

Communal Societies

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The Board of Directors of the Communal Studies Association (formerly the National Historic Communal Societies Association) has authorized the publication of *Communal Societies* to provide an outlet for manuscripts representing original research and analysis of historic and current communal groups. The widest range of academic disciplines shall be represented. Authors should write articles that will effectively transmit information across disciplines.

MANUSCRIPT SUBMISSION

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Address manuscripts and editorial correspondence to Professor Michael Barkun, Editor, *Communal Societies*, Department of Political Science, Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY 13244-1090. Books for review should be addressed to Dr. James H. Sweetland, School of Library and Information Science, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53201. Authors should prepare their manuscripts in accordance with guidelines in chapter two of *The Chicago Manual of Style for Authors, Editors, and Copywriters*. Authors will find Kate L. Turabian's practical typists' version of the *Chicago Manual* much more usable: *A Manual for Writers of Term Papers, Theses, and Dissertations*, 4th ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1973). Except for quotations, manuscripts must be in English, although exceptional articles in major languages will be considered. Manuscripts should be submitted in three copies, one of which must be the original (no carbons), and they must be double-spaced with an inch-and-a-half margin on all sides.

Footnotes must be numbered consecutively throughout the manuscript; double-spaced; grouped together on pages separate from the manuscript; and modeled on the examples given in the *Chicago Manual* or Turabian. Authors alone are responsible for the contents of their articles.

Articles appearing in this journal are abstracted and indexed in *Historical Abstracts*, *America: History and Life* and *Religion Index Two: Multi-Author Works*.

BUSINESS, MEMBERSHIPS, AND SUBSCRIPTIONS

Address all business correspondence, including requests for reprint permission, to Professor Donald E. Pitzer, Executive Director, Communal Studies Association, Center for Communal Studies, University of Southern Indiana, Evansville, Indiana 47712. Annual membership is \$25 regular, \$50 sustaining, \$15 student, and \$50 institutional.

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Shiloh's school building, Dexter, Oregon. Bob Huston, architect.
Courtesy of Shiloh Youth Revival Centers.

THE CONTENTS OF THIS ISSUE raise by implication an issue too infrequently addressed in communal studies—the question of the methods and theoretical perspectives appropriate to the subject.

The majority of communitarian scholarship remains historical, seeking to reconstruct the life histories of communities and their members. This remains a task of primary importance even as the body of communal histories grows. This is so for two reasons. First, the ephemeral nature of some communities, together with their occasional distaste for record-keeping, means that important cases remain obscure. In addition, scholars tend to be drawn to those communities for which records are most accessible. Yet as Bret Carroll's article on Mountain Cove demonstrates, it is possible to fill out more complete and thus more useful pictures of even the obscure and less documented instances. The same is true for Dennis Hardy's portrait of New Town, where records are fuller. Second, even those cases that have benefited from long study and where archives are abundant continue to reveal new and unsuspected aspects, as Carol Kolmerten demonstrates in her presentation of New Harmony letters.

Thus, the bulk of communal scholarship continues to be historical and is likely to remain so, given the expanding universe of cases that require excavation. There remain, however, methodologies and theoretical perspectives from other disciplines. While influential work continues to be done in, for example, social science disciplines, it remains puzzling why communal societies have not attracted more attention beyond the circle of those committed to reconstructing their life stories. For these societies have been unique social laboratories—"patent office models of society," in Arthur Bestor's telling phrase—that raise in innumerable variations some of the oldest and most

fundamental questions about human behavior: the relationship between the individual and the group, the balance between democratic and authoritarian decision-making, the limits and possibility of both individual and social transformation. Three articles in this issue examine communal societies from relatively unfamiliar perspectives—Carol Weisbrod's legal analysis, David Stewart's use of art criticism, and Lucy Jayne Kamau's application of anthropology.

These novel perspectives maintain a symbiotic relationship with the more numerous examples of historical research. On the one hand, were it not for the historical reconstructions, the data base would be insufficient to conduct research from the points of view of other disciplines. On the other hand, as other disciplines, particularly in the social sciences, turn their attention to communal societies, their emphases and conclusions are bound to affect the way in which subsequent historical narratives are constructed, by suggesting new criteria for determining what kinds of evidence are worth collecting.

Communal studies thus takes the form of a conversation among disciplines, in which each enriches the others. Hopefully, *Communal Societies* will remain a significant forum in which such conversations can be conducted.

Michael Barkun