissolution of the Society, the intrigues of the participants. It is understandable that writers about the Harmonists have taken definite stands of interpretation, seeing only single parts of the Society story and those only in a dim light at best.
The volume in review is a history of the life of George Rapp and the Harmony Society as a unit and as a company of individuals, ending with the death of Rapp in 1847. Part I is the story of Rapp in Germany and of the development of the idea of man's destiny as Rapp understood and preached it. Documentation is from public records and correspondence of the Württemberg period. Part II pertains to the foundation of the Harmony Society in Pennsylvania, 1804-1815 — its organization, progress, crisis, recovery and departure for Indiana. Part III is devoted to the Society and its experiences at New Harmony, Indiana, 1814-1825, when the Harmonists returned to Economy (Ambridge), Pennsylvania. Part IV is an account of the Society and Rapp until 1847. The author explains that the period thereafter until the dissolution in 1905, with a detailed report of the litigations which lasted until 1916, will be covered in a future volume.

This present reviewer is in better position to appreciate the work of Professor Arndt than is the general reading public. As Curator of what is now the Old Economy Village in Ambridge from 1949 to 1965, he fully appreciates such a definitive account of Rapp and the Harmony Society as individuals and as sharers in an experiment in institutional utopianism.

At the start of the 16-year period indicated the archives of the Harmony Society could not be compared with the present collection. Great quantities of papers then were in private hands, and the existing archives were in complete disarray. The W. P. A. project of the early 1940's had left indicative records of the work attempted, but those indications proved useless. Through constant and tireless searching, manuscripts, ledgers and other documentary materials were retrieved, sometimes in single pieces, sometimes by the pound. Professor Arndt has left few items undealt with.

One familiar with the data available, however, may offer some comments that possibly may stimulate "more studies," as suggested by the author in the preface of this volume. For example, on page 78, Professor Arndt makes one of his few conjectures when he questions the cause of the disagreement between Rapp and Dr. Haller in the early days of the Society. But the Susquehanna University has published several articles, The Bloomingrove Notes, in which the Keim Diary affirms that the break between the two men was caused by disagreement about insistence upon the principle of celibacy in the group.

As an offshoot of the Harmony Society, Tuetonia was proposed by an articulate former member of the community in 1927 — Peter
Kaufmann, a seceder who, with several others, planned to set up a truly American utopia. This man deserves further study than that given by Professor Arndt on pages 358-377. The Kaufmann Diary was located in the State Library at Columbus, Ohio. Photostats of letters and other papers, including the Tuetonia constitutions, now are extant at Old Economy Village.

Other studies feasible would be those that could be done with ledger books, in English and German, pertaining to nineteenth-century agriculture, printing, medicine, textile manufacture, meteorology and museum organization and management.

The University of Pennsylvania Press is not to be commended upon the paper used or the binding chosen for Professor Arndt's book. Even though the price of the volume appears high, it must be remembered that the author has compressed a tremendous amount of scholarly research into it. Apparently to cut costs of printing, footnotes have been kept at a minimum. Many statements in the main text are documented in the Notes section and many are quoted in the body of the text, but much documentation seems to have been deleted.

However, this publication is a definite contribution to the bibliography of the most successful utopia ever seen in the United States.

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It is always pleasantly surprising to realize that the world's most famous woman artist, and Mary Cassatt merits such a description, was born in Pittsburgh. As Frederick Sweet details in his new monograph, the exact fact is that Mary Stevenson Cassatt was born in Old Allegheny in her father's house on Rebecca Street (now called Reedsdale Street). And, although the date is usually given as 1845, Mr. Sweet, using family documents and the baptismal records of Trinity Church (Trinity Cathedral) in Pittsburgh, proves 1844 to be the correct year of her birth.