

GEORGE RAPP'S HARMONISTS AND THE BEGINNINGS OF NORWEGIAN MIGRATION TO AMERICA

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EVEN before George Rapp's Harmonists moved from Harmony in Butler County, Pennsylvania, through the great Pittsburgh gateway to establish their second settlement, New Harmony, on the Wabash, they had become internationally famous as highly successful American pioneer builders in the wilderness, but their well-arranged move down the Ohio to the Wabash increased their prestige as models of group migration. With a justified pride in their brilliant transportation of an entire community of 800 people with cattle, sheep, horses, feathered flocks, swine, flora and fauna, building supplies, machinery of various kinds including a steam engine, seeds for future harvests, beer, wine, food supplies, tools, raiment, and medicines over such a distance, Frederick Rapp on March 28, 1816, wrote his Pittsburgh agent George Sutton: "I can inform you with much pleasure, that we all arrived here in good State of health, and landed our property Safe, which we brought with us from there, so that nothing has happened to none of our Boats of which there was above thirty." Thousands of individuals had passed through Pittsburgh on their way west, but the Harmonist migration was the greatest group achievement of that time and has never been properly recognized in the history of Western Pennsylvania. The Harmonist move was the transportation of an entire civilization from the east to the primeval forests of the west, and for that reason in the west and in Europe the new settlement soon became known as "Harmonie, that Wonder of the West."

Frederick Rapp and all the Harmonists were fully aware of what they were accomplishing and therefore took great pride in their unique community, so much so that they wrote enthusiastic letters to friends and relatives in old Württemberg inviting them to come and join them in the wide open spaces of the glorious west. One such letter from Frederick Rapp to Joseph Leobold in Vaihingen-an-der-Enz has been preserved and enshrined in translation for all posterity to

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read in my *Documentary History of the Indiana Decade of the Harmony Society*. The main purpose of this letter was to order a great selection of grape vines and fruit trees from the productive and fertile areas of Württemberg to be planted later on the Wabash, but Frederick Rapp also took time to give an account of the Harmonists since their departure from Württemberg and to invite others to join them. This and other letters were prepared for delivery in person by a friend of the society, "Mr. Schäffer, who is bringing this to you and who does not live at all far from us and is a respected man." It is important for the purposes of this article to add that Schäffer was a journalist and editor of the *Ohio Adler* (Eagle) of Lancaster, Ohio, a man who then spent two years in Germany doing business for various German-Americans, and a man whose business favored spreading the good message of Harmonist success and American opportunity to all who were willing to read or listen. Frederick Rapp wrote his old friend Leobold in Württemberg:

The trade branch has occupied a great deal of space in the United States, arts and sciences in part are still in their childhood here, but some have developed very high among which especially mechanics are to be reckoned, in which the Americans surpass all other nations. This has been encouraged by the freedom which everyone enjoys under the law for here one knows nothing of any limitation. Each man can do what he wishes; some carry on two, three, or four and some even more professions and carry all of them on or whichever goes best. There are no poor people here who must suffer need or who could not feed themselves. An acre of land costs 5 fl from the government which is to be paid for in four installments and when a family is so poor that it can buy no land, then the land can be obtained on a loan basis for 1, 2, 3, to 10 years and the third part of what is planted must be paid the owner of the land and they need pay neither taxes nor other dues. In this way it is easy for a man who works only half the time to obtain in three or four years an estate of 50 to 200 acres of land, which is the least that a person has here. We ourselves have many such families sitting on our land to whom we have loaned it in this manner and would have place on our land for some 100 families who could live on this calmly and happily without being tormented by worries of food or being bothered by the beadle or official servant.

Much less would they have to worry that their sons would

be taken away as soldiers, the laws of the land here are exactly the opposite of a monarchy. Every person who has reason can live happily under them, every citizen is acquainted with them and knows the punishment of every crime in advance before it comes before court. Officials and subjects have the same laws and the crimes of both are punished equally. All officials are elected by a majority vote of the citizens. Every citizen has equal right in the place of election, each year the lawgivers in each state are elected by the people. These form the assembly and the senate, in order according to circumstances to improve the laws, to set state affairs in proper order, and to maintain them therein. Everyone has the freedom to express himself freely or to write about political and other affairs; also complete freedom of conscience is introduced in all America so that every person according to the conviction of his own conscience can perform unhindered his Divine service. Everyone can here as well in political as in religious fields develop according to his own ability and reveal himself. This is the reason why Americans are far more enlightened than many nations of the world. *It is our wish that many more poor German families may come here because so much of the best land still lies uninhabited here. The rights of mankind are unknown to them and we should like to have them enjoy them with us* for every wisely thinking person can see that as yet there is no durable peace in Germany, but the firmament of the political heaven is covered with a cloud in which a horrible night is still enveloped out of which necessarily thunder and lightning must develop before a clear heaven can appear out of which the sun can once more shine forth and refresh the earth with its lovely ray.¹

This letter and similar ones by members of the Harmony Society set in motion a chain reaction throughout Württemberg which then, through unforeseen acts of God, as this article will show, resulted in the first group migration from Norway to America.

The Württembergers had always been known for their mystic piety, industry, fertility, intelligence, and migratory interests. Before World War I made it illegal in seventeen of our states to teach or

¹ Karl J. R. Arndt, *A Documentary History of the Indiana Decade of the Harmony Society, 1814-1824* (Indianapolis, 1975), 1: 237-38. Unless otherwise noted, all quotations from letters in this article can readily be found in this volume because it is chronologically arranged and citations always give dates.

speak German, there were no cities of any size in America that did not have at least one social and one musical organization made up entirely of Americans from Württemberg. Their fertility and industry forced them to seek their fortunes in distant lands because effective contraceptives had not yet been invented and George Rapp's most effective substitute of self-disciplined celibacy lacked the essential mass appeal. Furthermore, at this time Rapp's method of stopping the population explosion had not yet become completely effective and was certainly not proclaimed to be a way of life in the society; in fact, Rapp solemnized a number of marriages in the society during the Wabash decade, because not all Harmonists could abide by Saint Paul's suggestion that it might be well to marry but better not to do so. The appeal of George Rapp's Harmony Society for most Württembergers was its phenomenal wealth and success and its misquoted and misunderstood promise to help emigrants once they arrived in America.

The lure of a good life in America with the help of the Harmony Society was greatly increased by the presence in Europe of one Peter Ulrich, a somewhat nebulous agent of the society who made a business of collecting inheritances in German lands for those who had migrated to America. Like many others, he also had good connections with Dutch shippers seeking human freight for their sea-going vessels. He also engaged in some smuggling, which later got him into jail in Philadelphia, but his political connections were so good that he was released by a presidential pardon. Yet, he was not completely dishonest at this time and sincerely suggested to Rapp that the society's agent in Philadelphia, Mr. Godfrey Haga — a wealthy merchant of unquestioned integrity — send a ship to Amsterdam with exports from his business, which on return would then bring back a shipload of Württembergers bound for the Harmony Society. This well-meant proposal did not materialize, so he made his own arrangements, and about the middle of October 1817, after a voyage of sixty days, landed happily with 430 persons in Philadelphia. Before Ulrich's arrival, Frederick Rapp had spent considerable sums of money paying the passage of other Württembergers who had come over as "redemptionists," or persons who would pay their passage by becoming indentured to some American, and who had solemnly declared their purpose of becoming members of the society. After the passage had been paid by Rapp, these people often had vanished without meeting their obligations. Still, Frederick Rapp was willing to give Ulrich's people the benefit of doubt because they had arrived on a specified boat which he had met personally after making the

difficult trip from the Wabash to Philadelphia.

There were a considerable number of loyal disciples of George Rapp in Württemberg who had the misfortune of taking the wrong ship to America from Amsterdam. Among these were Jacob Hofmann, Johannes Schiller, Johann Georg Schwerdt, Johannes Bay, Friedrich Schnabel, and Johannes Hasert. With many others, they took passage for Philadelphia from Amsterdam in the brig *Seepflug*. Not all of the records have been preserved, but it is known that Johannes Hasert paid full passage on the *Seepflug* for himself and family "for freight and passage, with food and drink according to contract" before departure from Amsterdam on May 25, 1817. Captain P. J. Manzelman signed the receipt for Zwissler and Company. At sea, food and keep were so poor that Hasert died and was buried on the island Hølder. Soon after, the ship with its 500 passengers aboard got into a great storm which resulted in such serious distress that in the last week of September 1817 it was forced into the Norwegian port of Bergen. Having lost both its masts and its bowsprit, it was clear at first glance that the vessel would require considerable repairs if it were to be made seaworthy again and able to continue on the voyage to Philadelphia. Some weeks later it turned out that the *Seepflug* could not be repaired and had to be sold.²

Passengers who had paid their full passage to America now demanded that their money be returned, but Captain Manzelman maintained that this was the responsibility of the shipping company. Meanwhile, the sailing season had come to a close and it became clear that the German emigrants would have to spend the entire winter in Bergen. They could not and did not want to return to Germany because the large exodus of Germans had created difficult financial situations at home resulting in the passage of laws which prohibited emigrants to return once they had given up their residence and decided to leave. Returnees, especially such as these who through shipwreck and corrupt shipping companies had become paupers, would inevitably become a welfare burden on the locality to which they returned. Württemberg for centuries had granted its citizens the right to emigrate but had also been very paternal in warning all its people about the dangers and consequences of abandoning the homeland. By

2 Ingrid Semmingsen, "A Shipload of German Emigrants and Their Significance for the Norwegian Emigration of 1825." Reprinted from *The Swedish Pioneer Historical Quarterly* (July 1974): 183. My article is greatly indebted to this publication and to Professor Semmingsen's generous cooperation. For translation from the Norwegian I am indebted to Professors Odd S. Lovoll and LaVern Rippley of St. Olaf College, Northfield, Minnesota.

comparison, the wealthy city of Frankfurt allowed emigrants to return only if they had assured themselves of their right to local residence by depositing certain funds required of all citizens, which included a certain amount for welfare. Norway itself at this time was suffering from a major depression, and the government let it be known that the sooner these Germans could leave, the better it would be. Thus stranded in a cold and foreign land, these disciples of George Rapp found help and solace among a group of very pious Norwegians who shared with them an unwavering faith in the love of God and his complete direction of all the affairs of men.

Professor Ingrid Semmingsen of the University of Oslo has found two letters of the followers of the Norwegian pietist Hans Nielsen Hauge addressed to these "German Brethren," Württemberg followers of George Rapp. In this community of believers in Norway these unfortunate Swabians found assistance, love, companionship, and deep understanding, with the result that correspondence between the two groups continued long after Rapp's disciples had left Norway and arrived in America. Professor Semmingsen has generously sent me copies of these letters which she discovered, and I have sent her copies of my published material, but beyond brief references to the unpublished letters she has discovered I shall not quote from them but leave it to her as discoverer to publish the full texts and thus to provide the Norwegian documentation for this Scandinavian chapter in the history of Harmonist relations with the world.

Without knowledge of Professor Semmingsen's or my own publications, Dr. W. Weintraud in September 1974 published an article entitled "Schicksale württembergischer Auswanderer im Jahre 1817" ("Fates of Württemberg Emigrants in 1817"), which sheds considerable further light upon the *Seepflug* tragedy.³ His research was based on a study of the chronicle of the Family Rieber in Bergen, on documents relating to the *Seepflug* tragedy in the Norwegian National Archives in Oslo, and a correspondence with the director, Sigurd H. Loenner in Oslo. Dr. Weintraud's concern primarily is genealogical and it shows that a number of those stranded in Norway remained there, married, and became Norwegians. There was also a German community in Bergen, and this group also took great interest in their stranded countrymen. A committee for aid was elected, which called

3 W. Weintraud, "Schicksale württembergischer Auswanderer im Jahre 1817," *Südwestdeutsche Blätter für Familien- und Wappenkunde*, Band 14, Heft 5 (Sept. 1974): 16-21. A copy of this issue is in the Ward Collection at the Western Reserve Historical Society in Cleveland.

for donations to help the unfortunates. This brought in 1,200 "Speciethaler" and a generous donation of cloth from the king of Norway. The police adjutant Schönberg between October 10 and 13, 1817, drew up a list of the passengers giving their age, trade or profession, and destination. Children, whose parents had died, were not entered on this list, but these orphans were placed in Norwegian homes and usually adopted. Photocopies of this list and of another drawn up at Bergen on April 29, 1818, by the Hanseatic Consul Olzen and entitled "Etat — Nominatif" of the "unfortunate passengers of the *Seepflug* and at present in Bergen" were sent to me by Professor Semmingsen and are part of my archives. For convenient genealogical research Dr. Weintraud in his article has published Schönberg's list in alphabetical order.

In her article "A Shipload of German Emigrants and Their Significance for the Norwegian Emigration of 1825," Professor Semmingsen states that the Rappites at the beginning of April 1818 had found another friend in Consul Andreas Grünning, a leading burgher of Christiania (now Oslo), originally from Hamburg, who had long been interested in the emigrants' fate and had collected 900 pounds sterling in Germany to help them on their way to America. This made it possible for a number of the Germans on October 7, 1818, to leave Norway on the ship *Prima*, which in January of the next year arrived in Baltimore. Professor Semmingsen then points out that a part of the German emigrants had arranged to leave on another vessel, the *Susannah Catharina*, and that this group had made contact with friends in America and had obtained from them assurance of economic aid to cover their transportation costs. They had also received help from a "noble merchant" in Bergen, who donated some money to enable them to continue their journey, but Semmingsen is not able then to say when and where this ship arrived.

At this point, the record found in my *Documentary History* continues the story. On February 12, 1818, Jacob Hofmann and other disciples of George Rapp in Bergen, Norway, wrote Godfrey Haga in Philadelphia:

Necessity compels us to write to you. Brethren of ours who are in the Harmonie in America had reported to us that they wanted to accept more people in their community, and that those persons who would want to come should apply to Mr. Haga, Merchant in Philadelphia, and he would provide the necessary means of help. Perhaps you are already informed that on our journey we ran into misfortune and because of a violent storm

could not reach America but had to sail in another direction to Bergen in Norway. Now, most treasured friend, we believe that without the will of God nothing can happen to us, although as yet we cannot see through the hidden ways of God, yet we can leave it to the almighty God; because, however, God has men on earth, so that one can give help to the other when in need, we request you also to give us assistance and we have no prospects of finding any help. Here in Bergen we cannot stay nor can we go back into Germany again at our own expense. We beg you therefore that you will soon let us know because we do not know how soon we shall be moved. They do tell us that we shall be repaid some of our passage, but that is still a matter of argument. One says we will get to America and the other that we must go back to Germany. Well, good friend, if you have any prospect from the Harmonie then give notice so that we have something to show to a captain that in America we will surely be redeemed. In that way there is better chance that we will be accepted because now no captain wants to accept anyone without money. If you can help it, do not leave us stuck here. Also inform our brethren in the Harmonie of our condition. The heavenly Father will reward you for this that you do unto us. When you write to the Harmonie then, write to David Lenz from Schnaith, Schorndorfer Oberamt. We received his letter in the month of December, 1816, and tell him that his daughter-in-law from Winterbach is also here, and that it is each one's hearty longing and wish to be with them in the Harmonie. They should let us feel their brotherly love. Those who are together here with a longing to be with their brothers and sisters are by name: Margaretha Hassertin from Hebsack and Joh: George Gutbrodt and family from Geradstätten, and Fried: Schnabel from Schorndorf, Daniel Vogt and family from Winterbach, and five families from Schnaith. The total of those who would like to be in Harmonie is sixty persons.

The letter was signed by four men, named: Hofmann, Schiller, Schwerdt, and Bay. A postscript then stated: "When Peter Ulrich has completed his journey happily, he will report to you about us." As noted previously, the *Seepflug* had left Amsterdam the end of May 1817, and had taken refuge in Bergen the last week of September of that year. Peter Ulrich and his 430 passengers had sailed late in August and after a voyage of sixty days had arrived in Philadelphia

late in October 1817, but because of several complications which were seriously to affect not only him but also the financial condition of the Harmony Society and, therefore, the unfortunates in Bergen, Norway, he seems to have failed to carry out the mission mentioned in the above postscript. On inheritances still due the Harmonists in Württemberg Ulrich had collected between 10,000 and 11,000 florins, each American dollar then figured at 2 florins 30 gr. This had been paid him in good hard cash, which the Harmonists badly needed at this time if they were to redeem their unfortunate friends in Norway because their treasury had been depleted by previous redemptions in Philadelphia and because in the west on the distant Wabash they were operating on paper currency worthless in the east. To make the situation about as complicated as it could possibly be for the Harmonists in Bergen, Ulrich had invested all the money he had collected in various wares which he would have to sell before he could pay the amounts collected to the Harmony Society. All these wares, however, had been confiscated by the collector of customs for the United States, who, becoming suspicious of Ulrich, had had all his property sealed and later, on searching his house, had found several watches and valuables which Ulrich had forgotten to declare. As a result of all of this, Ulrich, who for some time had been the subject of secret reports in the Württemberg State Archives, was put into jail, from where he wrote imploring letters for help to Washington and the Harmony Society.

This dilemma, however, did not help to liquidate the assets of the Harmony Society, which were tied up in the wares Ulrich had bought with Harmony Society inheritance money and which were now confiscated by the United States government as his own property. It took some time before this complicated information reached the Wabash, then by mail even more distant than by present slow Post Office standards of operation. In justice to the Harmony Society, this complicated situation must always be kept in mind when we deal with the problems of the Rappites stranded in Bergen. Haga, the very sympathetic and able representative of the Harmonists in Philadelphia, belonged to the Church of the United Brethren and was a close friend both of their Bishop Loskiel in Bethlehem and of their specialist in Indian affairs, John Heckewelder, who had spent many years in the west. Haga, however, had been cautioned by the Harmonists about persons who were not really suitable material for the Harmonie and whose only interest was in profiting in a material manner from the credit of the society.

On February 24, 1818, Christian Friedrich Schnabel wrote to Haga from Bergen stating that the emigrants had already sacrificed their worldly estate and that they found themselves in a land where they could not remain. He had received several letters from his brother Johannes in the society assuring him that upon arrival in Philadelphia he could obtain help from Haga, "and I also have direction from my best friend, Mr. Peter Ulrich, to you. Thus I dare to burden you with a letter and ask you for support." Schnabel then listed others who were stranded with them and requested that an enclosed letter to his brother be forwarded to him at the Harmony Society. He did not know how long they would remain in Bergen and apparently gave no specific address where they could have been reached. The letter to his brother stated: "On September 5 we lost all masts, also we were very badly treated by our disloyal captain. He did not give us the food which he was obligated to give us according to contract. This brought about great sickness so that over 200 souls died, among these 12 souls from Schorndorf. My own dear child also became a victim of this unhappy trip, which loss caused me and my wife such pain that we were sick for 2 months. She was a gentle good little daughter and was named Elisabetha Christina, and she brought her earthly life up to 2 years less 11 days." The letter concluded with a list of other Rappites bound for the society in America. Haga forwarded this letter to the Wabash on May 29, 1818. Two days later, in Bergen, one Samson Traae wrote a deeply religious and friendly letter to "the German Brethren" there acknowledging a communication from them, which showed that they had found kindred spirits there to soften their misery.

At the beginning of the summer of 1818, according to Dr. Weintraud's above cited article, about eighty of the more well-to-do passengers of the *Seepflug* chartered the brig *Susannah Catharina* from a certain Captain Fischer. The cost of the trip to Philadelphia was to be ninety Spanish "Thaler" per person. Before departure the participants had to deposit the sum of "12 - 1600 Silberspeziethaler" and had to sign a document promising to reimburse the Norwegian state upon their arrival for the amounts advanced for their stay in Bergen. For this purpose Captain Moldt of the *Susannah Catharina* was given a power of attorney to collect this sum, which amounted to about 1,410 "Speciethaler."

Before the *Susannah Catharina* sailed on August 13, 1818, a document addressed to the king, the Norwegian government, and the Norwegian people, expressing the passengers' gratitude for all the

kindness shown them during their stay of over a year in Norway, was signed and published on behalf of the unfortunates. Later a private letter dated November 11, 1818, describing the hard fate of the German emigrants, "Harte Schicksal der deutschen Emigranten," was published in the Bergen *Adressavia* (No. 37) in 1819. It stated that the Germans were allowed to go on land only if they could prove that they could make a living without becoming a public burden. Since many of them could not give such proof, "they were sold or had to permit themselves to be sold at an auction," with the exception of twenty-eight, "with whom no one would be bothered."

On October 23, Jacob Boller, a business agent of the Harmonists in Philadelphia, wrote Frederick Rapp that, after a sixty-day voyage, with some damage to one of the masts, the *Susannah Catharina* had arrived from Bergen with 107 passengers, among whom were several families who suffered misfortune and who wanted to reach their final destination in Harmony. Among these was the Schnabel family. Boller continued: "I handed him your letter which you wrote to us in behalf of these unfortunates, which he will read to his fellow passengers. As said, there seems to be an exact connection established between them. I conclude this from the fact that Schnabel does not want to accept your offer to liberate him personally, unless this offer is also extended to his fellow passengers." From remarks then added it appears that Rapp had then suggested that the others be indentured with a special clause stating that the liberated person should be free again within six to nine months in return for the repayment of the money. Haga and Boller thought it would be difficult to find anyone who would accept such a clause. Rapp probably made this suggestion as a way of freeing the unfortunates from the ship at once in the hope of releasing them from the indenture and bringing them to Indiana as soon as financial conditions would permit.

On October 25, Schnabel wrote his relatives that they had sailed from Bergen on August 13 and now found themselves helpless and deserted after they had sold their property to join the society at the invitation of the Harmonists. He again listed those who wanted to join the society and implored the Harmonists to give them notice as soon as possible. This letter was signed by ten of the unfortunates. Boller reported to Rapp on November 4 that all except Schnabel and his wife were still held on shipboard waiting to be released and that the parents were beginning to indenture their children by placing as much of their own passage on them as they could bear. The first passage fare which they had paid seems not to have been returned, although

this had amounted to more than 20,000 gulden, and now the second passage was due together with a demand from the Swedish government for the sums advanced in Bergen, amounting to about \$1,500 for the entire group. This demand had been protested. Boller continued :

Also, they have not received a penny of the money collected for these poor people in German ports and transmitted to the Swedish Government for distribution, a sum which, as Schnabel told me, amounted to the respectable sum of at least 25,000 Gulden, according to newspaper reports. Swedish lower officials washed their hands in this money and the chief cashier pled bankruptcy. The city of Hamburg alone collected 800 pounds sterling and transmitted that sum. Since then a court has decided that Capt. Moldt has no right to hold these people on the ship because of Swedish demands. About 12 persons who got off the ship before this decision was made must on that account serve from 6 to 12 months longer. And the Captain refuses to pay back the amount. I regret to inform you that these people complain bitterly about the letters of invitation sent out from Harmonie stating that upon their arrival here they would be cared for, because that really is not the case, and some even believe they could bring a lawsuit against you for the loss of their estates, when all was lost.

Schnabel and his wife, then in a state of far-advanced pregnancy, would remain in Philadelphia until spring, staying with another one of the unfortunates who had managed to free himself. Ulrich, meanwhile, had managed to get out of jail and was spreading the report that Rapp's agent Boller had money to free all but was withholding it for his own use.

On March 20, 1819, George Rapp, in the absence of his son Frederick, wrote Boller acknowledging a letter from him and another from the people who arrived from Norway and expressed his deep disappointment in the people who had lately come to them from Germany, because they were setting such a bad example in the Harmony Society. "They are too wild for our community. The former money of over \$7,000 expended will bear little fruit. If I could help, I would leave these people to the Americans, they can better accustom them than we." The newcomers who did not run off before coming to New Harmony had caused much dissension in the congre-

gation, but the situation being what it was, Rapp still wanted to help free the people from Bergen. While George Rapp had no money for that purpose, he said Frederick would probably find the means to release the newcomers in the summer after his return from New Orleans. Convinced the people could not wait that long, Rapp asked Boller to take a loan for the purpose or to ask the ship captain to free the people on credit to the society, perhaps with good security until they could pay. "I have more paper money lying here than would be necessary for that, but of what good is that, it is mostly notes from Kentucky and Ohio in the neighborhood." There was some hope that Abraham Ziegler would pay up some of the money he still owed on the old Harmony, yet money was tight and that was not to be decided for at least another month.

Rapp wanted the release of the following families: Daniel Vogt, one woman and three children said to be indentured, Margaretha Hassertin with two children, her daughter being indentured, Johann Georg Gutbrodt and his wife, his sons being indentured, and Margaretha Künzlerin and two of her children. Enclosed in this letter to Boller was a letter to Daniel Vogt acknowledging his letter and one from Schnabel, both of whom could not be reached because no definite address or place had been given. Also specific statements about the number of persons involved and costs had never been provided. Rapp explained that the money he had available on the Wabash was not accepted in Philadelphia, while silver was too rare and too heavy to transport over such a distance. He remarked that there had been tremendous changes in the economic situation within the past two years and acknowledged that the emigrants' fate had been horrible. "One might also think, why did you not come on the ship on which my sister and several friends of ours came, who are here. Did we not do our duty and fulfill it? Did not brother Friedrich instead of you free many godless people of the world who begged him for it, and many of them ran off on the way, and our money was lost? Did we not risk \$7,000 cash money in this, to which our sweat and work clung, and few even thank us for it." He then urged them to consider well whether they really wanted to join the Harmony Society with its narrow path of life. He was especially suspicious of the children, stating that in America anyone could make a living anywhere if he was willing to work. It was anything but an encouraging letter; rather it was one filled with bitter disappointment over the latest arrivals.

It was not until April 29 that Jacob Boller wrote Rapp from

Philadelphia that he had freed those from Bergen at his own cost and risk and that fifteen of them were on the way to New Harmony. The full details and costs were then given, which are reprinted in translation in my *Documentary History*. Boller thanked God for having this burden off his neck.

From the record as just reviewed it would seem that all those from Bergen would be permanently filled with bitterness against the Harmony Society because of all they had suffered due to the invitation they had received, yet the blame by no means was all with the Harmonists and, fortunately, that was generally realized. Most of that which happened was beyond the control of the Harmonists, yet the unhappy results did not at this time enhance the image of the society. That image began to shine and sparkle anew with the sale of New Harmony on the Wabash to Robert Owen of Scotland and the well-managed return of the Harmonists by steamboats — one of them made to their order by the directions of the famous Captain Henry M. Shreve, for whom Shreveport, Louisiana, was named. This glorious move back to Pennsylvania, with extensive coverage in the international press, came a year before the first group migration of Norwegians set out for America in the comparatively small vessel *Restauration*. Considering the dangers of the high seas (and these Norwegian pioneers were fully aware of the risks they were taking), in absolute courage this voyage exceeds the daring which the Harmonists had shown in their moves to the west and then back to Pennsylvania.

From the existing record it appears that the Harmony Society maintained no further contact with the Christian congregation of Norwegians that had proved of such staunch support to the stranded followers of Rapp in Bergen, but Professor Semmingsen's research in the Norwegian archives has brought to light a number of letters which testify to the close contact these newcomers maintained with their Norwegian brethren even after their arrival in America, particularly those who did not ultimately join the society. Without attempting to present the full text of the originals here, for that will be done in Norway, I would merely call attention to the fact that on May 4, 1819, shortly after Boller had written Rapp the letter referred to above, Jacob Hofmann, Johannes Schiller, Johann Georg Schwerdt, and Johannes Bay wrote a letter to the brothers and sisters in Bergen reporting on their crossing to America through a violent hurricane which threatened to capsize their ship. In this letter they were most charitable in describing their unfortunate situation and extremely

cautious about attributing blame to the distant Harmony Society. They accepted their fate with complete confidence in God, spoke with great appreciation and love of their soul-satisfying meetings with the Norwegian brethren in Bergen, and expressed their longing to be with them again. Although by the necessity of indentures they and their families had been separated, they managed to get together frequently and worship collectively. They praised the great opportunities which America offered all people, in spite of the hardship which they had to suffer before they obtained their release. In their hearts they felt more longing for the companionship of the brethren in Bergen than for their native Germany.

Another letter, written by Jacob Hofmann, Michael Widmeier, Adam Hofner, and Margaretha Schiller, on June 14, 1823, to the brethren and sisters in Norway, acknowledged a letter from them and gave the most recent reports on the location of each of those followers of Rapp who had been diverted to Norway. From this letter the continued interest in the Harmonists becomes quite evident, and the writers reveal some surprise over the fact that the Harmonists have not been applying their wealth to charitable purposes or missionary activity. They admit, though, that those of their group who had been admitted to the society had found peace and satisfaction there and had been well received. They praised the freedom of religious life in America but could not refrain from continuing to think of the comforting spiritual kinship they had experienced in Norway. We must await the publication of the full texts of these letters by Professor Semmingsen. But, even in the absence of a fuller record of this continued correspondence, there is enough evidence to show that the Bergen experience had established a close relationship between those who had been stranded in Norway and the pietist congregation in Bergen, and that the interest in the Harmony Society and the hope of America continued to live in Norway. In the presence of such warm sentiments as those expressed in the letters sent from America on June 14, 1823, it is quite reasonable to believe that these relationships were continued later and came to blossom when the first group of Norwegians departed from their country on July 4, 1825, in the *Restoration*, for it was after their arrival in America that this group in their time of distress appealed to the society for help, just as the Rappites in Bergen had done in their hour of need. In his book *The Norwegian-Americans*, Arlow W. Andersen comments: "A rather convincing essay on the influence of the stranded Germans is Ingrid Semmingsen's 'A Shipload of German Emigrants and their

Significance for the Norwegian Emigration of 1825,'”⁴ and that was before she was able to support her conjecture by newly discovered evidence in Norway.

Semmingsen's article quotes as follows from a letter which the Swedish viceroy, Count Carl Mörner, wrote to Karl XIV Johan, dated March 25, 1818: “The German emigrants' arrival in Norway seems to have made an unexpected impression upon this people which is so strongly rooted in its fathers' soil. A few days ago some peasant from Asker parish near Christiania came to speak with me on behalf of their neighbors about emigration to America, and about the support the government might be able to give them to set such a plan in operation. I advised them against the thought. I recounted the misfortunes the German emigrants had been exposed to and explained that the easy and inactive life the emigrants were leading at the moment — it was perhaps this which had misled these peasants — would come to an end as soon as the season allowed us to send them back to their homeland. I hope that our peasants shall thus be cured of this fatal idea by the very result of the situation that had brought them to this thought.”⁵

The viceroy, of course, was not as well informed about America as were the German emigrants through their direct communication with such authorities as Frederick Rapp and the members of the Harmony Society, and his views were much the same as those which the Duke of Württemberg had expressed in an official warning to his loyal subjects not to emigrate to the “Island of Mississippi” to find an easy life. Ingrid Semmingsen traces the reports about America beyond the above point and shows that a reward was even offered the person who could discover the person or persons spreading the rumors. She demonstrates in her article that the name “America” and the word “emigration” had found their way into everyday speech through the German emigrants seven years before the first group left Norway.

Cleng Peerson was a Norwegian who was by many regarded as the “father of Norwegian immigration to the United States,” the “advance agent” of the immigrants of 1825, and the pathfinder for Norwegian settlement in the west. According to his own statement, he arrived in the United States in August 1821. That was the time when the Harmony Society had a commission of its own in Württem-

⁴ Arlow W. Anderson, *The Norwegian-Americans*, Immigrant Heritage Series, ed. by Cecyle S. Neidle (Boston, 1975), 225.

⁵ Semmingsen, “A Shipload of German Emigrants,” 187-88.

berg for the purpose of collecting inheritances and debts due members of the society. Their presence there resulted in a great deal of publicity about the unique success of the society in America and in several articles about the society in widely-read journals of the country which later found their way into American newspapers. The year following, 1822, then brought considerable publicity to the Harmony Society and the New York Society for Promoting Communities, an organization which communicated with the Harmony Society about the secret of its success and which later established contacts with Robert Owen of Scotland. This also was the year when the home-grown American economist Mathew Carey published the *Addresses of the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry*, in which the Harmony Society was presented to the American nation as the model of models to follow for the achievement of wealth and happiness. Wrote Carey:

We offer for reflection, fellow-citizens, an important fact, that sheds the strongest light on this theory. The settlement of Harmony in the western country, was conducted on this plan. This little commonwealth depended wholly on itself for supplies. It had, to use the cogent language of Mr. Jefferson, "placed the manufacturer beside the agriculturist." What was the consequence? The settlement made more rapid advances in wealth and prosperity, than any equal body of men in the world at any period of time — more, in one year, than other parts of the United States, which depend on foreign markets for the sale of their produce and the supply of their wants, have done in ten.⁶

This also was the time when the Harmonists attracted a great deal of national attention. A group in Boston, which planned to set up a commune, wrote to Frederick Rapp in 1822 for assistance. The Harmony Society at this time and in the years that followed was the economic showplace of America, and few persons who traveled in the United States failed to visit the society and write about it. Also in 1822, the Shakers requested an understanding with the Harmonists. In 1823, the *Stuttgarter Morgenblatt* published articles about the Harmonists on the Wabash, and the *Washington National Intelligencer*, one of the nation's leading newspapers, published the report of a visit to the unique community. In April 1824, the *Philadelphia National Gazette* published a lengthy report on the great progress of the Harmony Society and about the same time a Mr. Duane of Philadelphia gave Frederick Rapp a letter of introduction to the governor of the state of New York, because Rapp was interested in develop-

6 Mathew Carey, *Addresses of the Philadelphia Society for the Promotion of National Industry*. (Philadelphia, 1820), 176-79.

ments in that state and was looking about for a new location for his famous society. In June 1824, New Harmony on the Wabash was offered for sale in the leading newspapers of the United States because the Harmonists had purchased new lands near Pittsburgh where they planned to set up their third settlement. The powerful politician and publicist of New York City, Mr. Mordecai Noah, was interested in establishing a Zion in America for his fellow Jews then suffering persecution in Russia, and a Mr. Solms of Philadelphia, as agent of the Harmony Society, offered him the town of New Harmony for that purpose. In July 1824, Richard Flower, by virtue of an understanding with Frederick Rapp, advertised the sale of New Harmony in the principal newspapers of England and probably France as well, as had been suggested by Solms of Philadelphia. This then led to the purchase of New Harmony by Robert Owen and the resulting international publicity. The Harmonists, meanwhile, were making their own news by another well-planned and well-executed migration of their entire community to their new location on the Ohio River below Pittsburgh. There can be no doubt about it: the Harmony Society at this time was world-famous and its activities were the focus of national attention.

It is unrealistic to think that a man of Cleng Peerson's interests and abilities would not have been aware of the activities of the Harmonists or not have been influenced by them. According to Theodore C. Blegen, Peerson returned to Norway on a flying visit in 1824 and returned to America the same year, where he made arrangements for the settlement and reception of the first group migration of Norwegians to America. It is significant that at this time his object was to unite all the Norwegians in one community, which would own all its property in common.⁷ This was entirely in keeping with the spirit of the time as far as immigration was concerned, for new German immigrants who found the Harmonists too strict were also thinking in such terms.

Peerson's suggestions to the first emigrants from Norway that they invest their money in Swedish iron and buy a vessel to cross the ocean, both of which they could then convert into cash in America, was in the spirit and practice of those years, as we have seen from Peter Ulrich's investments and as can be ascertained from the proposals of a Dutch communal group that had read about the Harmonist wealth

⁷ Theodore C. Blegen, *Norwegian Migration to America, 1825-1860* (Northfield, Minnesota, 1931), 41. For other material on Peerson I am greatly indebted to this scholarly work.

and applied to the society to share some of it in this manner. All the details about Cleng Peerson and the extensive preparations for the first group migration of Norwegians to America have been carefully researched and elucidated by Blegen in his *Norwegian Migration to America* and need not be recounted here because we are primarily interested in the relationship of this migration to the Harmony Society. It serves our purpose to note only that these courageous Norsemen on October 9, 1825, more than three months after leaving Stavanger, arrived at New York in their sloop *Restauration*. The Norwegians attracted a great deal of attention in New York City, and the newspapers gave the story considerable publicity. To eliminate the kind of suffering that the followers of Rapp had to endure before they finally were released from their ship in Philadelphia, the United States had passed a law in 1819 which permitted only two passengers to each five tons of the tonnage of a transatlantic vessel. Under this act, the forty-five passengers of the *Restauration*, not including the crew of seven, should have had the accommodation of a ship of $112\frac{1}{2}$ tons and with the child that was born on the voyage it should have been 115 tons. The tonnage of their sloop, however, was less than forty, though the newspapers helped put it at forty-five and the customs officers at fifty-five tons. Nevertheless, the ship was confiscated and released only after considerable effort on the part of friends. Actually, this was not a case of violation of the spirit of the law, because these immigrants had entered upon this venture for their mutual benefit and not to exploit anyone else.

About the beginning of November, the immigrants reached their destination on the shores of Lake Ontario in the northern half of Murray Township, New York, which later became known as Kendall Township. Authorities charged them five dollars an acre for their land, and each adult bought forty acres. Because of shortage of funds, an arrangement was made for payment in ten annual installments. Under great hardship of winter the community struggled along until June 27, 1826, when at the advice of Cleng Peerson, they addressed the following letter to Frederick Rapp of the Harmony Society, then in the midst of construction of its third American settlement, the divine Economy, where Christ in his Second Coming was to dwell with them.

Frederick Rapp Esqr. Sir,

On behalf of our present sufferings we make bold to address you — We are in a country new to us & the forest is almost an insurmountable barrier to us — We are not expeditious in clear-

ing it. We are destitute of provisions — We cannot procure necessaries from the surrounding people for the country is new and they are mostly poor though good & charitable — We wish you if it be consistent for you to grant us our request to advance money enough to pay for about 400 acres of land on or before the beginning of 1828 — It will require sixteen hundred dollars — We also have an excellent site for a saw mill and are anxious to have one erected soon — To accomplish these objects we are willing to have the whole put in Mortgage for security of the repayment of the money advanced. Should you be able to grant our request you will add one more bright gem to the catalogue of your charities and bring joy ease and felicity to a number of People who are now poor & pennyless & in a foreign land — Please write us an answer. Signed by the Norwegian Settlers in the town of Murray County of Orleans State of New York.
Murray June 27, 1826.

Andrew Knudson	C. Nelson
Tormod Madland	N. Nelson
Danil Rossdhal	H. Harveg
Gidmund Davidson	

Frederick Rapp Esq. Dr Sir.

If you can grant us any assistance, I wish you to write and let us know as soon as possible in order that I may come and make some arrangements. We stand in need of clothing and necessaries for building a saw mill.

Cleung Peerson⁸

The holograph was in the hand of Cleung Peerson and evinced a familiarity with the history of the Harmony Society and that he knew about its help to others in distress, but it also showed Peerson as a rather inept advisor in this instance. He had been in the country long enough to acquire a good English style and to write a business letter that was to the point; however, the letter also gave the impression that Peerson by this time had become too Americanized and had lost insight into the importance of the soul of man, especially when address-

⁸ I am quoting from the original document, but this was first published by Mario S. De Pillis, "Still More Light on the Kendall Colony: A Unique Sloop Letter," *Norwegian-American Studies and Records* 20 (1959): 24-31. Also see his "Cleung Peerson and the Communitarian Background of Norwegian Immigration," *Norwegian-American Studies and Records* 21 (1962): 136-57. See also, Andersen, *Norwegian-Americans*, which cites the De Pillis and Semmingsen articles and the appeal to Rapp.

ing the Harmony Society. Frederick Rapp was a hard businessman, but he could be a most gentle Christian and most helpful in real distress to those who needed help. If Peerson had taken time to give the truly Christian background of these immigrants and if he had presented the story of their courageous crossing in a small sloop of their own, George and Frederick Rapp probably would have borrowed the money to help them. Peerson's greatest blunder was to state that "the forest is almost an insurmountable barrier to us — We are not expeditious in clearing it." Those two sentences aroused Frederick Rapp's suspicions and in his reply he seized upon them. I quote his answer from his letter book, a copy of which is in my archives:

1826 July 10. Messrs Cleng Peerson & Co. at the Norwegian Settlement, Town of Murray, County of Orleans, New York

Your letter dated the 27th ult came duly to hand by the last mail in which you put down your difficulties and indigent circumstances, as well as a wish to borrow some money to pay for Land, erect a Saw mill and to procure other necessaries etc.

In reply to this request I have to state to you, that it is entirely out of our power to assist you, as we have been under enormous Expenses, in Establishing this our third place, and the Expenditures, are not clear all at an End yet, which will over-run our active Capital by a considerable amount.

I would recommend you to get an accommodation nearer home, where your Land & your people are Known, which I expect wd be an easy thing to obtain, as your State is one of the Richest in the union, and has loaned large sums to some of the western States etc. If you continue improving your Lands, the Lender will run no Risk by your giving a Mortgage on the premises etc. I am somewhat surprised to hear you call the forest an insurmountable Barrier.

Three times we have commenced a new in the forest, and where our present Town has been erected within two years, we had heavy timber, and undergrowth, that a horseman could not get through, but what is called insurmountable by many Individuals, is performed by the Hands of united Industry and perseverance, under the direction of good management with almost incredible facility, because nothing is undertaken before a true calculation is made, whether anything can be done or not.

The Beginning of such a Settlement is generally hard and

attended with more or less unexpected Difficulties, however, by a steady course of Industry & frugality the work of the honest is genl crowned with success which I have no doubt will be the case with you, if you continue in Peace & union together. F.R.

More than twenty years ago, Cleng Peerson's appeal and Frederick Rapp's reply were transcribed and annotated for publication in the proposed third volume of my *Documentary History of George Rapp's Harmony Society*, but because of lack of necessary financial support for the publication of this volume and the unwillingness of publishers to risk publication without such cash subsidy, they have not been published until now in this form. To Professor Mario De Pillis, however, belongs the credit of first publishing Peerson's letter in an article in *Norwegian-American Studies and Records* in 1959, but he did not discover Frederick Rapp's reply. This, therefore, appears here for the first time, and as of now Rapp's reply seems to have been the last communication in the problem of Norwegian migration to America. It is entirely possible, however, that more material will surface in years to come, because much Harmony Society material was given away to friends, interested persons, former members, sold to collectors, and a great deal was ordered to be burned. In at least one instance, such documents were already on the way to the city dump to be burned when they were rescued by a German-American janitor, who could read them, and made them his personal property. In the settlement of the Harmony Society property, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania showed no interest whatever in the Harmony Society Archives, historically the most valuable part of the property. By that settlement, all memorabilia, furniture, books, and archives became the personal property of the Dusses, and John Duss took no interest in the archives until very late in life. This is quite understandable because his personal musical career and the many lawsuits which plagued him and caused him to move to Florida kept him busy with other things. He was, also, generous in disposing of material to persons who showed interest, because at that time there was practically no economic value attached to German-American historical material. Even the Historical Society of Pennsylvania found it enormously difficult to get together the relatively picayunish sum required to buy a part of Cassel's great collection of German-Americana, and another part of his collection has only recently been made accessible on shelves in Illinois, but for want of funds remains uncatalogued. The

tone of the Peerson letter would permit the conclusion that there had been some previous contact with Frederick Rapp, either personal through Peerson or otherwise, so the possibility of further light on these relationships must not be excluded.