

# Voices from New Harmony: The Letters of Hannah Fisher Price and Helen Gregoroffsky Fisher

CAROL KOLMERTEN

---

THE STORY of the American Owenite communities is an ambiguous one, as related by its participants in their letters "home" to family and loved ones. Many of the letter writers were initially taken with Robert Owen's "system" to change the old immoral world into a new, moral one but were soon discouraged with the realities of community life. The vitriolic essay of Paul Brown and the critical letters of William Maclure illustrate how reform-minded men lost their faith in Robert Owen's Utopian schemes to change the world. Perhaps the dedicated Philip Price, a member of the New Harmony Community from Philadelphia, best expresses the optimistic hopes and the dashed expectations of Owenite followers as he leaves the New Harmony area in August of 1826:

Here we bade adieu, probably forever, to the beautiful and fertile [land], and at the same time to the splendid dreams of terrestrial happiness and human perfection which had been almost as the light of my soul, as the pole star of my existence, for so many months previous. It is needless now to recount the causes by which this bitter disappointment was occasioned. It is sufficient to say that we were sadly retracing the same road which but a year previously we had traveled with hopes so elate [d] and impatience so ardent to be actively engaged in those schemes that were to remodel the fact of creation.<sup>1</sup>

Carol Kolmerten is professor of English and director of the honors program at Hood College. She is the author of *Women in Utopia* (1990) and editor of the 1991 reprint of *Unveiling a Parallel*, an 1893 Utopian novel. The letters are published courtesy of the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.

1. See Paul Brown's diatribe, *Twelve Months in New Harmony*. 1827 (Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1972); William Maclure's letters in Arthur Bestor, *Education and Reform: Correspondence of William Maclure and Marie Duclos Fretageot*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1948); and Philip Price's August, 1826 letter in the Friends Historical Library at Swarthmore College.

The letters and essays from the people who joined one of the Owenite communities for economic reasons rather than for ideological ones illustrate, with less ambiguity and with more asperity, how the communities failed to produce workable industries that could support them with the ease and comfort Owen had promised. Letters from workers such as Thomas Pears in New Harmony or James M'Knight at the Haverstraw Community illustrate their growing discontent. They feel betrayed that Owen's appealing promise of an eight-hour working day with a community of mutual help was not forthcoming. Having been attracted to an Owenite community because of its promise of starting over again, they had no interest in Owen's notion of communitarian reform and, in fact, many felt threatened by Owen's anti-religious rhetoric.<sup>2</sup>

The letters from women in the Owenite communities detail their own disillusionment with betrayed promises. Most of the married women who went to an Owenite community went because their husbands were anxious to have a second chance at life. It was the women who joined an Owenite community as the wives of men who wanted to start life over again who felt the most betrayed in their experiences in the communities. What happened, I have proposed elsewhere, was that culturally accepted ways of thinking about Woman, what I call an ideology of gender, hardened into a cultural practice that few of the married women could escape. As in the mainstream culture, married women were expected to live out their roles as helpmates, to practice self-sacrifice. Whether they liked it or not, the married women in the communities were considered to be the servers of everyone, to "belong" to the community. Believing in the community's tenets was beside the point for women who were expected to *be* the community's wives.<sup>3</sup>

The discovery of a set of new letters from women living in New Harmony during Robert Owen's experiment there reaffirms many of the hardships in the community that others have written of so eloquently.<sup>4</sup> But these new letters let us hear, for the first time, the voice

2. See Thomas Pears' letters in *New Harmony, An Adventure in Happiness: the Papers of Thomas and Sarah Pears*. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1933); James M'Knight's essay "A Discourse Exposing Robert Owen's System as Practiced by the Franklin Community at Haverstraw," (New York: 1826).

3. *Women in Utopia: The Ideology of Gender in the American Owenite Communities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); for more specific information, see specifically chapter three and the conclusion.

4. Economic problems plagued New Harmony from its founding in January of 1825. Preparing the machinery for production and the land for crops proved to be exceedingly difficult for William Owen, Robert Owen's son left in charge in most of the first

of an unhappy widow and an optimistic married woman. The letters, written by two sisters-in-law back "home" to Philadelphia, show us the thoughts of a widow, Helen Gregoroffsky Fisher, who resented her stay in New Harmony for many of the same reasons most of the married women did, and the thoughts of a dedicated married woman, Hannah Fisher Price, who went to New Harmony not just because her husband wanted to start over again, but because he and she wanted to be part of a great experiment that they hoped would change the world. These new letters still illustrate their writers' anguish, but they also let us hear the voice of a married woman devoted to Owenite ideals. Her voice reveals a noble spirit that transcends the inconveniences and hard work. It is this woman, then, who lets us feel the Utopian impulse behind those pioneers who made their way to New Harmony. It is her very optimism in the face of overwhelming negative odds that foregrounds the problems at New Harmony.

### *1. Helen Gregoroffsky Fisher*

Helen Gregoroffsky, educated in England, married Miers Fisher, Jr. on June 4, 1813 in St. Petersburg, Russia, where he had established the mercantile house of Miers Fisher and Co. in 1809.<sup>5</sup> Miers Fisher, Jr., the son of a prominent Philadelphia family and friend of John Quincy Adams, died suspiciously within 30 hours of his marriage. Following his death, Helen moved to be with his family in Philadelphia and then, in late 1825, with Miers's sister, Hannah Fisher Price, Hannah's husband, and their three daughters, Helen became part of the famous "Boatload of Knowledge" leaving Philadelphia to join Robert Owen's New Harmony, in southwestern Indiana.

---

year. Few of the arriving community members knew any more about operating the industries than did young Owen. By the time the first edition of *The New Harmony Gazette* appeared on October 1, 1825, William was calling for skilled workers. By December William wrote his father with a tone of desperation, telling him that New Harmony had no superintendent of farming and that it needed workers of all kinds but had no place for them to sleep. See also the letters of William Pelham, William Maclure, and Sarah and Thomas Pears.

5. For biographical information on Helen Fisher, see *The Genealogy of the Fisher Family*, by Anna Wharton Smith, (Philadelphia: 1896), 23. See also the Miers Fisher Letter Book, housed at the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College, which includes letters from Helen written after her husband's death to her new in-laws. The letters from Miers Fisher, Sr. to Helen are in the private collection of Lee H. Pierce.

On the way to New Harmony, the boat the Prices and Helen were on got stuck in the ice for four weeks. Unlike her sister-in-law, Hannah, Helen was not content to wait out their enforced time in the ice; rather, she took off by foot with Robert Owen to visit the Yellow Springs Community in Ohio on their way to Indiana. By the time they arrived at New Harmony Helen appeared no longer to receive any special favors from Robert Owen, and Helen became noted for her constant complaints. How much Helen's complaints are simply those of a woman taken under Owen's wing and then discarded, we may never know. But we do know that Helen was quickly disillusioned with New Harmony. Her disillusionment in a letter home written seven months after arriving, was foreshadowed four months earlier when a visitor to New Harmony, Karl Bernhard, the Duke of Saxe-Weimar, reported meeting a "Madame F," whose "complaints of disappointed expectations I had listened to" at New Harmony.<sup>6</sup> He writes:

I became acquainted with a Madame F—, a native of St. Petersburg. She married an American merchant, settled there, and had the misfortune to lose her husband three days [sic] after marriage. She then joined her husband's family at Philadelphia, and as she was somewhat eccentric and sentimental, quickly became enthusiastically attached to Mr. Owen's system. She told me however, in German, that she found herself egregiously deceived; that the highly vaunted equality was not altogether to her taste; that some of the society were too low, and the table was below all criticism. The good lady appeared to be about to run from one extreme to the other for she added that in the summer she would enter a Shaker establishment near Vincennes.

Helen left New Harmony shortly after writing her letter but instead of joining a Shaker community, moved to Cincinnati, where Hannah and her husband and their children had just moved. There she died in 1828.

Helen, though not married, complained the same way many of the married women did: having no "place" other than that of serving others, insulted at the thought of having to do "degrading" working class women's work, and having no transcending belief in being part of a group's sacrificing and working together to achieve a new moral world, Helen complained about her job (working in the school), about her friendlessness, and about her health.<sup>7</sup> Helen was not a reformer; she wanted a different life, a new start. Her at-

6. See Karl Bernhard's comments in *New Harmony as Seen by Participants and Travelers* (no pages in text).

7. That Helen died less than two years after complaining of a continual cough suggests that at least some of her complaints have a compelling urgency to them.

titude toward her assigned roles was exactly the same as the married women who went to New Harmony because their husbands wanted to start life over again. They lost power in "their" sphere and lost status.

## 2. *Hannah Fisher Price*

The three letters from Helen's sister-in-law, Hannah Fisher Price, also illuminate New Harmony's flaws, but Hannah's attitude toward her hardships is different. Hannah Fisher was born July 8, 1793 and married William Price, a man she referred to as "the Dr.," on October 4, 1820.<sup>8</sup> At the time they moved to New Harmony in December of 1825, they had three small daughters, Emily who was 4, Sarah who was 2, and Caroline who was four months. Hannah's brother-in-law, Philip, was enthusiastic about New Harmony and, at his urging, she and her husband decided to leave the "old, immoral world" to venture to an egalitarian "community of equality."

Hannah was not a complainer; she worked hard for an ideal she believed in. When the boat to New Harmony got stuck in the ice and her sister-in-law plus numerous other people left, she remained to be with her husband, who was attending to a sick man on board. Where Robert Dale Owen's *Travel Journal* records how many women on the boat were miserable and unused to hard work, Hannah never despaired.<sup>9</sup> Her letters, instead, reflect her pioneering spirit and her selflessness.

Hannah and her family left the community in June of 1826, having accepted an invitation from the Birkbeck family to spend some time with them in nearby Wanborough, Illinois, the site of a modified Owenite community a year earlier.<sup>10</sup> There the Price fam-

8. For biographical information about Hannah Price, see Anna Wharton Smith, *Genealogy of the Fisher Family*, 70-73.

9. Robert Dale Owen, another of Robert Owen's sons, was on the boat with Hannah and Helen until Helen left with the elder Owen. Robert Dale writes early on in German: "Some of the ladies of our party appear already quite impatient and dissatisfied the more so since they almost can't do anything for themselves" (239) . . . and later, again in German, "The ladies are becoming evermore disgusted, particularly S. T., who cried this morning during breakfast. It is somewhat a good education for her and for all of us. As for myself, seldom have I had a better time" (243). See *To Holland and to New Harmony: Robert Dale Owen's Travel Journal*, edited by Josephine M. Elliott (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1969).

10. Morris Birkbeck had come to the Boltenhouse Prairie in uninhabited Illinois in 1816, where he planned a type of communal living that would retain individual property. By 1818 two different groups of emigrants totaling some eighty-five men and women sailed for the English Colony in Illinois, which had broken into two distinct

ily, along with a few other people from New Harmony spent two months or so "in [an] enchanting place," living in a mansion house an eating at a common table, according to Hannah's brother-in-law Philip. But Hannah and her "little circle" were unable to remain in Wanborough because they could not procure enough money to support themselves there.<sup>11</sup> Philip and his wife Matilda moved back to Philadelphia, and Hannah and the "doctor" then moved to Cincinnati, the "beautifully situated" town she noted in her first letter. Her husband, Hannah writes in her first letter from Cincinnati, "is quite cured of communities" but she adds that she does not regret her "pilgrimage in the least." In Cincinnati, Hannah would have five more children and become active in the anti-slavery movement. Her house, a "free house" in the 1840s, offered succor to escaped slaves on their way to Canada. Hannah died of cholera in 1850, nursing her husband's patients during an epidemic year, believing to the very end in the "beauty" of Owenite theory. She was, both at New Harmony, and later in Cincinnati, a Utopian woman.

---

settlements, Albion and Wanborough. In 1821 William Hall emigrated to Wanborough for some of the same reasons many married men brought families to near-by New Harmony: he needed to provide a better life for his wife and children. After hearing Robert Owen speak at Albion in December, 1824, Hall began the Wanborough Joint Stock Society in July of 1825. Unable to accept Owen's views of religion, education, or women's rights, Hall nonetheless fashioned a community that provided equal economic benefits for all members after expenses were paid. By the summer of 1826 Hall's joint stock company seems to have disappeared, because Philip Price writes in his August, 1826, letter that Wanborough's residents, during the summer of 1826, consisted of Morris Birkbeck's two sons; Gilbert Pell, a brother-in-law of the Birkbeck's and his wife; William and Hannah Price and their children; Stedman Whitwell, an architect Robert Owen had brought over from England to design the New Harmony town plan; S. A. Turner, a young woman from Philadelphia; and a Mr. Farant, an Italian refugee, and a Mr. Monant, a Swiss vine-dresser. For information on Wanborough, see the *New Harmony Gazette*, May 17, 1826; William Hall's Journal, "From England to Illinois in 1821," published in the *Journal of the Illinois Historical Society* 39 (1946): 21-66; Walter Hendrickson's essay "An Owenite Society in Illinois," *Indiana Magazine of History*, 45 (1949): 175-82; and my *Women in Utopia*. For information on Wanborough during the summer of 1826, see Philip Price's August, 1826, letter in the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College.

11. Information about Hannah's months in Wanborough comes from Philip Price's August, 1826, letter at the Friends Historical Library.

3. *The Letters*<sup>12</sup>

Letter from Helen Fisher, August 11, 1826 from New Harmony:

My dear brother,<sup>13</sup>

I received your very kind letter dated 17 July yesterday, and it is with great pleasure I see you still desirous of my joining you at Philadelphia; I have quite made up my mind to leave this place by the first opportunity. Since Hannah and the Dr.<sup>14</sup> are gone, I do not feel the least interest in remaining here. Everything and everybody are perfect strangers to me and I am only sorry that I ever had the unfortunate idea of coming here.

My health is beginning to suffer from this climate. I have a very bad cough and continual head-aches, which make me rather uneasy. I have been spending a few days at the Prairies<sup>15</sup> on a visit to Hannah; they have formed a small Society of ten members and seem very well pleased all except poor Hannah, who still regrets old Society. The Doctor invited me to join them but I positively refused not finding myself fit for Community life. The situation of the Prairies is delightful and the air very pure. The children improved very much in their looks during their short residence there. Sally Turner<sup>16</sup> seems delighted and does not talk of going home, but Phillip [sic] Price<sup>17</sup> and his wife seem rather inclined to go to Philadelphia, however as it is not generally known I beg of you not to mention it until you hear something more about it.

The continual changes that occur in this place are so numerous and so wonderful that it would require volumes and a much abler pen than mine to describe them. I will therefore leave the recital of them until I can do it in words.

I am not surprised at anything now, and should not wonder if

12. The letters, part of the Fisher-Warner Papers, are transcribed courtesy of the Friends Historical Library of Swarthmore College. I thank Patricia O'Donnell, Archivist, who helped me decipher strange looking words and unusual spellings. I have changed little in the original letters, but I have added punctuation and paragraphing when necessary for a modern reader to follow the text.

13. The letter is written to Redwood Fisher, Helen's deceased husband's older brother.

14. Helen refers to William Price, Hannah's physician husband.

15. Another name of Wanborough, Illinois, a small community about 30 miles west of New Harmony.

16. Sally Turner is a young woman from Philadelphia, who joined the New Harmony Community, then went with the Prices to Wanborough in the summer of 1826.

17. Philip Price was William Price's younger brother who was already living in New Harmony when William and Hannah arrived. Philip was also a doctor, who married Matilda Greenbree in April, 1826, in New Harmony.

the whole would break up even before I had time to leave it. You may imagine how pleasant it is to live and work here with such ideas. —What you tell me about having a class does not much suit me for I confess to you that the class of children would never have been my choice could I have avoided it. The only thing that made me accept a situation in the school was the fear of being put to the wash-tub or the kitchen, of which I understand nothing; besides I have had the instructions of Mr. Neef<sup>18</sup> whenever I require them, and I do not think myself capable of undertaking any thing like teaching by myself. If I can however be of any use to my dear nieces I shall be very happy to do every thing in my power to oblige them.

—Now my Dear brother I must speak on the subject of my departure which cannot take place until the rising of the river and very likely not before the latter end of October. You are kind enough to let me draw on you for the money necessary for that purpose and I have spoken about it to Mr. Owen<sup>19</sup> who has been telling me that in about a fortnight or three weeks he will have to remit a large sum to the house of Joshua Longstreth.<sup>20</sup> and promises to let me have a hundred dollars out of it, for which I shall have to give him a [word missing] draught upon you at three days notice according to [word missing] own desire. I hope it will put you to no inconvenience especially as you know it three weeks beforehand.

I feel quite happy when I think of the pleasures of seeing you all again. It will be my duty to do what I can for our dear mother. She need not put herself in the least out of the way for me, every thing will appear delightful after Harmony. The only idea of being with my own relations who all interest themselves in my welfare will be sufficient to make me happy. It is high time for me to finish. I have only room enough to beg you to give my best love to all my sisters, and to Joseph Warner<sup>21</sup> who has written to me a very kind letter. I have not time to answer it at present but shall certainly write to him very soon. —God bless you all is the sincere wish of your affectionate sister.

18. Francis Joseph Neef, one of New Harmony's Pestalozzian teachers, who with William Maclure's help, had established the first Pestalozzian school in the United States.

19. Robert Owen, the philanthropist whose fortune had established New Harmony.

20. Hannah's sister Sarah married Samuel Longstreth; Joshua was his brother.

21. Warner is Hannah Fisher Price's sister Lydia's brother-in-law, who lives in Philadelphia.

*The Letters of Hannah Fisher Price**1. March 10, 1826 (New Harmony) to Joseph Warner*

It is so long since I had a pen in my hand I hardly know how to use it. Last evening while sitting in the Hall, Phillip [sic] handed me thy letter. Judge of my joy and surprise on seeing thy well known hand once more, as I had almost despaired of ever hearing from any of you again. It is very true, that I have not deserved thy usual attention, having been so very negligent. If any one had have told me that I should have been three months from home without writing I would not have believed them, yet such has been the case, not that I had nothing to say, not that I did not think of you, not that I did not dream of you, nor was it that I had not time. But I was waiting every week in hopes that I should be able to give you some satisfactory information respecting our proceedings at this place.

Altho [sic] we were a long time getting here, yet it does not seem as if I were more than 40 miles from Phi'a [sic]. We traveled so rapid to Pittsburgh and were so soon fast in the ice, and remained one month at Safe Harbour. Afterward we got on so fast to Cin'tt [sic] and there saw such beautiful steam boats, that it appeared to me that to return home would be a mere nothing—Cin'tt is beautifully situated and appears to be a thriving town. Twenty steamboats were built there last summer; they are the finest boats I have ever seen in any place that I have been. They reminded me of the pleasure barges seen in pictures from China, their lightness and elegant movements on the Ohio appear like enchantment. After travelling hundreds of miles surrounded by mountains and forests, I seemed at a loss to imagine where these beautiful boats could have come from. I am told that there are 120 on the Ohio river, We often passed 6 or 8 in a day.

The scenery for many hundred of miles down the river is one chain of mountains covered with lofty trees. During our pilgrimage in the Ice the mountains were covered with snow, and we frequently during the moonlight nights went out sliding or skating on the river. I was constantly reminded of the Esquimoux [sic] living as we did in a boat fast in the ice, and covered as it was with snow and ice. The first few days I thought it would be impossible to live from day to day in such a situation, but such is the force of habit that we became very comfortable, and I think I never laughed more in so short a time in my life.

The gentlemen kept us supplied with wood and we had two stoves well filled with it. The gentlemen went every day hunting; indeed sometimes we joined in the chase. The mountains being covered with snow, the deer came to the river side to seek refuge from

their pursuers. There was guns fired on all sides by our own party as well as others; I should have written my journal but I really could not. It was out of the question. I often very often wanted to relate some little droll event that I thought would interest thee as well as many others of my friends, but I could not, crowded as we were together in a small keel boat: *it was impossible*.

After living in so small a place so well warmed that, on landing at Mount Vernon I was almost frozen, it being extreme cold and in the western country they never think of closing a door. We had a comfortable ride from there in a waggon [sic] well filled with beds so that we were quite warm altho the glass was below zero. We found Mr. Owen and Helen had arrived ten days before us. I had suffered anxiety on her account, but was relieved by her appearance as she looked so well in good spirits, and said she enjoyed her journey very much.

I must write close now, as I have said nothing of this place. We found things here in a very confused state and much time has been spent in legislating. Mr Owen wished the people to govern themselves but after having spent some weeks in which little else was done but going to the church to make fine speeches, to no purpose—they reminded me of our quarterly meetings—the personalities being so pointed and so unfriendly that Mr. Owen and the chairman sometimes found it difficult to keep order. He would often rise up and say *kindness* my friends, *kindness* is the principle. They all joined the constitution and not being willing to comply, the Aristocratic party withdrew their names from the constitution and were going to form a community of their own, but Mr. Owen refused to assist them unless they united again. It was then proposed that Mr. Owen should take charge of the whole community for the term of one year, and these persons should be chosen to take account of the stock and value the property and the community should have it at their valuation. We are now waiting the issue of this determination.

At present we are not situated at all comfortable, Helen not so much so as myself. The town is so crowded, and the buildings not made the most commodious, that we suffer many inconveniences that might be avoided were proper buildings made ready for our reception. We sometimes get quite out of heart, particularly Helen who has not been comfortably fixed since her arrival here. She sometimes speaks of returning to Ph'a—I wish her to remain a few weeks, in order that we may see the result of the last measure.

I know that it is impossible all at once to effect a perfect change in the habits and manners of such a number as are here assembled, people from all points of the Compass. If the number were smaller

an more congenial I think it would be more easily effected. It is true that as we are all of different habits and manners we are perhaps better calculated to amalgamate than if the whole were in one fixed habit. It would then be difficult to draw us out of that fixedness, but I fear that the number here is too large ever to settle down altho' Mr. Owen is as sanguine as ever and says constantly that all is as it should be.

I acknowledge the theory is beautiful but I sometime fear for the practice, altho' I have already seen what might be effected by combined labour. We visited Economy and I was convinced that united efforts could produce wonders,—18 months where a beautiful town now stands, was a wilderness—this place is a standing monument of what might be done. The orchards here are beautiful, peaches and apples and plums together with many other improvements. How they, the Germans<sup>22</sup> could have done so much is a matter of surprise. I dare say much may be done by us when we shall have confidence in one another, but at present we have not.

Since legislation has been done away with, we repair to the Hall every night, where we converse, read, dance or sing, walk up and down. In a few weeks lectures will be delivered on different sciences and instruction to youth will be given in natural history. The young people of both sexes are very happy; Sally Turner is as gay as a lark. There are many youth of both sexes that are very happy in the variety of each other. Philip Price is engaged to be married to a very nice girl. Tell Mrs. Turner I shall not answer for Sally surrounded as she is by circumstances the most favourable to the community system. I find she is a favourite here; she is so happy. She is always laughing. . . . Sally would give me a good reprimand for this if she knew I had joked about her. I don't think that there is a happier person in Harmony than Sally. She pleases all parties.

Thee must excuse my writing on this half sheet, I was down on the last page of the first sheet, before I knew it, and have not half said all I want to yet. . . . I think the Crisis is passed. I am sure that things will either mend here, or that we shall separate, but the minds of the people are more disposed to separate than I have seen them since I came here. Thy saying it would take a few weeks to come here is very true. The journey is nothing; think nothing of it. . . .

In a year or two there will be something worth seeing here, as I

22. The Rappites under the leadership of George Rapp bought land in southwestern Indiana where they created "Harmonie" in 1814-15. Rapp sold Harmonie to Robert Owen in 1824, reputedly because of the bad weather and mosquitoes in the southwestern Indiana region. The Rappites then moved back to Pennsylvania and settled at Economy, not far from their original settlement.

never calculated remaining more than two years, I hope in that time it will be proved whether or no the system will be practicable and so that is all I want to see if it is. I will most likely return to the eastern states, so don't give up the idea of visiting. I will keep thee advised of every thing as we have no secrets here. Thee shall hear all things from me. It would be foolish to omit writing anything. It is like all experiments must be proved by demonstration alone.

Esther Speakman<sup>23</sup> has just called and returned thy kind remembrance. I must now finish as I must send this to the office. I wish thee to remember that our letters are all free. They are charged to the community so that it will not take all one can make in a week to pay for one of thy letters as thee once told me it would. Helen, Sally and the Dr. join me in remembrance to all our respective friends as is named. It is not in the New System to offer apologies or I would for this poor scawl as I have not had a pen in my hands for months, and I have Carry<sup>24</sup> to nurse while I am writing. That is why it is so crooked. Farewell.

Give my love to Mama, Lydia, and Sally.<sup>25</sup> I shall write them very soon. Tell Mama I constantly remind Sally<sup>26</sup> of her Grandmama and she says Naddy, Rossy and Sally Warner<sup>27</sup> so that I know she remembers them. Do not forget to give my love to friend William Anuty (?) Hutchinson.

2. *May 3, 1826 to Joseph Warner from New Harmony*<sup>28</sup>

I little thought when I received thy last letter that the next would be the quitting of sorrow. What an agonizing scene awaits my beloved sister. I would write to her, but also I am too much overwhelmed myself to offer her any consolation. It was only last evening that I was made acquainted with the painful truth that I have another widowed sister. A week ago a gentleman of this place returned from New Orleans, and brought with him a letter from Mr. Eadon. Dr.

23. The wife of John Speakman, a druggist from Philadelphia. The families knew each other in Philadelphia and became enamored of Robert Owen's system when he lectured there.

24. Baby Caroline was born on July 15, 1825.

25. Lydia and Sally (Sarah) are Hannah's two older sisters.

26. This Sally refers to Hannah's young daughter, born December 13, 1823.

27. Sally Warner is Hannah's niece, her sister Lydia's daughter, born January 10, 1821. Perhaps Rossy refers to Hannah's nephew Redwood Fisher Warner, Sally's older brother, born September 29, 1818.

28. Samuel Longstreth, Hannah's brother-in-law, has just died in New Orleans. He leaves his wife Sarah and seven children, ages one through fourteen.

Price had left here, that morning, on business to Mount Vernon. Helen had heard that there was a letter for the Dr. and went to get it, but the gentleman refused to give it [sic] her, saying he had promised Mr. Eadon not to give it to any one but the Dr. She told me, and I concluded it was on business. The Dr. returned late that evening and I informed him of this letter, and he immediately went to get it. On his return, I questioned him closely about the contents of it. He said, thoughtfully, the gentleman had retired. I then, felt no suspicion. The next day he said it was on business. I knew Samuel had often written lately on business to the Dr. and I still made no other questions. We had received a letter from him previously to his going to New Orleans, with some instructions to the Dr. respecting his business. He then expressed some doubts whether he would go or not, and gave us some expectations of returning by us and giving us another visit, My heart gladdened at the idea of again seeing him.

Previous to receiving this letter, I had written him to New Orleans, so that we did not know for certain whether he had gone or not until I received Sally's letter by Mrs. Applegarth. —Last evening Helen entered my room with tears in her eyes, I asked, if she had heard anything from home. She said, yes. Judge of my anguish when she imparted the painful bidding, that my beloved Brother was ill at New Orleans. She begged me to prepare my mind. . . . She had previously asked the Dr. why he had concealed it from me so long. He said he had not the courage to tell me. I had noticed something prayed on his mind, but thought that things had not gone as well out of doors as he wished. Little did I think what an affliction awaited me.

Were I within reach of home, where I could mingle my ears with poor dear Sally, I might then feel some little consolation; Dear Lydia can feel for her, her grief must be again renewed, in this painful scene. Tomorrow the Dr. says that the awful tidings will have reached Ph'a. What a day. I shall pass in the reflection of the trouble that you will all be involved in. I shall pass many a sleepless night until I hear from Thee. Be pleased to inform me how our dear Sally supports her affliction. She has sweet children to offer her consolation. Hetty and Sally I am sure will afford her the greatest.<sup>29</sup> I have no doubt but Fisher will also prove a blessing; he was always a thoughtful child<sup>30</sup>—6 weeks ago, our dear Samuel paid us a visit. He

29. Hetty and Sally probably refer to Sally's oldest children, Sarah Redwood Longstreth, born December 9, 1814, and Helen Longstreth, born December 4, 1816.

30. Fisher probably refers to Sarah's oldest boy, Miers Fisher Longstreth, born March 15, 1819.

was cheerful and spoke of home as the only pleasure in life, showed all Sally's letters to me, and said repeatedly to me, How good she is to write me so often. He seemed quite well then. I urged him to take care of himself. He promised me he would. These repeated strokes destroy our energies and render us for a time incapable of any active duty, but I hope time will enable us to look back with pleasure on the happy hours we have all enjoyed in the society of a virtuous and excellent friend.

I need not recommend my dear sister to Thy protection. Thy kindness is too well known to me, to doubt, that every attention will be paid. Give my mass affection sympathies to her. Say when I become more composed, I will. At present I am not sufficiently so to offer her any comfort. I need all that my friends here are able to afford me. I never closed my eyes last night. It is only this morning that I have found any relief; it is only this morning that tears have come to my relief; situated as I am a thousand miles from you all and knowing the time that must intervene before I shall again see any of you, being that one prop after another is taken from us, our poor mother must feel stripped.

The Dr. has assured me that as soon as he can find it fit he will return with me, and do all that he can to afford a solace to my mother and sisters, He will do all in his power in attending to the business in this country. He has instructions that he will take a pleasure in fulfilling respecting some debts that are owing in this country, I expect he will write by the return of Post. Helen will also I think. She feels keenly in this our affliction. Until this, she was getting quite happy—she is now living with Mr. Neefe's [sic] family and is quite pleased with her new occupation. She is a most accomplished creature quite competent to teach almost any branch of learning. She is universally beloved by every body here. Mr. Neefe [sic] is quite glad to find so competent a female teacher in this place.

Two days later

As respect [sic] this place I can only say that I am sure the schools will go on nicely, They are doing everything to promote the welfare of the children, I am confident the children will be well instructed, habits of industry will be formed together with all the useful and scientific instruction. The time of most of the heads of this establishment has been occupied in making improvements, in everything connected with the schools, This is the principle inducement I have for remaining here.

I feel so anxious to be with you all at home that I cannot persuade myself that I am permanently fixed here. I am also persuaded that a community upon a small scale with a few competent persons at the

head would be a most excellent thing. The advantages for training children could not be so easily effected in any other way. I sometimes feel a hope that I may see a modified community after this plan, established near Ph'a. Whenever there is an opening of this kind I am confident the Dr. will return. He is gaining experience every day here, The advantages of united labour is so evident here that notwithstanding all the counter actions we have had to contend with, the benefit resulting from cooperation is visible to every one that visits this place. I would willingly give the details of everything that is going on in the various departments, but my mind is not in a situation to make such an effort. It dwells too much on the affliction that you are all involved in at home, for me to think of any thing else, and were it prudent that I should return, husband, nor children, rivers or mountains, would not keep me here. I would return, but alas, it is not in my power to offer any relief, but if the united efforts of my husband could in any way afford you any relief or consolation, I am confident he would with pleasure do anything that would lessen in any degree the painful situation that my mother and sisters are now placed in.

It appears to me that the Dr. would be useful in attending to any business that may be left unattended in this country. I have heard him say that he would do anything that you would think best that lay in his power to do. He is aware that much of the weight of business will necessarily rest upon Thee, that Samuel was so faithful in attending to, I allude to the unsettled business of which Samuel had the care of.—

With a heart overflowing with love to you all I remain thy Affectionate friend H. F. Price.

I am aware that Thy industry and interestedness will enable Thee to do much, but Thy often being called from home, and having the care of several troublesome and difficult pieces of business, leads me to think the Dr. might be useful—He has been so much with Samuel since his return from Europe that I have thought he could be the only person that could so well assist Thee, Jabez<sup>31</sup> being away, be kind enough to write me Thy candid opinion. We could join a community if there any going on near Ph'a or the Dr. could engage in practice. I have written thus that if any thing may occur, Thee may inform us of it. The Dr. has been very thoughtful and anxious, ever since we heard of this event, be pleased to write me very soon.

I shall write to sister Sally as soon as I can feel able to do so. As yet I find it would add to her grief.

31. Jabez is Hannah's youngest brother, born April 30, 1801.

3. *December 8, 1826 to Joseph Warner from Cincinnati*<sup>32</sup>

. . . I am now very pleasantly situated in a very large boarding house. There are some very interesting genteel women or rather families I should say, all from Boston or New York. Each family occupy two rooms . . . I could not be more comfortable. Accustomed as I have been the last few years to strangers, I soon mingle in with them, but they are so amiable and so different from the society I have lately been obliged to submit with, there seems nothing here but good feeling. They show every disposition here to take the Dr. by the hand. . . .

Tell Helen he [William Price] is quite cured of communities so that I do not regret the last years pilgrimage in the least. P.S. My hands are so stiff that I can scarcely feel my pen. I worked so hard at Harmony.

32. I quote only the parts about New Harmony.