
This work, together with Dr. Arndt's earlier George Rapp's Harmony Society: 1785-1847, constitutes the first complete history of America's most successful association of religious communists, a history based entirely on the study of the original records carefully gathered in Europe and in this country.

The earlier volume, published in 1965, was reviewed in the Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine (volume 49, number 4); this review was written with keen perception by Lawrence S. Thurman, curator from 1949 to 1965 of what is now the Old Economy Village in Ambridge, under the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission. Thurman is now curator of another commission property, the Boone Homestead, Birdsboro, Pennsylvania.

This reviewer served as restoration architect of Old Economy for the commission and was almost continuously occupied with the task from 1938 to 1965. In this capacity he was primarily concerned with the restoration of the seventeen buildings, the garden, and grounds but, in his search for basic information concerning the structures, early builders, and their methods and materials he consulted the voluminous records in the Harmony Society's archives, as well as the two other Harmonist communities in Harmony, Butler County, Pennsylvania, and New Harmony in Indiana.

As architects are led perforce to a concern with history, the few competent histories and tracts on the Harmony Society were studied and persons consulted who remembered the late days at Economy, principally Dr. John S. Duss, that explosive but highly knowledgeable personality, the last surviving trustee of the society, who lived in the Great House until his death in 1951. Much was gained from association with Dr. Karl J. R. Arndt and his first preoccupation with the fascinating saga of the Harmonists and study of the society archives at Economy. Arndt's interest did not include any appraisal of their architecture, and it is to be regretted that his books do not include a treatment of the architectural restoration at Economy; in fact his illustrations include none of the buildings and gardens that were restored to their original condition. However, Dr. Arndt did suggest to the Winterthur Museum in Delaware that they commission this reviewer to prepare an article on the architecture of Old Economy Village
BOOK REVIEWS

and its restoration. This article has been completed; it appeared in the Winterthur Portfolio 8 as “Threshold of the Golden Kingdom: The Village of Economy and its Restoration.” The article includes sufficient historical reference to account for the character of the architecture and its builders and their methods, with numerous photographs of the finished work. It should also be mentioned that the architect, as well as Dr. Arndt, owes much to the assistance of Dr. Thurman throughout the period of his curatorship.

It would be difficult to find a biographer of the Harmony Society better suited to the task than Professor Arndt. From the outset he proposed “to let the Harmonists tell their own story” as revealed by the letters, business records, books, and papers contained in the extensive and valuable archives at Economy and elsewhere. Arndt’s study was supplemented by visits to the Harmonists’ homeland in Germany, discovery of the papers of the De Leon faction in a log cabin in Louisiana, and material remaining in the other two colonies of Harmony and New Harmony.

Arndt’s complete mastery of the German language and its form in the early nineteenth century and, more importantly, his familiarity with the archaic script in which the early records were written (these people spoke and wrote among themselves exclusively in German), well fitted him for the long and arduous task to which he was, and is, passionately devoted.

The first volume, George Rapp’s Harmony Society, deals with the formative years, the herculean labors involved in clearing three wilderness sites, their transformation into three flourishing communities which became marvels of agriculture, industry, and commerce which were celebrated throughout this country and Europe. He traces the vital moving force of their religious convictions throughout their periods of adversity and fulfillment. This little oasis of withdrawn people, of whom only a few leaders dealt with a frequently hostile outside world, nurtured a sincere effort to establish a peaceable brotherhood among themselves. But within their creed were two abiding, and to many incomprehensible, obsessions — preparation for the second coming of Christ in their own time and the voluntary acceptance of celibacy, a tenet that inevitably led to the extinction of the society. These matters and the driving force of their two remarkable leaders, George Rapp in spiritual things and Frederick Rapp in material affairs, are made very real and understandable by Arndt.

This second volume, George Rapp’s Successors and Material
Heirs, takes up the story after the death of George Rapp, an event which substantially ended the "golden age" of the society. This is a complicated and melancholy period dealing with the decline and dissolution of the Harmonists' little empire, a time of bickering and bitter lawsuits not only against the world outside but among themselves as well. As their numbers steadily dwindled, more and more outsiders were brought in to do the work the members could no longer do for themselves. The reins of direction were passed from one group or person to another, ending in the sole leadership of the residual trustee, John S. Duss, who steered the ship finally into port. Duss's handling of this last period is recounted by Arndt with an effort to be truly objective in attitude and to analyze the storms of controversy and bitterness which Duss countered with the fortitude and the shrewd wit for which he was noted. As John Duss was alive and active during Arndt's work at the Great House, there were confrontations between them, some of which this writer witnessed, that may have shaken but did not break the spirit of the indomitable, vociferous, and remarkable old man. On the one hand, Dr. Duss, from his intimate association with the late leaders of the society and its affairs, contributed much invaluable knowledge to historian and architect alike; on the other, Dr. Arndt's intensive and scholarly research has given us a faithful account of this difficult period.

These books will provide one with an understanding of why the architecture of this charming village of Old Economy constitutes a fitting memorial in its simple, direct style to the natures of those who created it. Fortuitous circumstances made it possible to achieve one of the most faithful restorations of any early-American community. The devoted and resourceful administration of the village of Economy by its present curator, Daniel Reibel, has made it a shining example among the many historic properties administered by the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

It is likely that Dr. Arndt's exhaustive and masterly work will remain the definitive record of the Harmony Society and the Harmonists' bold venturesome nature, curiously blended with their determination to establish a peaceful, industrious community of true brotherhood consistent with their ideal of a primitive Christian faith.

Pittsburgh

Charles M. Stotz