HISTORICAL SOCIETY NOTES AND DOCUMENTS

THE PITTSBURGH MEETING OF GENERAL LAFAYETTE, GEORGE RAPP, AND FRANCES WRIGHT:
PRELUDE TO FRANCES WRIGHT'S NASHOBA

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Sehet, dieser Plan hat endlich müssen zum Vorschein kommen, und jetzt ist er da als die grosse Göttliche Economie.

Behold, this plan finally had to become manifest, and now it is there as the great divine Economie.—George Rapp to his followers, February 11, 1838.¹

It is distinctly from the inspection of the German colony of Harmonie, and afterward of Economie, that Frances Wright dates a first conception of the mode in which might be effected the gradual abolition of negro slavery in the southern States; and, equally, the gradual reformation of civilized society.—Frances Wright, Dundee, August 13, 1844.²

The best and most complete description of General Lafayette's visit to Pittsburgh is given by Leland Baldwin in his Pittsburgh: The Story of a City. Baldwin's admirable work provides a suitable backdrop to the relationship among Lafayette, George Rapp, and Frances Wright.

"The social high spot of Pittsburgh's early history," Baldwin wrote,

was the occasion of the visit of Lafayette in 1825 during his triumphal tour of the country. He approached Pittsburgh on May 30 by way of Lawrenceville, where he received a salute of twenty-four guns and breakfasted with Colonel Wooley in the arsenal. The road to the city was lined with the curious and

¹ Collection of sermons in Arndt Archives.
² Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Biography, Notes, and Political Letters (Dundee, Scotland, 1844), 126. This has been reprinted in Frances Wright D'Arusmont, Life, Letters and Lectures, 1834/1844 (New York, 1972), 28.
crowded with military organizations. At the tollhouse at what is now Twentieth Street, Lafayette and Mayor John Snowden got into an open barouche drawn by four white horses and entered the city. They were followed by other carriages containing veterans of the Revolution and by a long procession of troops and citizens. On a vacant lot at the southwest corner of Penn and Tenth were gathered a great number of school children, each wearing portraits of Washington and Lafayette. From there on the children preceded the "nation's guest" and strewn flowers on the streets. Finally the procession halted at the Mansion House, on the northwest corner of Wood and Fifth... which was to be Lafayette's headquarters during his stay.

Baldwin went on to describe Lafayette's first day in the city: "There was a banquet at which Henry Baldwin, Harmar Denny, Charles Shaler, and James Ross spoke. In the evening there was a magnificent ball at the Pittsburgh Hotel at the southeast corner of Wood and Third Streets; invitations to it had been eagerly sought, and the possession of one was the final cachet of social distinction then and for many years to come." 3

With this vivid overview before us, let me stress some of the sidelights which appeared less significant to Pittsburghers at that moment, but which were all-important to Pittsburgh's national and international image, namely the highly visible presence of Frances Wright, a very close friend of General Lafayette, and George Rapp and his party from the then showplace of America — Economy on the Ohio. It was at the occasion of this grand festival that the legend probably was born according to which General Lafayette is reputed to have told Rapp, the famous American Christian communist, that this world had lost a great general in him.

Lafayette's evaluation of George Rapp's phenomenal achievements on the American frontier cannot be verified in contemporary sources, but it does appear that the two met in Pittsburgh. On May 26, 1825, Abishai Way wrote to George Rapp: "It is pretty well ascertained that General La Fayette will be at Bradocks Fields (12 miles from this) on Sunday Evening and will enter the city on Monday morning next, We will look for you and your friends on sunday evening..." 4

That Sunday evening, George Rapp, his granddaughter Gertrude Rapp, John L. Baker (Langenbacher), Dr. Christopher Müller, and Dr. F. Wilhelm Schmidt drove to Pittsburgh to participate as special guests in the welcome of General Lafayette to the city. Because Abishai Way was a wealthy Pittsburgh businessman and had invited them, they probably stayed in his house, although it is possible that

3 Leland D. Baldwin, Pittsburgh: The Story of a City (Pittsburgh, 1937), 280.
4 From Arndt Archives.
some of them lodged at the Mansion House. I have not found any written record of the meeting between General Lafayette and the Harmony Society party, but a note which the general's very close friend wrote to John Baker on May 31, 1825, leads me to believe that at least part of the George Rapp party might have stayed at the hotel, which was the headquarters of Lafayette himself. Frederick Rapp at the time was tending to business in Philadelphia. Frances Wright's note says the following:

Let this convey to you my dear Sir the farewel & kind wishes which we could not speak this morning. I pray you to present the same with the assurance of my respect to Mr Rapp, whose Indisposition will I trust prove slight. I beg you to write me news of his health to New York. The steamboat Bolivar will it is said leave this tomorrow as the river is rising, & will call for Arthur should he persevere in his wish of returning home immediately. I send you our three horses which with their saddles, I commend to your friendly care until our return. May health and happiness remain with yr society to whose kind remembrance I commend myself & sister.

With due respect & esteem yr sincere friend

Frances Wright.5

The reply to this letter is without date, address, or signature, and I have identified it as John Baker's answer only by handwriting and contents. There is another circumstance to strengthen my claim, and that is that it is written on the address side of a letter to Stephen Stone, Jun., at Beaver Point. This letter to Stone from Economy on May 7, 1825, is signed: Jno. L. Baker. The text of the letter when compared to Wright's dated letter shows that it was written June 1, 1825, and the contents prove that it is a reply to Frances Wright's letter given above. The text follows:

After leaving you night before last in Pittsburgh Doctor Smith and Miller with myself had a very pleasant ride in the cool and moonshine of the night, and arrived safe at half past one o'clock in our calm retreat of Economy — and found Mr. Rapp very much reduced in the morning after taking medicine which operated severely upon him — yet had the effect of removing his indisposition almost immediately he is now almost as well as before — Arthur had arrived here with your horses before us —

5 Ibid.
they will be well taken care of by our people untill your return, the Steam Bt not coming down yesterday, and Arthur so anxious to go with the Intention to bring his wife from Illinois to this part of the country, started on foot to Steubenville an hour before the Bolivar passed here this morning — The recital of the circumstances attending the Entry and reception of very worthy Genl La Fayette & Suit in Pittsburgh his condection and display of cordial friendship together with your own my dear Miss toward Mr Rapp and his people filled every soul with wonder, and every heart with the liveliest emotion of gratitude all join in the hearty desire that God may preserve for many years the Life and health of the General Friend of Man, of yourself and sister with the best wishes for success — in your laudable desigion of redeeming "the most degraded tribe of all Human race" from misery and reclaiming from vice — may we soon enjoy the pleasure of seeing from[?] your safe return and success of your Labour
If it is not asking to much be pleased to remember Mr Rapp and his people, to Genl. La Fayette & his son when you arrive at Boston —

Frederick Rapp had left Economy for business in Philadelphia on May 19, 1825, and did not return to Economy until June 14, 1825, otherwise he certainly would have been present at the great welcome which Pittsburgh gave to General Lafayette on May 30, and would have met Frances Wright. Previous to the Pittsburgh meeting with George Rapp, however, Wright had met Frederick Rapp in New Harmony, Indiana. As she took a particular interest in prominent and interesting males and never was at all coy about it, she did not fail to pursue her advantage in Philadelphia as soon as she arrived there, as the following note of June 7, 1825, addressed to Frederick Rapp shows. He was then staying with his close friend and fellow-speculator and businessman J. Solmes.

Mr. Frederic Rapp
at J. Solmes
Market Street No 214
between 5 & 6 Street —

I trust this will find you still in Philadelphia my respected friend. I am just arrived with my sister from Economy & Pitts-

6 Ibid.
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burg, to wch. last place yr venerable father, with Gertrude, Messr Baker & Dr. Miller had accompanied us to meet General Lafayette. We are a good deal fatigued tonight. Tomorrow at any hour after 9 in the morning you will find us — We lodge at the Mansion house hotel —

With true respect & esteem
Frances Wright

Mansion house Hotel. Tuesday night.

By June 14, Frederick Rapp was back in Economy, which was then especially busy with house construction and the general activity required to return to a condition of business as usual. This time the Harmonists' plans for the future were even greater than they had been in their previous two settlements, and this time they were able to profit from their previous experience of building two towns in what had been a wilderness. Donald MacDonald on Sunday, May 19, recorded in his diary: "We were received with great joy and kindness by the Harmonians, who are as busy as bees building a new town. We dined with them, & returned at night to Pittsburgh. . . ." From Pittsburgh MacDonald went to Albany accompanied by Robert Owen and from there took passage on a steamboat for New York, arriving there on Monday, July 4, just in time to meet Lafayette and soon after, of course, Miss Wright. It was while Frances Wright was sharing in the glamor of the Glorious Fourth celebration in New York — this time all the more glorious because of General Lafayette's presence — that John L. Baker died in Economy after a brief illness. Frederick Rapp under date of July 22, 1825, thus reported the great loss to the society's friend and agent, John Caldwell, at Shawneetown, Illinois: "I am sorry in having to close my letter to you with the mortifying Intelligence, which announces the death of our mutual friend John L. Baker, who departed this life on the 6th Inst. His decease commenced with a dysentery, and terminated in the course of three days with a Cholera morbus. The remainder of our Society enjoy good health & Business goeth on as usual."

By August 16, Frances Wright was back in Pittsburgh getting ready for her Nashoba venture, which John Baker in his letter of June 1 had referred to as a "laudable desig two redeeming 'the most degraded tribe of all Human race' from misery and reclaiming [it]
from vice.” The plan was to set up a black utopia for slaves in western Tennessee. There they would be taught how to live and work as free men in a settlement to be developed somewhat along the lines of Rapp’s Harmony Society and Owen’s New Harmony. For this project Wright had managed to gain the help and interest of George Flower, the son of Richard Flower, who had sold the second settlement of the Harmonists, New Harmony, Indiana, to Owen. Both Flowers knew the Harmonists well and had done a great volume of business with them in developing the English Prairie. Frances Wright and George Flower obtained Frederick Rapp’s guidance for Nashoba, but before going south, Wright wrote as follows to Frederick Rapp on August 16, 1825:

I omitted my honored friend to request you wd. have the goodness to forward any letters that may arrive to your care for Mr. Flower or myself. — Until the 25th instant they may be forwarded to Mr. George Flower Albion Illinois — after that date to the post office Nashville Tennessee. —
Again receive my parting good wishes, respect & esteem
Frances Wright.

16th August — 25. From Mr. Shield’s house —

Before she left Pittsburgh on this occasion, Wright must have picked up some ugly rumors about Baker’s sudden death. She did not bother to verify the rumors, and they became so confused in her mind that in writing her autobiography in Scotland some twenty years later, she committed to print a completely confused and slanderous report of the Harmonists. Because it was written in English for a civilization or society that has become almost completely monolingual, it has experienced a continued rebirth in print and thus continues to malign the good name of George Rapp and his glorious Harmony Society. Without the ability to speak the language of the Harmonists or to appreciate the literature and music found in their excellent library, Wright recorded that there was no difference in the point of intellectual advancement between the mass of the Harmonists and the enslaved blacks of the South. Concerning the sudden but natural death of John L. Baker she wrote (in the third person):

.... A startling circumstance occurred previous to her last visit to Economie. This was the sudden and ill-explained death of the distinguished Becker. The frightful apprehensions which circumstances generated, but which she did her best to stifle in her mind, she afterwards found to have been very generally

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10 From Arndt Archives.
entertained both in and out of the society. He had attempted to induce an alteration in the tenure deeds of the property in favor of the mass, and to extend to the same, the rights of administration. The circumstances of the case, and the various surmises which they generated, inspired Frances Wright with additional distrust and abhorrence of all associations not founded upon the broadest principles of justice, and of which the bond of association, the tenure of land and capital, and the mode of direction, were not made clear to all concerned. It is self-evident, indeed, that wherever this is not the case, the whole must end in a trick of swindling, or a game of children.11

In suggesting that Baker's death had resulted from his attempt "to induce an alteration in the tenure deeds of the property in favor of the mass, and to extend to the same, the rights of administration," Wright showed her ignorance of the Harmony Society Articles of Agreement, the recorded deeds, and the society's administrative system. At the very beginning of the Harmony Society in Butler County, deeds were signed "Georg Rapp mit Gesellschaft" or "Joh. Georg Rapp mit Gesellschaft," followed by the names of "Frederick Rapp" and "Johan Georg Schmid." The Articles of Agreement, written in German, clearly stated that the property was held in the name of George Rapp and his society. This was often translated "George Rapp and Associates," or, as given in the Jefferson Petition, "The Memorial of George Rapp & Society of Harmony," which was clearly signed by all members and submitted to the Congress of the United States in 1806. In the Articles of Association, all members pledged their obedience to the laws and regulations of the congregation and to those appointed and chosen as superintendents. George Rapp was the society's spiritual leader, and Frederick Rapp was manager of business affairs. For the sake of efficiency, Harmony Society business was conducted in the name of Frederick Rapp, but he had a number of very trusted fellow Harmonists to whom he delegated authority, and among the most trusted were John Baker and his brother R. L. Baker. There were many others such as Christopher Müller, Dr. Schmid, and Conrad Feucht, not to mention the many who took flatboats full of Harmony produce down the rivers to New Orleans to be marketed there. When she wrote twenty years later, Frances Wright was probably still angered by her own Nashoba failure and confused by what she probably heard about the Count de Leon and how he misled many of George Rapp's followers. At the time the episode attracted much publicity and it has often been described since.

By way of correction and contrast to Wright's mendacious report, I urge all readers to examine the accounts of the following persons who visited the Harmony Society either immediately after

11 D'Arusmont, Biography, Notes, Political Letters, 26.
Wright had been there or not long thereafter. All three men were bilingual and had the advantage of being able to converse with all the Harmonists in their native tongue. Particularly significant is the report of Friedrich List, the German economist and later editor of the Reading, Pennsylvania, Adler. The author of a book on national economics, List was invited to present a series of lectures to the Pennsylvania legislature. Bernhard, Duke of Saxe-Weimar, and Maximilian, Prince of Wied, have also handed down valuable accounts.12

How highly Wright and George Flower valued the advice, judgment, and business assistance of Frederick Rapp may be seen by a review of some of the extant correspondence that passed between them. On October 24, 1825, George Flower wrote Frederick Rapp from Nashville:

We have returned to Nashville after a long tour through the Western district of the State of Tennessee. The result is that we have fixed upon a situation for our commencing our Establishment on the South side of Wolf River, 15 Miles from the Mississippi. The land is not so good as some on the North side of the river, but has every appearance of health and runs down to the river preserving an even bank that never overflows on our side. This tract is surrounded by vacant land and across the river lies rich land which we can procure at Government prices. The nearness to Navigation, the health of the Situation, and the excellence and length of the season for picking cotton induced us to make this selection.

We have given up water power seeing the ill effects of mill dams in this climate. We must therefore ultimately make use of Steam power. Mr. Yeatman[,] informed me that small Steam Engines might be procured at Pittg. that wd. turn a grist mill a pr Stones, a Saw — and a Gin for 2,200 or 3,000$ — we would consult you on the Cost of the Engine and what one of that power would cost with the putting up, & if a person would contract for the putting up of the Engine and a saw mill from Pittsburgh. We have had a long journey and nobody to assist us. Our place has been made known and published in the papers. It is generally well received. We are on the best terms with the principal people of the State.

Avarice and a fear of loosing their popularity have prevented any persons from giving up any of their people yet. But many say that they will if such an establishment goes into effect. Gen. Jackson is very favourable to it. But every thing rests upon us individually at present. We therefore return to Memphis to purchase those pr fine hands to begin our Cabins before bad weather sets in.

We wish for your advice about a Steam Engine its power and cost. We wish to be made acquainted with these particulars before we erect any Horse Mills. . .13


Maximilian visited both Economy and New Harmony and had particular praise for Economy and Rapp.

13 From Arndt Archives.
The rest of the letter is devoted to an order for various supplies needed for construction at Nashoba, as well as clothing and farming implements. All the items ordered were to be sent either to Frances Wright or to George Flower near Memphis, Tennessee.

Communication was slow in those days, and Frederick Rapp as a careful businessman first had to make necessary inquiries before he could reply satisfactorily to Flower's letter. He did not answer until December 15, 1825, saying:

... I delayed answering it before I knew of an opportunity to send the articles you requested me to procure for you but am sorry to say there has none offered ever since nor will, I am afraid before next spring, as the Ohio River is now entirely closed up with Ice. — I do not intend to send the articles before I hear of you again, as you probably will have to make some other arrangements to get them elsewhere. — With pleasure I perceive that your long and tedious journey has taken a good End and that you have fixed upon a situation likely to be very advantageous for your Establishment, and shall be much gratified to hear that it will be favourable to your health and persevering Enterprise, and proof to correspond with the local advantages you mention.—

I have consulted several experienced Engineers of Pittsburgh about the Steam Engine you State, and have been told that an Engine of such a Power (say 20 inch Cylinder) would cost from $24 to $2500 at Pittsburgh, as to setting up a saw mill I would advise you to get an experienced person in the western country who would to my estimation charge only half as much as they would do in this country etc.14

George Flower, meanwhile, had been to Kentucky, where he was detained by a long and serious illness from December to the end of March. This illness seems to have left him unaware of the fact that in the interim another year had begun, so when he again wrote Frederick Rapp, this time from Nashoba, he dated his letter as March 4, 1825, which Frederick Rapp in his endorsement then changed to 1826. Flower wrote that

I have but just arrived at this place having been detained in Kentucky by a dangerous illness ever since last December. The business has therefore been a good deal retarded, Miss Wright having been without aid since I left her — seven female slaves have been sent to us from South Carolina and they with their Master performed a journey of 700 Miles to reach us. I have just learned that 8 purchased people have landed from the Nashville Steam boat. Two double Cabins are all the buildings I have found on the land, I write particularly to acknowledge the receipt of your letter in answer to mine which was handed me by F. Wright yesterday to countermand the order for articles there sent for by me and to introduce Mr. Richardson as the person who will for the future correspond, and transact all commercial concerns for Frances Wright. You will probably receive by this mail a letter from Frances Wright as well as one from Mr. Richardson. The latter will be accomp'd with an order for a larger amount than the one I sent relying upon your kindness in attending to the purchase and early shipment of those articles which are not of your manufacture. We have just been notified of the shipment of Five Hundred dollars worth of Goods, a most acceptable donation to

14 Letter Book copy in Arndt Archives.
the Establishment by Mr. Jeremias Thompson of New York.
This year I find myself in all the business and difficulties of a new
settlement in the woods—

From Memphis Frances Wright on the same date but with the
correct year wrote to Frederick Rapp:

We now send a more extended order for goods from your society and Pitts-
burgh to wch. you will oblige us to attend in place of that sent formerly by
Mr. Flower.—

The order is made out and enclosed by James Richardson the gentleman
who will conduct the business of our store. From him you will receive all
future orders of a similar nature and with him we request you to communicate
in reply.—

I remit an order for four hundred dollars wch. I will thank you to place
to my credit and send an accompt with the goods and Invoice pr mail.—Let
the goods be forwarded as soon as convenient addressed for Frances Wright
and consigned to the care of Winchester & Carr Memphis.—

If good insurance can be effected let it to be done.
With best wishes to yr. society...16

On the same date as the above letter the Harmony Society
Archives show this draft:

$400
Memphis West Tennessee 4th March 1826
At thirty days sight of this second of exchange, first of same
tenor & date being unpaid, pay to the order of Frederick Rapp
the sum of four hundred dollars.
Charles Welkes, Prest of the Frances Wright.17

The detailed order for supplies is not printed here, but it was made up
by James Richardson “in behalf of Frances Wright” and called for
clothing, bedding, kitchen utensils, and especially such implements
as were needed for construction and farming.

On April 14, 1826, Frederick Rapp with a covering letter ad-
dressed to James Richardson sent an invoice for the articles ordered
and on the same day addressed Wright as follows:

Above please find Invoice of Sundry articles put up according to your order,
which came to hand a few days ago, you will find every thing you ordered
except Slipper Bath and pewter plates, which cannot be had in Pittsburgh,
the articles will be forwarded very soon by Messrs. A. Way & Co. to the care
of Messrs. W. & Carr Memphis, Tenn. as per your direction, and hope will
arrive safe and proof satisfactory, the ploughs are of the kind which I am
informed generally are take to your country and hope will answer the
intended purpose.
The Bill for $400 on C. Wilkes President of the N. York Bank I have
deposited in the Branch Bank at Pittsburgh for collecting which when paid

15 From Arndt Archives.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid. (copy).
will leave a Ballance in your fav. of $36.34 1/2/100. which is subject to your order. I shall with pleasure attend to your commands you may favour us with in future, our manufactory is now in full operation and performs very well, our machinery is much superior to those we formerly had etc.

The health of our Society has been good and we are progressing in Improvements as fast as can be expected.

I hope you have by this time, made considerable advance in your new plan of establishing a Colony etc.

We have no way of Insurance in this Country, and from the safety with which goods lately have been carried, I think is not much danger. 18

From Nashoba James Richardson on Sunday, December 18, sent Frederick Rapp another order for supplies which was acknowledged by R. L. Baker, John’s brother, in behalf of Frederick Rapp, stating that the goods will be sent “as soon as the river is open.” Baker, for Frederick Rapp, on February 15, 1827, dispatched the goods to the agent of the Harmony Society at Louisville instructing him to forward the shipment to Nashoba. On the same day Baker informed Wright of his action, explaining that ice on the river had prevented earlier shipment. 19

Richardson wrote to Frederick Rapp from Nashoba on May 17. He acknowledged receipt of the shipment, sent a New York draft for $165 from Frances Wright’s sister, Camilla, and stated that “Frances Wright left us, a few days ago, on a visit to Europe.” 20 Frederick Rapp acknowledged receipt of Camilla Wright’s draft on June 16, and on May 8, 1828, Camilla Wright Whitbey signed the following receipt at New Harmony, Indiana: “Received from Romelius Baker on behalf of Frances Wright the sum of four dollars thirty seven & ½ cents being the balance due her on an account with Frederick Rapp —” 21

This receipt closed the account and concluded the business transactions of Nashoba with the Harmony Society. The change of name of Frances Wright’s sister bears mute testimony to the fact that order had triumphed over chaos at Nashoba, for on December 15, 1827, Richeson Whitbey and Camilla Wright had been married by the justice of the peace, H. J. Persons. Yet, Camilla did not submit to marriage bonds without an explanatory protest in the Nashoba Journal following the recording of the marriage:

For this apparent dereliction from one of the fundamental principles frequently advocated in these records, as in Page 14, wherein Camilla Wright stated that she considered the proper basis of sexual relation to be the unconstrained choice of both parties; while she continues to regard the marriage

18 Letter Book copy in Arndt Archives.
19 Ibid.
20 From Arndt Archives.
21 Ibid.
tie as in the highest degree irrational and in its nature calculated to produce a variety of evils, she believes from the result of experience that by living in open violation of the civil institutions of the country, irrational and more frequently indignation will be produced in the minds of the greater portion of mankind and thus effectually indispose the public mind from listening to the reasoning which should precede the practice of opinions so novel, and repugnant to those established in the existing state of society.22

Frances Wright, as we have pointed out above, had the last word on George Rapp's Harmony Society in her autobiography of 1844, but previously Rapp in his inner sanctum, to which Fanny Wright, "priestess of Beelzebub," never gained access, had summed up his views of her free-love colony in Nashoba. On October 14, 1838, Rapp preached a sermon in German to God's Swabian elect in his divine Economy, Pennsylvania, based on John, chapter 17, verses 6 and 7: "I have manifested Thy name unto the men which Thou gavest me out of the world: Thine they were, and Thou gavest them me; and they have kept Thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever Thou hast given me are of Thee." In the sermon, Rapp stated that God had given man a free will at man's own cost and risk under the condition that His word was a great treasure. He had also entrusted to man a great talent which he was to invest in the course of his life.

The Harmony Society, Rapp maintained, had by its free will chosen wisely to keep God's word and to invest its talents to the advancement of its harmonious brotherhood, wherefore the society had been given a special divine mission in the face of the Second Coming of Christ. While the Holy Spirit was continuing his work in the society, its members could observe, according to prophecy, the evolution of the anti-Christian beast in the outside world. Rapp then continued: "For we must also know how the anti-Christian beast is still developing, for that Miss Wright, whom all of you know, once visited Harmonie and spied out everything among us and found a deep unity among us. And she also tried to build one [a Harmonie], but, of course, without light, and only with reason." Rapp stressed the gulf between Wright's vision of communal life and that of the Harmonists. "And she went from us to New York and there spread her devillish doctrine, and the President [Andrew Jackson] and his comrades were in agreement with her, and gradually they hoped to eliminate the old moral code and introduce a bestial way of life. And now picture to yourself such a handful of people [as the Harmony Society] who

have undertaken to fight against the kingdom of the beast, how do you think God will reward such a people with the advent of Jesus? But we may not expect the coming of Jesus in America, although we do see His judgment.”

I conclude this study of Frances Wright’s relation to George Rapp’s Harmony Society with an evaluation of her restless and tormented character as sent to her by her long-suffering husband, William Phiquepal D’Arusmont, who gave their daughter the love which her mother was too egotistical to provide, “leaving the appreciation of my words to your own conscience.”

Your life was essentially an external life. You loved virtue deeply, but you loved also, and perhaps even more, grandeur and glory; and in your estimation, unknown, I am sure, to your innermost soul, your husband and child ranked only as mere appendages to your personal existence. You could not even conceive their individuality, as distinct from your own; you imagined you possessed that which we mutually agreed no human being possesses over others, the right of stopping their personal development and forcing them to live your life without examining whether that existence coincided with their wishes or their ideal. . . . You could not conceive that my daughter and myself should be anything but satellites revolving in your orbit, and I must also sorrowfully add, my friend, that since an epoch closely corresponding with your Scotch inheritance, your simple and austere disposition seemed suddenly to expand into desires of luxury, and at the same time your character and political opinions underwent a complete transformation. Frances Wright, the champion of democracy became the warm defender of aristocracy. This is attested by your last publication, “England, the Civilizer,” which offers a most striking contrast to your earlier writings. Constant discussions owing to the utter change in your sentiments and character made our life together impossible.

Postscript

Mrs. Celia Eckhart, of Washington, D.C., has called my attention to Cecilia Helena Payne-Gaposchkin’s article, “The Nashoba Plan for Removing the Evil of Slavery: Letters of Frances and Camilla Wright, 1820-1829,” in the July and October 1975 issues of the Harvard Library Bulletin (pp. 221-51, 429-61). Some of these letters should be read together with those I have given here, but from my knowledge of Frederick Rapp’s character and his deep devotion to the Harmony Society, I should like to make some comments to her claims on Frederick Rapp, particularly as made in her letter written from Philadelphia on June 8, 1825.

23 Frances Wright and Jacksonian Democracy did much to convince George Rapp that the United States also was doomed and that Jesus would receive the Harmonists in Palestine. My collection of Rapp’s sermons, from which this comment on Wright is taken, makes difficult reading even for the clergy of our time because of the decline in theological training and study.

24 Perkins and Wolfson, Frances Wright, 378-79.
Wright says on page 242: "Upon consulting with F Rapp I found him decidedly of the same opinion & obtained from him the ready promise of his valuable assistance." This must not be extended to mean an approval of her plan, about which the Harmonists had great reservations. Rapp was only expressing his confidence in the power of united labor such as was found in the Harmony Society. He was extremely skeptical about communes, but at this time was being asked for advice on such organizations by persons in Boston, New York, Canada, Holland, and Norway. United labor, yes, when of the Harmony Society kind. Yet he was always helpful to those who sincerely asked for help. On page 244 Wright stated that one of her main objects in Philadelphia was to find Frederick Rapp, then "& just caught F Rapp before his departure for Baltimore in his way (north) /west/. This enabled me to charge him with my business in Baltimore — namely to see an efficient philanthropist there, to explain the intended experiment to him & to direct him to supply me with the names of some good planters in Tennessee." At the start of this letter Wright had cautioned, "Read this letter in private," yet it does sound rather imperious. But imperious she was, and since she soon after spoke of Rapp as a man who knew Tennessee very well, she was probably consciously "directing" him. Rapp was not a man to be "directed" in this manner, especially when his time was occupied with the important business of the divine Economy, which he was just then getting started. On page 245, she is probably stretching matters a great deal when she says "F Rapp will explore for the location" (of Nashoba). At most that meant by advice and by agents or friends, such as George Flower, who did take the time to explore in person and almost lost his life in the process, as our letters above show.

On page 246, Frances Wright again showed her weakness for citing names of prominent men who were supposedly eager to do her bidding: "After that important visit we shall strike North again to Indiana, & await in Harmony the arrival of F Rapp who cannot join us before Novr. — Shd my interview with Genl Jackson have been favourable [we] I shall then return with F Rapp & Mr Flower to Tenessee, or otherwise bend our course according to circumstances—" One gets the impression from Wright's letter that Frederick Rapp, whom she had described as "a man of the most enlarged & liberal views & possesses more practical knowledge & experience, as an American farmer & settler, & also as a practical reformer & teacher of the human species than any other individual probably existing" had little more to do than to help her set up a wild experiment in
western Tennessee while he was committed to the building of the "Divine Economy," to which he was fully devoted and in which he believed. He surely never spoke to Wright about Economy, because, living by the divine Word as the Harmonists did, he would not cast pearls before the swine. Wright, however, was not the kind of woman to be left waiting alone on the frontier. The last paragraph of this Philadelphia letter shows that she already had found another life-giving illusion: "I must speak another time of Mr. Owen. He is working miracles & promises fair to revolutionize a 2d time the North as I pray we may do the South." Frances Wright and Robert Owen were kindred spirits, as their tragic failures soon showed. Her sister Camilla on page 438 a little later correctly diagnosed the trouble: "As you know the danger in all sickness with our Fanny is the tendency to the disease attacking her head, & on this occasion our terror was the fever settling on the brain where her greatest sufferings lay. . . ." What Wright needed was some cracked ice for a cracked brain.