The Communitarian Impulse

1885 - 1900

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Introduction

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The Road to Utopia

From the late 1880's through the 1890's, reformers with diverse backgrounds and differing ideas instituted a series of communitarian experiments. These experiments usually began with a group of like-minded, socially conscious people travelling to untouched, frontier areas and creating communities which embodied their vision of a better society. In 1885, for example, ex-Greenbacker Albert K. Owen with the help of Fourierist Marie Howland promoted the formation of the Credit Foncier of Sinaloa. Settled in 1886, their colony, often referred to as Topolobampo, lasted until 1895 when internal disputes finally brought about its dissolution. Topolobamo was the first of twenty-five reform communities which arose during the next fourteen years. These communities included the Fairhope Industrial Association (1894), the Colorado Co-operative Company (1894), the Ruskin Co-operative Association (1894), the Christian Commonwealth Company (1896), the Home colony (1898), Point Loma (1898), and the Co-operative Brotherhood - Burley (1898).

Essentially, all of these communities arose out of a radical, Gilded Age intellectual heritage with its roots in pre-Civil War America. The communitarians grandfathers for the most part belonged to the artisan/farmer/shopkeeper middling class, and they inherited from them evangelical-christian attitudes and democratic-

individualistic precepts. The communitarians spoke of conspiracies against their democratic freedoms. They spoke of the evils of wage slavery, monopolies, foreign interference, middle-men, and money lords. They spoke in apocalyptic terms of the coming downfall of American society. A sense of crisis prevailed, and many concerned Americans needed to act when faced with the evils of industrializing America. One reformer wrote, "the present social and economic order is doomed."

For a few Gilded Age reformers, utopian experiments offerred an avenue of escape from the doomed society and a way to still promote change. Many reformers knew the histories of the eighteenth century Shaker communities and the ante-bellum Owenite and Fourierite colonies. When they discovered that traditional means of reform like third party movements no longer remained an alternative, they quickly embraced the until then dormant idea of an intentional community. A community offered not only a practical way to achieve their aims, but in fact the only way to achieve their goals. By building colonies on virgin land, reformers could start with a clean slate, setting their little utopias apart as models of a better society -- a city on a hill. In short, colonies satisfied a need for activism to combat social ills.

Usually these colonies derived their inspiration from one or two strong leaders. Although the Fairhope Industrial Association contained noted reformers such as James Bellangee and later Marie Howland, it was essentially the brainchild of Ernest B. Gaston. An Iowa Populist and supporter of the Single-tax, Gaston had attempted to form a utopian community, the National Co-operative Company, in

1890, but failed. Three years later Gaston tried again. He incorporated his ideas into an essay titled "True Co-operative Individualism, advertised the Fairhope idea, corresponded with prospective members, and became one of the initial settlers. In fact, nearly all of these late nineteenth entury experiments, like Fairhope came into existence through the efforts of a single man or woman who wanted to put their theories to the test.

The communitarians began their utopian ventures with a large amount of optimism, projecting an idealistic future in their proposed colonies. They would pioneer the land and build a community where harmony and brotherhood not anarchy and hate prevailed. But in nearly all cases their initial idealism wore off as the problems of pioneering and instituting their theoretical plans began to grow. Essentially, these communities were a paradox in the Gilded Age. As the city on the hill, a utopian colony supposedly acted as a model to be imitated. For example, the Co-operative Brotherhood at Burley, founded in 1898, purposed to be a model for other communities to emulate until eventually an entire state could be won over to socialist ideas. Yet, the Burley colony also existed as an escape for its members from a society that would soon collapse. These two purposes conflicted, creating situations where life in the community could not match the ideals of its founders. Factors such as the hardships of frontier life, a lack of adequate funding, hostility from neighboring communities, and internal squabbles eventually brought about the dissolution of utopian communities such as Burley. Indeed the average life-span of a utopian colony was only four-and-a-half years.

By the end of the first decade of the twentieth century the communitarian movement had almost ended. The colonies of the 1890's which were begun with such high hopes found little receptivity for their ideas outside their communities. Yet, the story of the communitarian movement is important. Up till now the Gilded Age colonies have mostly been studied as individual entities, and for the most part these studies offer only a narrative history of colony events. Yet, for many reasons the colonies should be considered together. Sharing a similar radical ideology, adopting similar tactics, and constantly communicating with each other, the utopian communities were in a sense united, posessing the common goal of an equitable society. By examining three of the utopian colonies, Topolobampo, Fairhope, and Burley, I hope to show the intellectual dynamics of this communitarian movement -- its creation, existence, and downfall. Moreover, I hope to place the communitarian movement in the context of the Gilded Age. Where did their ideas come from? And, what influences acted upon them? Above all, the communitarian movement needs to be seen for what it is: a living part of our cultural heritage.

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The Radical Ideology

Americans have generally assumed that economic growth would create greater material wealth for everyone. Yet during many periods in American history, this assumption has proven false. Certainly during the Gilded Age, many Americans faced a growing discrepancy between American life as it existed and Amerian life as many thought it should be. America during the last decades of the nineteenth century was a society in transition -- changing from a decentralized, agricultural society to a centralized, industrial one. Yet, while the socio-economic system began its rapid transformation during and after the Civil War, many Americans still retained the values of the pre-war culture. These values shaped the way Americans reacted to their industrializing culture and essentially provided the impetus to the reform efforts of the Gilded Age.

In his book Alternative America, John L. Thomas outlines the essential characteristics of the Gilded Age reformer's "world view." Thomas believes that two pre-Civil War intellectual trends, the Jeffersonian/Republican ideology and Evangelicalism, had the greatest effect on the post-war reformist outlook. He writes:

> the sons possessed a double inheritance: an original faith in the virtuous republic drawn from secular demonstrations of the Enlightenment; and a more recent commitment to the sacred that called Americans to their task of building the blessed community.[1]

Before the Civil War this "double inheritance" posed few serious

dilemnas for the middling Americans -- farmers, artisans, and proprietors who constituted the bulk of the population.[2] After the war, however, the nation appeared less and less like the virtuous republic as industrialization changed social and economic forms. The Evangelical heritage could not sanction inaction in the face of the increasingly non-republican, socio-economic system, and a search for alternatives began. How did these concerned, christian, middle class Americans who became Gilded Age reformers view their new world, and how, then did they act?

In the Omaha platform of the People's Party (1892), Ignatius Donnelly outlined the conditions which necessitated cooperation on the part of reformers. These conditions included corruption, demoralization, business prostration, monetary deflation, impoverishment, concentration of land, and obstruction to labor organization. Donnelly then concluded, "a vast conspiracy against mankind has been organized ... and it is rapidly taking possession of the world."[3] For Donnelly and many others, the American system had become problematic, a sense of crisis prevailed, and men such as Donnelly sought to enact change by participating in a series of reform efforts.

Many of the changes in American society which Donnelly and others found problematic began during the Civil War. Up to that time economic prosperity appeared to complement individual freedom, but that state of affairs quickly began to change. During the 1860's and early 70's the government issued large quantities of greenbacks which served to finance the war and later the postwar

debt. This increased money supply spurred industrial growth by keeping a lid on interest rates and proved beneficial to farmers by pushing up commodities prices. To the banking community and politicians, however, the issuance of greenbacks appeared irresponsible, even dishonorable. Therefore, during the seventies Congress imposed a series of restrictions on the number of greenbacks issued. This trend culminated in the 1879 Resumption Act which put the nation's monetary system back on the gold standard at a time when industrial growth demanded an expanding currency.[4]

From 1870 to 1896 the restricted money supply helped to create an economic system which tended toward greater and more visible social inequality in American life. Farmers who sold their crops on the glutted international market faced falling prices for their crops as well as monetary deflation. Wheat that cost a dollar per bushel in 1870 brought only eighty cents in 1880 and decreased to sixty cents in 1890. Meanwhile, despite a slight reduction in freight rates, the cost for transportation remained an intolerable burden on farmers who at the same time were encountering lower prices for their crops. A growing resentment towards "railroad

[1]John L. Thomas, Alternative America, (Cambridge, Massachussetts and London: Belknap Press, 1983), p. 35.

[2]Reform efforts before the Civil War were closely tied to American perceptions of their republic and the revitalization of liberal activism during the Second Great Awakening. Prewar reform efforts included the Abolitionist and Temperance movements -- movements whose ramifications echoed through the Gilded Age and into the Twentieth century.

[3]Omaha Platform of the People's Party, in The Populist Mind, (Indianapolis, New York: The Bobbs-Merril Company, 1967).

[4]Laurence Goodwyn, The Populist Moment, (Oxford University Press, 1978, pp. 11-14.

monopolies" grew in towns that had a few years earlier welcomed the railroads with open arms. Borrowing money spelled doom for many small merchants and farmers because interest rates skyrocketed as money became less and less available particularly in the South and West.[5] Along with this general downward economic trend for many farmers, poverty in the city increased as immigrants and farmers swelled the ranks of the industrial work force. This huge supply of labor, cyclically augmented by the periodic recessions which rocked the nation, kept wages below a minimum standard of decency for large numbers of workers.

Henry George accurately assessed the crisis of the Gilded Age when he noted that economic progress does not improve conditions for the bulk of ordinary people, but actually leads to poverty.[6] As industrialization progressed, more and more Americans, like George, noted this growing inequality in American life. Albert K. Owen, Greenbacker and founder of the Topolobampo community, wrote in 1885:

> All the privileges, all the offices, all the emoluments, all the honors, all the luxuries [go] to the cunning, to the designing, to the insignificant tricksters and middlemen; all the burdens, all the taxes, all the dishonors, all the disadvantages [go] to the producing, to the unincorporated people.[7]

Once men such as Owen and George recognized the inequality inherent in the economic system, their world view -- rooted in Evangelical

[5]Goodwyn, pp. 69-70.

[6]Henry George, Significant Paragraphs from Progress and Poverty, with an introoduction by John Dewey, (New York: Robert Schalkenbach Foundation, 1928), pp. 9, 10.

[7]Albert K. Owen, Integral Co-operation, (New York: John W. Lovell Company, 1885), p. 8.

and Jeffersonian attitudes -- demanded that they search for ways to change it.

Initially, nearly all would-be reformers turned to the political process the traditional way to achieve change. During the Gilded Age, however, neither the Republican nor the Democratic parties provided an agenda for reform that addressed the social problems many Americans perceived. In The Populist Moment, Laurence Goodwyn writes, "sectional, religious, and racial loyalties and prejudices were used to organize the nation's two major parties into vast coalitions that ignored the economic interests of millions."[8] Since the Civil War the Republican coalition had evolved into a narrower business-oriented party based in the north and supported by Union sentiment and Protestant denominations. Meanwhile, the New South Redeemers had asserted control of the Democratic party by rhapsodizing the Lost cause and emphasizing White Supremacy. Both the Republicans and Democrats, then, were crucially tied to business elites, and neither, therefore, had much interest in radical economic reform.

Lacking an outlet for their reform impulse in traditional political activism, reformers through the 80's and 90's began to denounce the unresponsive system: "day by day people see their liberties slipping from their grasp ... the wealth that was their passing by adroit political maneuvers into the hands of the oppressors .... the government of the country has become an instrument of oppression in the hands of a ruling class."[9] Clearly,

[8]Goodwyn, p. 4.

if both the government and political process were corrupt, reformers had to act initially outside the system: they had to form third party, reform movements.

From 1867 to 1896 a series of third parties attempted to gain power. Beginning with the National Labor Union in the early 1870's and proceeding through the Greenback party, the Union Labor party, and finally the People's party, the Gilded Age third party movements united men and women disillusioned with governmental processes. The National Labor Union and the Greenback party criticized primarily the monetary system.[10] Yet, according to Charles McArthur Destler, Greenbackism also embodied the eastern radical idea of a cooperative economy. This second strand in the reformers intellectual heritage involved the moral efficacy of workshop cooperation where the individual, allied with his co-workers, could accrue the full benefits of his or her labor.[11] In the Greenback movement, then, one first sees the appearance of a radical, collectivist ideology in the context of a native reform movement. Furthermore, these Greenback ideas persisted through the 1880's, briefly reawakening in the Union Labor platform of 1888, and emerging again with the Populist revolt revolt in the 1890's. Yet despite the persistence of their theories, all these early third party attempts, the National Labor Union, the Greenback party, and the Union Labor party were doomed to failure because they attempted a political impossibility. Each party tried to form a nationwide coalition based on recognition of economic hardship when in reality the two-

[9] The Railway Times, 1 July 1896.

party system kept the agenda tied to sectional/religious/racial issues.

The third parties of the 1870's and 1880's served an important purpose in the Gilded Age, providing an awareness of a radical reform ideology which had roots in prewar America. Yet, another group of movements -- more radical, yet still native American in nature -- also contributed to this growing reform ideology. During the 1870's and 1880's Socialist ideas from Europe filtered into the arena of American reform. These socialist ideas gained a wide hearing primarily through the writings of three authors: Henry George, Laurence Gronlund, and Edward Bellamy.

Although Henry George's book, Progress and Poverty (1879), remained within the teachings of classical liberal economics and although his primary aim was to restore the harmony of the capitalist economy, he nonetheless adopted elements of the socialist critique. For example, George argued that the land should be commonly owned to avoid the monopolization of natural opportunities. Yet, this socialization, according to George, should not extend to the industrial sphere where he believed in outright competition.[12] Adhering much more closely to socialist theory than George, Laurence Gronlund's book Co-operative Commonwealth essentially transplanted the ideas of German socialism to the American scene. Importantly,

[10]The National Labor Union and the Greenback party derived their monetary ideas primarily from the writings of Edward Kellogg in the early 1840's. See, Charles McArthur Destler, American Radicalism, 1865-1901, (New London: Connecticuit College Press, 1946), pp. 50-77. And, Goodwyn, pp. 13, 14.

[11]Destler, p. 7.

Gronlund rejected the Marxian class-struggle thesis because, in his view, America never possessed a class system. When it was first published, Gronlund's book was not widely read. Only after the arrival of Edward Bellamy's Looking Backwards (1888) did people take note of Gronlund's work as a predecessor of and an influence on Bellamy's work. Like Gronlund, Bellamy rejected the idea of class-struggle in his utopia, and instead argued that an evolution of economic forms would occurr. The competitive system would disappear, according to Bellamy, and the economy would become "a single syndicate representing the people, to be conducted in the common interest for the common profit."[13]

Despite the European influence discernible in the works of George, Gronlund, and Bellamy, their ideas arose from essentially the same intellectual heritage -- artisanal/Evangelical/-Jeffersonian -- that gave birth to the Gilded Age third parties. In fact, after the publication of their works, different reform efforts embodying their ideas emerged and intertwined with each other and with the third party movements. Included among these was Henry George's Single Tax Movement which desired equity through a single tax on land. Nationalist clubs, inspired by Bellamy's novel, became popular with middle class intellectuals. Through 1890 and 1891, the Nationalists sought to educate Americans and thereby hasten the coming social evolution. In the mid-1880's the Knights of Labor built on the radical, native reform ideas to create a loosely

[12]Henry George, Progress and Poverty, (New York: Walter J. Black, 1942, 1879), p. 213.

[13]Edward Bellamy, Looking Backwards, (New York: The Modern Library (Random House), 1982, 1888), p. 38.

organized, nationwide union of workers and their agricultural allies. And finally, a Christian Socialist movement led by W. D. P. Bliss merged the ideas of the social gospel with other socialist concepts hoping to remake America into the Christian Commonwealth. It is important to note, however, that these psuedo-socialist movements differed from other reform efforts such as the Socialist Labor Party and the International Workingman's Association in that Single-taxers, Nationalists, Knights, and Christian Socialists avoided the class-conscious Marxian and European theories. By 1890 a radical, but definitely American, ideology had developed which combined prewar democratic precepts, inflationist monetary theory, and various cooperative and socialist techniques, with a reform impulse derived from a middle class, christian heritage. All of these ideas flowed into and around the various movements and third parties of the 70's and 80's until they finally pooled into the Populist revolt.

Originating in Texas in the 1880's, Populism began as a movement to organize farmers into local alliances and to build purchasing cooperatives. In order to finance the alliance cooperatives, organizer Charles Macune drew from Greenback monetary theory and proposed a treasury note plan. According to Macune, Alliance members would generate capital by circulating notes among themselves and using them to buy from cooperative stores.

During the Spring of 1890 members of the Texas Alliance travelled throughout the South and West trying to arouse support for Macune's plan. Yet to achieve Macune's goal of a cooperative, equitable monetary system, many believed that the Alliance would

have to enter the political arena. During 1890 momentum grew among Alliance members and many reformers from the midwest for the institution of yet another third party. And, in June of 1891 at the union convention Cincinatti, proponents of Alliance ideas created the People's party as their avenue for reform.

Through 1891 and early 1892, the Populist movement gained headway as more and more reform blocs pledged their allegiance. The Knights of Labor, under the leadership of Terence V. Powderly, adopted Macune's ideas and pledged organizational support. The Nationalist movement dissolved into Populism during late 1891 and 92. And, many Single-taxers found no conflict between support of Populism and adherence to George's theory. By the 1892 Omaha convention, a wide variety of groups had joined: there were,

> all shades of reform thought -- Greenbackers, Allianceists, Knights of Labor, Trades unionists, Single-taxers, Nationalists, Socialists, and Individualists ... pervaded by a spirit of harmony and unity of purpose that are surprising.[14]

Indeed, a movement that began as traditional agrarian protest in the mold of the Grange movement quickly assumed a larger and more radical purpose.

Essentially, two reformist trends can be discerned in the Populist movement. On the one hand, from 1891 to 1893 the radicals gained ground in the movement and advocated collectivist solutions to the farmers and workers problems, including the national ownership of the railroads.[15] Those who advocated this view came

[14] Farmers Tribune, 13 July 1892.

from the socialist movements, from the more radical wings of earlier reform efforts, and from the Alliance members themselves. Men such as the Knights of Labor leader Powderly, muckraker Henry Demarest Lloyd, socialist Laurence Gronlund, American Railway Union leader Eugene Debs, Christian Socialist W. D. P. Bliss, and of course Alliance leader and publicist Charles Macune all constituted this significant, "radical bloc" of the Populist movement. But the second, more conservative group which feared the collective economy, shunted the movement away from the original radical ideology towards the simply inflationist free silver idea. Among these conservatives who eventually achieved fusion with the Democracy in 1896 were James B. Weaver, who had a long history of favoring fusion, and H. E. Taubeneck, the national People's Party chairman who had little understanding of or faith in the Omaha platform ideology.[16]

From 1893 to 1896 the idea of free silver took hold of the Populist psyche, and much of the original radical optimism began to dissipate. Robert Wiebe in his book, The Search for Order, suggests that after the movement became politicized in 1892, "that confident feeling of the whole countryside marching in unison was lost."[17] A Single-taxer and a later participant in the Fairhope colony, James Bellangee left his post as State Secretary of the Iowa People's Party in late 1893. Founder of the Ruskin colony Julius Wayland, an ardent Populist in Colorado, also quit his agitation after the 1892

[15]Destler, p. 30.

[16]During the Greenback effort in Iowa in the early 1880's, Weaver promoted fusion with Democrats and thereby won election to Congress in 1884 and 1886; see Herman Clarence Nixon, "The Populist Moment in Iowa," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, January 1926, p. 25. Goodwyn, pp. 240, 241.

election and returned home to Greensburg, Indiana. The Railway Times, official paper of the American Railway Union, found that it could not support the Populist ideas as they emerged from the 1896 convention. They stated, "we do not regard the free silver issue of great importance," and suggested that the election of Bryan would do little to bring about the Co-operative Commonwealth.[18] In short, many radicals after 1892 felt dissatisfied with the Populist revolt as a means for reform, and they therefore searched for other alternatives.

Occurring between 1885 and 1900, the communitarian ventures can be seen as a response by reformers to the failure of reform movements such as Greenbackism and Populism. Albert K. Owen had a discouraging experience in the Pennsylvania Greenback movement and then found an outlet for his reform impulse by devising a plan for a "Pacific City" on Mexico's Topolobampo bay. Ernest B. Gaston, like his close friend James Bellangee, turned from his Populist agitation in 1893 and created a plan for a Single-tax colony, eventually located in Baldwin County, Alabama. Finally, Theosophist, Nationalist, and Socialist Cyrus Field Willard embraced the colonization plan of the Social Democracy of America after the Populist defeat in 1896 spelled doom for further political activism. Each of the communitarians thus travelled a long road in their quest to reform society. They began with a common heritage, educated

[17]Robert Wiebe, The Search for Order, 1877-1920, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), p. .

[18]The Railway Times, 1 July 1896.

themselves in reform techniques, devised a reform theory, and finally implemented their plans.

II

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The Communitarian Impulse

Communitarian experimentation during the Gilded Age arose mostly through the efforts of innovative men and women who devised the plan, pioneered the land, and later dominated the activities of the utopias they established. These men and women came from different parts of the country, adhered to different theoretical views, and participated in different reform movements. Yet, communitarians such as Albert K. Owen, Ernest B. Gaston, Marie Howland, Cyrus Willard and W. E. Copeland all shared a similar outlook on the world: they created similar colony plans and adopted similar tactics. What, then, are the backgrounds and ideas of these communitarians? And, why do they then all eventually opt for communitarian experimentation?

Dorothy Ross in her essay, "Socialism and American Liberalism: Academic Social thought in the 1880's," characterizes the background of socialist academicians in the 1880's as combining evangelicalism, liberal reformism, social idealism, and intellectual and practical ambition.[1] Ross, then, analyzes the writings of these intellectuals and the ways in which their backgrounds, influenced by Gilded Age socialist ideas, determined their world views. A similar process can be used when studying the lives of the founders of the utopian colonies. Inheriting pre-war modes of thinking nearly identical to

those of Ross's academicians, the communitarians' world view interacted with the reform ideas of the time to create their communitarian impulse.

The founder of Topolobampo, Albert K. Owen, was born in 1847 and grew up in a Quaker household in Delaware. According to Ray P. Reynolds, a historian of Topolobampo, Owen throughout his life advocated temperance, a probable result of his religious upbringing.[2] When he first conceived the idea of a utopian colony Owen wrote, "the Pacific City will be a giant church within itself. Its thoroughfares will be Gothic aisles."[3] On top of this decidedly christian outlook, Owen always possessed a sense of culture and refinement: at the age of nineteen Owen's father took him on a "grand tour" of Europe.[4] Clearly then, Owen received a christian, middle strata, educated upbringing, and this type of background would eventually determine his reform tendencies.

Communitarian Ernest Gaston's background bears a remarkable resemblance to that of Owen's. As the son of a minister, he probably received an Christian upbringing. In the late 1880's Gaston attended Drake University where he met professor E. A. Ott, a minister, a Populist supporter, and probably one of Gaston's mentors.[5] At Drake, Gaston must have had further exposure, through his contacts with Ott and others, to the

[1]Dorothy Ross, "Socialism and American Liberalism: Academic Social Thought in the 1880's," Perspectives in American History, 1977-78, p. 14.

[2]Ray P. Reynolds, Catspaw Utopia, (unpublished, 1973), pp. 2.

[3]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 16 March 1886.

[4] Reynolds, pp. 3, 6.

Christian ideas and ethics he had initially learned in childhood. By the time he graduated, Gaston had essentially become an intellectual -- well-read, able to write clearly and think critically. In the late 1880's he stayed in the vicinity of Drake University and edited a local newpaper, The Suburban Advocate. By 1890, the christian, middle-income, intellectual Gaston appeared ready to launch himself into a reform effort.

Marie Howland, who eventually became friends with both Owen and Gaston, came, unlike either of them, from a lower class background. As a young woman she worked in the factories in Lowell, Massachussetts, and much of what she later knew was self-taught. However, Marie Howland's early years cannot be considered wholly proletarian. During the 1850's she lived in the notorious New York Unitary Home where she participated in its the liberal, free-love activities while also absorbing the socialist ideas of Charles Fourier. Her education continued after her marriage to the lawyer Lyman Case in the late 50's, and she further broadened her intellectual scope during her visit to Europe with her future (second) husband, Harvard graduate Edward Howland.[6] Clearly, by 1866 when she married Edward and moved into a dream house in Hammonton, New Jersey, Marie Howland must be termed both middle class and an intellectual. Furthermore, her later writings demonstrate that at some point in her life she acquired prevalent

[5]E. A. Ott in the election of 1892 was the People's party candidate for Congress in Iowa's seventh district and in 1893 was the People's party candidate for Lieutenant governor in Iowa; see, Nixon, "Populist Moment in Iowa," pp. 61, 65, 72. Ott also became the first vice president of the Fairhope Industrial Association; see, Minutes Book, Fairhope Industrial Association, Fairhope Single Tax Colony Archives (hereafter FSTCA).

Christian, evangelical attitudes. In 1887 she wrote, "that all over the world are the signs of the 'Second Coming of Christ'... the triumph of the altruistic over the egoistic philosophy of life."[7] As her writing shows, Marie's ideas had prewar roots in evangelical, millenialist concepts. She shared a common, Christian heritage with her future reform partners Owen and Gaston.

Another communitarian who shared, with Owen, Gaston, and Howland, an educated, middle strata, Christian background was W. E. Copeland the leader of the Cooperative Brotherhood at Burley. Born in Boston, Copeland attended Harvard Divinity school and became a minister. He eventually came under the sway of Edward Bellamy and the Nationalist movement and emerged from his experiences as a Christian Socialist. He wrote in a 1902 edition of the The Co-operator, the Burley newspaper, that,

> people in general have been more deeply affected by the teachings of Jesus than even the church imagined; but coming from the infinite fountain of love [they do their] redeeming work independent of religious organizations[8]

Here, Copeland suggested that society does not need religious organizations to absorb and later pass on the teachings of Jesus. Indeed, Copeland, along with communitarians and other reformers simply "absorbed" evangelical christian ideas from their surrounding culture, and their reform efforts were essentially a moral crusade to remake America into a more christian nation.

[6]Paul M. Gaston, Women of Fair Hope, Mercer University Lamar Memorial Lectures, No. 25. (Athens, Georgia: University of Georgia Press, 1984), essay on Marie Howland.

[7]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 27 September 1887.

[8]The Co-operator, October 1902.

By the 1870's and 1880's, Owen, Gaston, Howland, and Copeland all viewed their world according to their christian/middling heritage. Yet what did this heritage truly entail? First it is important to note that the economic transformation from workshop to factory after the Civil war did not destroy the cultural imperatives surrounding the artisanal tradition. This tradition, according to John L. Thomas, embodied the idea of a "'moral economy' which persisted ... as a philosophy of true producers who formed a naturally cooperative community based on shopfloor solidarity."[9] The founders of the Burley colony related their belief in the efficacy of this "moral economy" when they wrote that "while in former times the individual worker labored on his own account, with his own tools, and was the master of his products, now hundreds of thousands of men work together in shops mines factories ... but they are not the masters of their products."[10] By the 1880's, the moral economy where the individual could control what he produced had disappeared, but the cultural ideal it represented still persisted. Combined with this artisan idea of a "moral economy" in the minds of the communitarians was an adherence to Lockeian political theory. Transmitted through Jefferson, this theory advocated a society of equals, yeoman farmers, who maintained their freedom by avoiding consolidation of governmental power. Finally, through its millenialist and perfectionist precepts, the communitarian's Evangelical heritage, which had earlier impelled the prewar Abolitionist and Temperance movements, provided the urge to reform when the communitarians confronted the many problems of the Gilded

Age.

Believeing as they did in the morality of a cooperative community and in the social vision of Jefferson, these christian radicals expressed outrage at the degeneracy of American society. Topolobampo member H. E. Garcken wrote to Gaston in 1890, "I am suffering to such an extent through the execrable labor-competitive, truly anarchical state of affairs."[11] A correspondent with The Social Democrat related this anarchical state of affairs writing "a man is cramped between the interminable dirty brick walls of a big city, bearing an existence which is not life in its true sense."[12] Confronting these conditions, condemnations of society flowed from the pens of the communitarians. Gaston saw in early 1893 the economy's "enormous waste of human energy and natural resources and its hideous injustice and cruelty."[13] Besides the economic turmoil which Gaston perceived communitarians at the Social Democracy convention in 1897 believed:

> In the light of experience we find that while all citizens are equal in theory, they are not so in fact. While all citizens have the same rights politically, this political equality is useless under the present system of economic inequality, which is essentially destructive of life, liberty and happiness.[14]

Facing a system which combined economic turmoil and political inequality, many reformers despaired. Gaston lamented, "to the one who has the true spirit of a reformer present conditions are almost unbearable."[15] All of the communitarians, raised as they were

[9]Thomas, p. 365.

[10]"Declaration of Principles of the Social Democracy," adopted at the Convention of the Social Democracy of America, 21 June 1897, in The Social Democrat, Chicago, Illinois, 1 July 1897.

according to a set of beliefs which defined American life in an almost utopian manner, suffered psychologically as they viewed the society around them. The realities of poverty, unemployment, foreclosures, and child labor acted like a fist in the face to these men and women. Yet, all of them possessed an essential self respect and an independence of thought which enabled them to take the psychological punches and still fight back.

Before communitarian reformers began to create their colonies, they first attempted to reform society through the political process. For the most part the communitarian's experience in partisan politics proved unsatisfying: the third party movements which they joined never gained extensive electoral success. Yet, it is important to note that these experiences provided Owen, Gaston and others with the elements that would later enable them to launch their communities. Through the reform movements, the communitarians established a network of contacts with other reformers. These contacts broadened their intellectual scope by providing them with innovative programs to combat the social ills. When they eventually confronted political defeat, these communitarians gained a sense of their own place in society and eventually came to grips with the

[11]H. E. Garcken to E. B. Gaston, 8 November 1890, FSTCA.

[12]The Social Democrat, Chicago, Illinois, 17 February 1897.

[13]Ernest B. Gaston, "True Cooperative Individualism," essay written in 1893, in Fairhope Courier, Battles, Alabama, 1 March 1895.

[14]"Declaration of Principles of the Social Democracy."

[15]Gaston, "True Cooperative Individualism."

fact that they lacked the outright power to enact change through established means.

Many of the men and women who initially joined the Topolobampo colony had earlier participated in both the Greenback and Knights of Labor movements.[16] Albert K. Owen in the early 1870's organized the first Greenback club in Pennsylvania and later became the Executive Secretary of the Pennsylvania Greenback Labor Party.[17] Essentially, Owen advocated Greenbackism because he needed funds to finance a railroad construction scheme. Caught up in the railroad fever of that era, Owen envisioned a transcontinental line that would stretch from Norfolk, Virginia across the South through Texas to a city on Mexico's Pacific coast. If the government issued more greenbacks, according to Owen, he would have had a better chance of acquiring the necessary funds to finance the road. Yet, in 1879 the Resumption Act, which put the nation back on the gold standard, defeated any hope that Owen might have had. The embittered visionary in a letter to a friend lashed out, "We do not have a republican form of government ... the United States has delegated its power to corporations."[18] During the next half decade, Owen futilely continued his efforts to build his railroad. He participated in the Knights of Labor, which advocated reforms nearly identical to those he supported as a Greenbacker. By the mid 80's, however, Owen had failed to achieve any of his goals with either Greenbackism or the Knights and began to search for other reform alternatives.

During his sojourn with the Greenbackers and the Knights, Owen learned different reform ideas and methods. His 1884 pamphlet, Integral Co-operation, demonstrated his awareness of many

contemporary social philosophers such as Wendell Phillips and Henry George.[19] Owen accepted the Greenback monetary and antimonopolist ideas; he called for "free money" and advocated the "use Public Utilities for the Conveniences and Revenues of the Public." Moreover, Owen adhered to the socialist idea of a cooperative economy: "Free money, unrestricted commerce and exemption from taxation ... must be attained co-operatively, not seperately; never by means of competition."[20] Thus, by participating in reform movements, Owen came in contact with and then adopted the radical ideology of the age. His grounding in the artisanal idea of a moral economy and the Jeffersonian ideal of an equitable society set the stage for his acceptance of this radical ideology, and his Christian background then accentuated his urge to reform.

Besides providing him with a set of radical ideas, Owen's experience with reform movements also put him in contact with many people who had similar outlooks and desires. One of these was Marie Howland, who Owen met in 1875. At the time, Howland supported the Grange effort in New Jersey, and yet she, like Owen, encountered few successes through that type of organization.[21] Possessing a similar cultural heritage and essentially advocating the same radical

[16]Henry C. Romaine to Albert K. Owen, in the The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 1 February 1886. See also The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 4 January 1886, 13 April 1886, 20 April 1886, 4 May 1886, 8 June 1886.

[17]Reynolds, p. 15.

[18]In Reynolds, p. 17.

[19]Owen, pp. 13, 15.

[20]Owen, pp. 10, 12.

ideology, Owen and Howland found that their different approaches to reform complemented each other. Howland believed in the virtues of Godin's Familistère, a "social palace," which she visited in France, based on the ideas of Charles Fourier. Owen, meanwhile, had a dream of building a railroad and possessed an openness to any radical social ideas which would lead to that end. Both of them, nurtured in the incubators of contemporaneous reform movements, combined their respective strengths and formulated the plan for a model community, a "Pacific City" on Topolobampo bay in Sinaloa, Mexico.

For Owen and Howland, large reform movements such as the Greenback party, the Knights of Labor, and the Grange, did not adequately satisfy their desire to enact change. Ernest B. Gaston underwent a similar experience with the Iowa Populist party. In the Spring of 1890 upset with what he termed "the savage, foolish and wasteful system of competitive industry," Gaston joined with a group of his friends and formed the Investigating Club. This club met weekly to read and discuss different theoretical works and reform ideas; it acted as a workshop to explore modes of action to achieve reform. Through this club Gaston and his friends learned the radical ideology which Owen and Howland had discovered ten years earlier. Yet unlike Owen and Howland, Gaston and his friends did not first join a reform movement. At that time, no third party existed on the national scene, and the thriving, but essentially passive, Nationalist movement could not satisfy Gaston's desire to achieve change. He and his friends decided they would, in their

[21]Gaston, Women of Fair Hope, p. 43.

words, "devise a plan to escape what they deemed the serious evils of the present system."[22]

Through the summer and autumn of 1890, Gaston thus attempted to start an intentional community, the National Co-operative Company. Yet while this initial attempt to form a colony failed, Gaston through his correspondence learned of a growing reform effort that was quickly spreading through the midwest. Communitarian H. E. Garcken wrote Gaston in December of 1890 suggesting that he "need not depend entirely upon [selling land] to join a cooperative movement." Garcken then queried, "do you approve highly of the Farmer's Alliance?"[23] Spurred on by friends such as Garcken and his associates at Drake, Gaston during the Spring of 1891 began investigating the Alliance movement and discovered that their ideas in many instances parallelled his own. Gaston's National Co-operative Company would allow noone to "monopolize the natural resources" and would ensure that each man would receive the "full product of his labor."[24] The Farmer's Alliance, meanwhile, echoed these two stances by supporting the nationalization of railroads and by advocating cooperative stores which would in effect cut out the middle-man.[25] Discovering the similarities between his own ideas and those of the Allianceists, Gaston set aside his efforts to initiate a cooperative community and in 1891 joined the burgeoning Populist revolt.

In May of 1891 Gaston travelled with an Iowa delegation led by James B. Weaver to the National Union Conference in Cincinatti. At that conference Alliance leaders from Texas and the midwest set in motion the processes that led to the formation of the People's

Party. Though Gaston still maintained his interest in communitarian reform, for the next three years he participated primarily in the Iowa Populist movement.[26] Gaston became a reporter for the Iowa Tribune, the flagship paper of the Iowa state reform press. As a reporter for the Tribune and as a close associate of prominent Populists such as James B. Weaver, presidential candidate in 1892, and James Bellangee, temporary chairman of the Omaha convention, Gaston became intimately involved with the Populist political effort in Iowa.

For the most part, however, Populism in Iowa failed. Unlike states such as Texas or Kansas which had economies more dependent on staple crops, Iowa had a diversified agricultural output. This diversification enabled Iowa to avoid the detrimental effects that the boom-bust cycle wrought in other states. Indeed, compared to states further south where Populism flourished, Iowa faced fewer commercial failures and suffered much less from the recession in 1893.[27] The relative economic prosperity in Iowa during the early 90's combined with other circumstances in the state to further proscribe the Populist effort. First, a large temperance movement existed which tended to obfuscate what the Populists considered more important issues.[28] Second, an entrenched Northern Alliance system

[22]"Bellamy's Dream," in Des Moines Daily News, Des Moines, Iowa, 19 July 1890.

[23]H. E. Garcken to E. B. Gaston, 20 December 1890, FSTCA.

[24]"Bellamy's Dream."

[25]See the "Omaha Platform of the People's Party," in Pollack.

[26]E. B. Gaston to Albert K. Owen, 31 May 1891, FSTCA.

already existed in Iowa which in effect made the Populist's Farmer's Alliance appear irrelevant. Facing the opposition of this Republican-run Northern Alliance, Populist organizers such as Gaston could not create enough grass roots support to elect their candidates. For example, in 1892 the Northern Alliance had 2400 local chapters while the Farmer's Alliance only had 460.[29] Since the electoral strength of the People's Party essentially arose from the support of farmers in the Farmer's Alliance, Gaston and his Populist friends suffered successive defeats.

Gaston summed up his frustration with the Iowa political process when he wrote in 1893,

> we who now recognize and denounce [society's] evils and are striving to unite a majority of its victims, may go before it goes -- in waiting for the slow movement of majorities.[30]

By late 1893, Gaston felt he could no longer wait for the majority to recognize the viability of the Populist reform proposals. Moreover, he must have perceived the growth of free silver sentiment, a sentiment which would obfuscate the radical proposals he supported. He therefore began to formulate a plan for another co-operative community and began to contact many who had been interested in his first effort.[31]

Neither Owen, Howland, nor Gaston could attain their visions of a better society through political reform movements. The feelings which they experienced as they encountered organizational difficulties and continual electoral defeats can perhaps best be summed up in Gaston's depiction of "those grand old heroes who have spent the larger part of a lifetime in reform work ... urging a new gospel of economic regulations only to be sneered at, jeered at and

dubbed 'old cranks' by their neighbors."[32] After the total defeat of Populism in the 1896 election, the feeling of frustration which earlier communitarians such as Gaston and Owen felt became more widespread. In 1897 leaders of the American Railway Union other Socialists such as Cyrus Field Willard, W. P. Borland, and W. E. Copeland broke away from the remnants of the People's Party and formed a new organization called the Social Democracy of America. The Social Democracy adhered to a theory which echoed almost word for word the Omaha Platform of the People's party. In a sense, the Social Democracy grew out of the gap created by the the failure of Populism, but with one important difference. Stung by the failure of Populism, the Social Democracy did not advocate political activism, but instead proposed,

> one of the states of the union ... shall be selected for the concentration of our supporters and the introduction of co-operative industry, and then gradually extending the sphere of our operations ... the National Co-operative Commonwealth shall be established.[33]

Clearly by the mid 1890's a feeling among reformers existed that the American political process no longer worked. After pinning all their hopes on the success of Populism, reformers after 1896 feared

[27]Nixon, "The Populist Moment in Iowa," p. 69.

[28]Fred E. Haynes, Third Party Movements Since the Civil War, (New York: Russell and Russell, 1916), p. 306.

[29]Nixon, p. 51.

[30]Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism."

[31]Henry Olerich mentions reading Gaston's plan--probably "True Co-operative Individualism," H. Olerich to E. B. Gaston, 3 September 1890, FSTCA. In 1893 Gaston recontacted Chase, Chowdrey, Fogarty, Hackworth, LaRue, Lucas, Olerich, Roberts, Thaanum, and Welsh, FSTCA.

to reenter the political arena. One of the few remaining alternatives, then, for a radical reform organization like the Social Democracy was to form an intentional community.

Although Owen, Gaston, and Willard turned to colonization primarily because of their discouraging experiences with political reform movements, their urge to create their own communities transcended a mere desire for reform. The communitarians possessed an intellectual makeup which differed essentially from that of other reformers. An intense practical ambition tinctured by romantic idealism determined their communitarian impulse, driving them to create something from nothing, to achieve the good life through the creation of a brand new community.

In his essay "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's," John Higham characterizes a basic desire among progressive intellectuals of the late Gilded Age. According to Higham, they emphasized, "doing things, in closing with immediate practicalities, in concentrating on techniques rather than sweeping theories."[34] Essentially, Higham's thesis holds true to an even greater degree among the communitarians. For example, an unknown correspondent of Marie Howland characterized Albert Owen as a man "who would unite in himself the functions of a theorizer and a worker combined in such a degree as to establish confidence in the minds of practical business men."[35] Four years later one of Gaston's correspondents wrote,

32Fairhope Courier, 1 January 1895.

33"Declaration of Principles of the Social Democracy," 21 June 1897.

"farmers are very poor on the prairie not understanding how they can better their portion and not willing to listen ... to any theory ... but [may] follow an example if practical success is demonstrated."[36] Gaston must have taken such advice to heart. He wrote in 1893,

> they that shall make good theories work and prove the value of proposed social solutions by practical demonstration will do far more to move the world than the wisest and most brilliant theorists.[37]

Cyrus Willard also understood the value of putting theories to work. A letter he received in 1898 envisioned his proposed colony "as an object lesson to the whole world."[38] While men such as Henry George, Edward Bellamy, or even James Weaver attempted to reform society through traditional means -- that is through literary or political efforts -- communitarians such as Owen, Gaston, and Willard rejected traditional reform methods as useless under the existing conditions. Essentially, Howland, Gaston, and Willard hoped their colonies would assume the role of a "city on a hill" which would educate others as to the benefits of their theoretical plans. Cyrus Willard suggested, "there is no use in attacking an evil in the abstract when we can do [it] so fatally in the concrete."[39] "The time has arrrived, the hour has struck," according to a reporter for The Social Democrat, "Action! Action! not talk is the present need."[40]

If the demonstration of good theories was the primary aim of communitarians, they also possessed a host of other, more personal reasons for creating their colonies. Ernest Gaston believed, "the present social and economic order is doomed," and a utopian colony "offers the only hope of escape from the deplorable conditions

everywhere present."[41] A contributor to The Co-operator also perceived a coming disaster: "we will need places of refuge from which discord has been expelled where men, women and children can dwell together in peace."[42] Clearly, communitarians believed they needed a hiding place, where they could "get under cover" and be protected from the detrimental effects of the evil society.[43]

Believing the society to be doomed the communitarians eventually pinned all their hopes on their cooperative colonies and in some respects began to idealize what colony life would be like. For example, Marie Howland received a letter from a prospective member who claimed, "The plan of our city with its beautiful shade trees will surely make a perfect Eden."[44] Similarly, a James S. Burke wrote Gaston concerning the National Co-operative Company, "I long to be away where I am not known, where I can begin life anew, these edenic hopes for their colonies some communitarians believed that the very conditions at the colony would help remake the

[34]John Higham, "The Reorientation of American Culture in the 1890's," in The Origins of Modern Consciousness, ed. by John Weiss.

[35]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 13 April 1888.

[36]F. D. Festner to E. B. Gaston, 26 August 1890, FSTCA.

[37]Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism."

[38]The Social Democrat, 22 February 1898.

[39]The Social Democrat, 26 August 1897.

[40]The Social Democrat, 23 September 1897.

[41]E. B. Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism."

[42]The Co-operator, Burley, Washington, August 1902.

[43]The Co-operator, 22 December 1900.

individual. Gaston wrote of "advantages which cannot be hoped for outside of [the colony] ... within the lifetime of a generation at least."[46] And W. P. Borland revealed to the Burley colonists:

> When you say I would be happy out there you but faintly express the matter. I would be more than happy. I would be transformed--made over into a new man with new and greater powers of feeling and expression.[47]

This idealization of community life, which one sees to some extent in all three communities, grows out of the basic premises of the communitarian impulse. If the colony is to be both an example to the outer world and a refuge from that outer world, life within the colony must approach the ideal.

The communitarian impulse thus embodied a set of contrasting desires. On the one hand, communitarians hoped their colonies would initiate a greater transformation of the larger society. But at the same time, communitarians wanted to escape from society and erect a social order which would be more beneficial to the development of the human psyche. As they created, promoted, and put into action their colony plans optimism prevailed, but the two contrasting impulses -- practicality versus idealism -- would eventually proscribe their communitarian effort.

[44]John Brown, Sr. to Albert K. Owen, Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 8 March 1886.

[45]James S. Burke to E. B. Gaston, 18 August 1890, FSTCA.

[46]E. B. Gaston "True Co-operative Individualism."

[47]W. P. Borland, letter, reprinted in the Co-operator, 19 December 1898.

III

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Starting the Colony

Historical studies of utopian communities tend to emphasize differences in personnell, origin, and location. Yet essentially, the communities shared similar goals, used similar tactics, and encountered similar difficulties. These similarities appear most prominently during the months before the actual colonizing began. All the communitarians emphasized their practical, business-like natures, and a pattern thus emerges in the steps Owen, Gaston, and Willard took to put their plans into action. The communitarians investigated the theoretical and organizational techniques of earlier colonies and incorporated what they learned into an overall plan for their proposed communities. After presenting this plan to a core of supporters, the communitarians advertised the benefits of their colony hoping in the process to raise money for land acquisition. Eventually, after usually a year of organizational work, the original settlers travelled to the colony site and began their pioneering effort.

When Owen, Gaston, and Willard first considered the idea of an intentional community, they studied the histories of other communities to discover the difficulties involved. In 1886, Albert Owen presciently wrote, "communities have failed ... because ambitious persons have crowded themselves into the front of public affairs." The "communities" Owen refers to were established before

the Civil War and include the Oneida community, Brook Farm, and the North American Phalanx.[1] But perhaps the most important inspiration for Topolobampo was Godin's Familistere located in Guise, France. During the Civil War Marie and Edward Howland had travelled to France and visited the Familistere. It left a lasting impression on the Howlands and reaffirmed their belief in the efficacy of the ideas of Charles Fourier. When Owen wrote Integral Co-operation in the early 1880's in consultation with the Howlands, he included many of the Fourierist ideas of the Familistere. It is important to note, however, that when Owen created his plan, he did not just adopt theories wholesale but instead maintained a discriminating eclecticism. For example, he wrote in March of 1886 that the members of Brook Farm were "too retired, too nice to be willing to do repulsive work."[2] Owen hoped the future members of Topolobampo would be more willing to get their hands dirty.

Although E. B. Gaston in 1890 probably knew the histories of the pre-Civil War colonies, the communitarian idea came to him from his contacts with Topolobampo and most of all from his interaction with the Kaweah Co-operative Commonwealth in Tuolomne, California. During the summer of 1890, Gaston tried to trade advertising space in his newspaper The Suburban Advocate for a ticket out to California to visit the Kaweah colony. Unable to finance the trip, Gaston still learned all he could of Kaweah and eventually copied Kaweah's organizational plan and application form for his National

[1]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 26 January 1886. John G. Drew to Albert K. Owen, Integral Co-operation, p. 76.

[2]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 30 March 1886.

Co-operative Company."[3] In early 1891 he wrote,

> I have followed with sorrow the developments of the dissensions in Kaweah. I believe its founders to be men of pure and lofty aims and I am filled with admiration at the admirable plan they have presented, but the mind capable of planning is not always capable of executing.[4]

By the autumn of 1890 Gaston had seen troubles arise in both the Kaweah and Topolobampo communities, and during that winter he began to adopt a more critical attitude towards their organizational plans. He wrote, "both enterprises have made a mistake in 'biting off more than they can chew' and in getting to far from settlements and in making the required cash payments for membership too small."[5] In a long letter to Albert Owen in June of 1891, Gaston generally praised the Topolobampo plan, but then criticized Owen's prohibition against erecting religious buildings.[6] Clearly by late 1891 Gaston had adopted a critical stance towards the methods and plans of other cooperative ventures, and his ability to think critically carried over to his Fairhope venture three years later.

When he devised his plan "True Co-operative Individualism" in 1893, Gaston kept in mind "the multitude of failures of social experiments" including Topolobampo and Kaweah. In 1898 he wrote:

> Those who organized the Fairhope association believe ... that all those who had previously attempted 'working models' of correctly organized communities failed to recognize both the fundamental principle of human rights and

[3]"Application for the National Co-operative Company," FSTCA; Robert V. Hines, California's Utopian Colonies.

[4]E. B. Gaston to Chas. Evan Holt, 12 January 1891, FSTCA.

[5]E. B. Gaston to Chas. Evan Holt, 22 December 1890, FSTCA.

[6]E. B. Gaston to Albert K. Owen, 31 May 1891, FSTCA.

> the dominant forces of human nature, and that their failure to recognize these and build their models upon them was due their discouraging record of unbroken failure.[7]

Gaston, perhaps more than any of his contemporaries, learned from the mistakes of other communities and then translated that knowledge into a viable colony plan. The Topolobampo, the Kaweah, and later the Ruskin colonists placed a large emphasis on cooperation and appeared to demand a change in human nature. But, from his study of their failures, Gaston understood the necessity for individualism in many areas and only emphasized "voluntary" cooperation when he devised the Fairhope plan.[8]

The men and women who eventually colonized the Co-operative Brotherhood in Burley, Washington possessed neither the discriminating eclecticism of Albert Owen nor the critical outlook of Ernest Gaston. Although the leaders of the colonization faction of the Social Democracy probably knew of earlier experiments they did not try to learn from those colonies' mistakes. In September of 1897 Willard wrote that he,

> wishes to hear fully from co-operative settlements, colonies, and associations of whatever form. We may learn wisdom from both failure and success. We propose to be practical and therefore ask for practical facts and suggestions.[9]

Yet despite his stated intention, Willard ignored nearly all suggestions and appeared to reject practicality in his efforts to

[7] Fairhope Courier, 1 June 1898.

[8] E. B. Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism;" Fairhope Courier, 15 September 1894.

[9] The Social Democrat, Chicago, Illinois, 9 September 1897.

create the colony. From June 1897 when the Social Democracy issued its platform and created the Colonization Comission, Willard and his two associates on the Commission, Richard Hinton and Wilfred Borland idealized the organization and efforts of Julius Wayland's Ruskin colony. "Struggling amidst the fierce fires of competition, thrown an infant into the center of a gory competitive ring," wrote Willard, "Ruskin has demonstrated the correctness of Socialist principles."[10] During their search for a colony site, Willard and Borland visited Ruskin and began an abortive attempt to ally their colony with it. The Ruskin colonists gave Willard and Borland a complete library of the Coming Nation and other pamphlets.[11] Rather than investigate different organizational possibilities, the creators of the Burley colony merely imitated the flawed plan of Ruskin. Unlike the founders of Topolobampo and Fairhope, the Burley colonizers failed to learn from the experiences of other colonies, and this failure would create many future difficulties.

None of the colony founders, Owen, Gaston, or Willard, began their communitarian efforts ignorant of the major obstacles in their path. For the most part they exhibited common sense. They began by first devising a theoretical basis for their proposed experiments. Albert Owen with the help of Marie and Edward Howland wrote and published Integral Co-operation; Its Practical Application in 1884, and the tract became the starting point for all discussion, all correspondence, and all theorizing about the proposed community.

[10]The Social Democrat, 1 August 1897.

[11]The Social Democrat, 2 September 1897.

While Owen had his theory of Integral Co-operation, Gaston set forth his proposals during the summer of 1893 in his essay "True Co-operative Individualism." At the first meeting of the Fairhope Industrial Association in January of 1894, Gaston read his essay to a group of his Populist and Single-tax friends who discussed its ideas and generally approved.[12] Eugene Debs and the other founders of the Social Democracy set forth their colonization ideas in the "Declaration of Principles of the Social Democracy of America" which were adopted at their organizing convention in Chicago, June 1897.

After they had formulated the theoretical plan for their communities, the colony founders needed to spread the word about their reform efforts. Perhaps the most important lesson communitarians learned through their earlier reform experiences was the overiding importance of the newspaper to advertise reform ideas. A reporter for the Railway Times wrote in 1896:

> the debauched and malicious capitalistic press does not hesitate to print and so broadcast over the land in the interest of the money power the vilest slander of which the English language is capable of expressing against courageous and patriotic men who dare champion the cause of the people.[13]

Reformers in the 1890's understood the power that the press had over the minds of the people. To combat that power, reformers, primarily the Populists, created thousands of their own journals, initiating a literary war between themselves and their capitalist opponents.

Begun in 1885, a year after arrival of Integral Co-operation,

[12]Minutes Book, Fairhope Industrial Association, FSTCA.

[13]Railway Times, 15 July 1896.

The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, according to its editors Marie and Edward Howland, "is devoted to the colonization enterprise ... and generally to the practical solution of the problem of Integral Co-operation."[14] The paper included songs, quotes, lists of stockholders, and occasional progress reports. For the most part, though, the Howlands simply reprinted the colony correspondence. According to Howland, "letters are windows through which we may look at their authors."[15] The Credit Foncier served an important purpose for Topolobampo and future communitarian experiments. The newspaper spread the idea of a utopian colony as a reform alternative and for the first time united those with an interest in communitarian reform through the give and take of published correspondence. Subscribers lived from New Jersey to California and their association with the Credit Foncier gave them a common bond of association with other like-minded individuals. Most importantly, future communitarians such as Gaston, Wayland, and Willard all discovered the communitarian idea through Marie and Edward Howland's publicizing efforts.

In 1890 when E. B. Gaston formulated his plan for the National Co-operative Company, he did not follow the example of Topolobampo and create a colony newspaper. He instead spread word of his colonizing venture by publishing articles in sympathetic local papers and by distributing pamphlets descibing his company's theoretical and organizational plan.[16] Although Gaston did achieve some success publicizing his venture, he never matched the

[14]Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 12 January 1886.

[15]Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 15 June 1886.

widespread enthusiasm that the Credit Foncier engendered for Topolobampo. The individual correspondence that Gaston conducted with prospective members never created the sense of community that Topolobampo participants gained and never generated the support needed to actually begin the colonization effort.

After his attmept to create the National Co-operative Company failed in the Spring of 1891, Gaston joined the Populist effort and began working for James Weaver's reform paper the Farmers Tribune. Weaver created the Farmers Tribune in the early 1880's to support his congressional candidacies and to espouse Greenback ideas. By 1891 Weaver had adopted wholeheartedly the theories of the Southern Alliance, and the Tribune became the leading reform paper in Iowa. During 1892 the paper became allied with the National Reform Press Association under the guidance of Populist theorist Charles Macune. The National Reform Press Association constituted in effect the propagandizing arm of the Populist movement. It gave editors, reporters, farmers, theoreticians, shop owners, and lecturers a common sense of involvement and togetherness in the Populist crusade.[17] During 1891, 92, and 93, Gaston himself must have experienced this sentiment and must have understood the power that a newspaper could provide to a person who wanted to educate and unite people for a reform cause. By the summer of 1893, however, Gaston's enthusiasm for Populism had diminished. In 1895 an editor of the Tribune wrote "Populist papers did not and do not pay ... the path of a reformer is a thorny one."[18] A combination of economic hardship and political disillusionment drove Gaston back to

[16]Des Moines Daily News, 19 July 1890.

communitarian experimentation; except this time Gaston understood the importance of the reform newspaper.

After the formal creation of the Fairhope Industrial Association early in 1894 Gaston began publishing the Liberty Bell in which he immediately printed his essay "True Co-operative Individualism" and the recently written Fairhope constitution. By August of that year, the Liberty Bell had evolved into the Fairhope Courier, edited almost continuously for the next thirty years by Gaston himself.[19] The paper's header quoted General Weaver:

> That which nature provides is the Common Property of all God's children; that which the individual creates belongs to the individual; that which the community creates belongs to the community.[20]

Here, Gaston's practical reform outlook shines through. Weaver's quote synthesized the radical ideas of the age and gibes perfectly with stated purpose of the Courier, "to advocate what it considers good practical theories."[21] Gaston in effect created a nearly ideal community newspaper. It appealed to reformers of many different creeds -- Single-Taxers, Fourierists, Socialists, Populists. It clearly set forth the ideas of the community. It related the news of the colony to supporters who lived in different parts of the country. Above all, the Courier united the men and women of the colony and gave them a sense of togetherness and purpose.

Interestingly, Gaston created the Fairhope Courier nearly one year after his communitarian effort began. The Courier thus became, above all, a colony newspaper, centering entirely on news concerning the Fairhope Industrial Association. Another newspaper, however, Julius Wayland's The Coming Nation existed as an entity before he

even considered a colonization experiment. In 1893 Wayland had recently returned to Greensburg, Indiana from Pueblo, Colorado where he had published a Populist newspaper. In Greensburg he began publishing the Coming Nation which over the next two years became the most widely read socialist paper in the United States. Wayland's success resulted from his terse prose style, his middle-of-the-road radicalism, and his inclusion of quotes, poems, songs, and articles by other prominent thinkers. He became known as the "one-hoss-philosopher" and in late 1894 formed a colony based on his socialist/Populist ideas and supported by the publication of the Coming Nation. Compared to Fairhope which began at approximately the same time, Ruskin encountered immense support -- a result of the widespread publicity that a well-established paper such as the Coming Nation could engender.

By the mid-1890's reform newspapers had essentially evolved a common format and carried for the most part a similar message. Unlike The Credit Foncier in the 1880's which mostly published colony correspondence, a newspaper such as the Burley colony's Co-operator, the successor to the Social Democracy's Social Democrat, possessed a multitude of aims: "it will give news of cooperative and social movements, have foreign correspondents, have prominent

[17]Goodwyn, The Populist Moment, p. 116, 206, 207.

[18]Farmers Tribune, 13 November 1895.

[19]J. H. Springer edited the Fairhope Courier from October 1895 until February 1896.

[20]Fairhope Courier, 15 August 1894.

[21]Fairhope Courier, 15 August 1894.

contributors, [publish] articles from men of science, have departments dealing with various phases of industrial cooperation, and ... conservatively present radical ideas."[22] After 1894, men such as Gaston, Julius Wayland, and Co-operator editor W. P. Borland recognized the importance of their newspapers in their efforts to reform society. In 1900 Borland wrote, "at present the [Co-operator] has no literary value whatever ... outsiders never think of looking at the paper ... it is not sufficiently interesting... we need a paper of general interest to the average reader."[23] For the communitarian attempting to establish a colony, a newspaper became the only way to maintain the reform effort outside the community. If a colony wished to act as a "city on a hill," a quality newspaper became necessary to demonstrate the viability of the "city" and its values. As James S. Ingalls wrote in an 1898 issue of the Co-operator, "the ideal we shall hold aloft will ... in time transform all nations and all peoples."[24]

Twenty-five utopian colonies were established between 1886 and 1900, and through community newspapers, correspondence, and travel a great deal of interaction occurred. Communitarian H. E. Garcken offers an excellent example of the kind of interplay that existed between communities. Garcken lived in Washington state and during the autumn of 1890 corresponded with Gaston, expressing his desire to join Gaston's National Co-operative Company. On the

[22] Co-operator, Olalla, Washington, 19 December 1898.

[23] Co-operator, Burley, Washington, 22 December 1900.

[24] Co-operator, 19 December 1898.

twenty-seventh of September Garcken informed Gaston of the plight of a utopian colony in Washington, the Puget Sound Co-operative Corporation, which had undergone a large amount of internal discord. Garcken wrote "I earnestly hope that nothing will occurr to mar the full success of your venture."[25] In December of 1890, Garcken again wrote Gaston this time concerning the prospects of the growing Populist movement.[26] Furthermore, one year later Garcken corresponded with Marie Howland relating his intentions to join the Topolobampo colony.[27] Garcken's meanderings between different colonies and different movements was in no way remarkable during the 1890's. Marie Howland herself, facing the failure of the Topolobampo experiment, searched for another community. Her friend Christian B. Hoffman, a former Topolobampo supporter and a subscriber to Gaston's Fairhope Courier, suggested she join Fairhope.[28] Similarly, Cyrus Willard in 1899 after an unsettling experience at the Burley colony transferred himself and his wife to Katherine Tingley's Theosophical Point Loma community. In short, a constant interaction between colonies existed: correspondence, newspapers, and personnell all flowed back and forth uniting, in a sense, the communitarian movement.

What kind of people read the community newspapers, cut out the advertisements, and sent away for descriptive pamphlets? An A. A. Fuller wrote Marie Howland in 1886 an introductory letter for his

[25]H. E. Garcken to E. B. Gaston, 27 September 1890, FSTCA.

[26]H. E. Garcken to E. B. Gaston, December 1890, FSTCA.

[27]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 1 November 1891.

[28]Paul M. Gaston, Women of Fair Hope, p. .

friend W. Burdick. Burdick and his wife, according to Fuller, "are excellent people, educated, refined, no whiskey, tobacco, or swearing."[29] In a similar vein, one of Gaston's correspondents, an S A. Hackworth, suggested that the Fairhope colony needed "a good class of people," and also argued heavily against black membership.[30] Finally, Burley supporter W. P. Borland wrote: "the Co-operative Brotherhood is attracting a membership from among substantial men of the middle class."[31] Men such as Fuller, Hackworth, and Borland clearly believed that a utopian community would be better off without the undesirable elements of society. In effect, the utopia they envisioned would be middle class, a community of equals, an example of the society to come not the society of the present.

And, in many ways, the communitarian founders agreed. Willard wrote in 1898 that many colonies "through excessive membership fee or other disqualifications, prevented the poor who had only their labor to come in."[32] Indeed, Gaston wrote Owen in 1891 that "the kind of people who are attracted to [utopian communities] are as a rule poor and sufferring from existing conditions." Yet even though the poor may be attracted to utopian colonies, Gaston took steps to ensure that they would not gain entrance to Fairhope. In his essay "True Co-operative Individualism" he expressed his desire for the company of "like-minded individuals." Then, at the 31 January 1894

[29]A. A. Fuller to Marie Howland, 7 March 1886.

[30]S. A. Hackworth to E. B. Gaston, 24 August 1894.

[31]W. P. Borland, "The Emancipation of Industry," Pacific Monthly, 4 (1904), p. 105.

meeting of the executive council, Gaston and the other council members decided that a $200 membership fee must be paid in full before residence could be taken up on colony. This $200 membership fee combined with the $100 request to build a cooperative store effectively prohibited poor farmers and industrial workers from joining the Fairhope colony.[33] The result at Fairhope was the creation of a community with few members at the extremes of the economic spectrum.

A similar occurrence happened at the Burley colony. Although its founders believed they had established a haven for the working class, a kind of insurance against the advent of hard times, Burley attracted a primarily middle class following. At one end were intellectuals such as Cyrus Willard and the minister and later secretary of the colony W. E. Copeland. At the other end were the Colorado miners, led by J. C. DeArmond, who constituted a majority of the community during its early years. Yet despite the seeming differences between men such as Willard and DeArmond, they like most other communitarians shared a similar heritage, economic status, and outlook on the world -- middle strata, Christian, and radical. Importantly the communitarians saw no contradiction between their exclusion of the real working class and their utopian aims. In their attempt to make a working example of an equitable society, the communitarians erected a set of artificial conditions which could not be recreated on a national scale. Their membership simply did

[32] Social Democrat, 20 January 1898.

[33] Constitution of the Fairhope Industrial Association, in Paul E. and Blanche R. Alyea, Fairhope 1894-1954, (Tuscaloosa, Alabama: University of Alabama Press), appendix A.

not accurately reflect the composition of the American populace, and this fact belied their claims that their communities were "practical demonstrations."

Along with their efforts to acquire a constituency for their communities, Owen, Gaston, and Willard also needed to accomplish two other important tasks before the actual colonization could begin. First, a search committee had to be created to seek out possible colony sites. These sites had to possess the potential for agricultural and industrial growth and had to be obtainable for a relatively low price. Second, the colony organizer had to raise enough money to finance the land acquisition and any initial expenses which the colony might incur.

For the future Topolobampans the search for a colony site was over before it even began. Owen had scouted the site on Topolobampo bay years earlier, and few questioned its viability as the proposed location for a Pacific City. Owen wrote to one of his associates after investigating the area in 1872, "Topolobampo is the best, the most picturesque and most desirable harbour on the Pacific and the Gulf coast of northwestern Mexico."[34] Yet, Topolobampo bay was remarkably unsuited for settlement. A sandbar stretched across the mouth of the bay effectively prohibitting any ships with significant draft. Meanwhile, for the community to even exist, the colonists would have had to build a canal across the 30 mile tract of land separating the site from the Fuerte river.[35] The situational difficulties -- a result of idealism triumphing over practicality -- which the Topolobampo colonists faced eventually became an

important factor in the decline of the colony in the early 1890's.

Yet during 1885 and 1886 before the actual settlement began, optimism remained high among those who had already joined the Topolobampo effort. In 1885 after the publication of a number of articles and pamphlets, Owen met John W. Lovell, a wealthy New Yorker who had earlier published Marie Howland's book Papa's Own Girl. Lovell began printing copies of Owen's tract Integral Co-operation, and helped Marie Howland publish the colony newspaper. That same year Owen chartered a colony corporation in Colorado. The company would issue ten thousand shares at ten dollars per share hoping to raise one hundred fifty thousand dollars before the actual colonization began.[36] Though the Credit Foncier company never came close to that fiscal goal, on the eighth of October in 1896 a group of twenty-five colonists set sail for Topolobampo from San Francisco bay.[37]

Gaston's difficulties in his attempt to found the National Co-operative Company were almost the opposite of those faced by the Topolobampo. A search committee had discovered a site for sale near Lake Charles, Louisiana, but Gaston could not raise enough money to buy the land. In October of 1890 Gaston wrote that he was enthusiastic about the Lake Arthur site, "but we have about given up

[34]Albert K. Owen to Benjamin Carman, 10 October 1872.

[35]Reynolds, p. 9, 10, 11.

[36]Reynolds, p. 34.

[37]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 2 November 1886, 9 November 1886.

hope of gaining strength to meet the required payments."[38] None of the prospective members including Gaston himself could sell off their real estate and raise enough money to put a downpayment on the proposed two thousand acres. By early December of 1890 Gaston had given up hope at least until the next autumn.[39]

But Gaston's communal effort had to wait much longer than one year. It was not until the autumn of 1894 that Gaston possessed the cash on hand to purchase land for a colony. Earlier that year, S. E. Mann and James Bellangee had been chosen by the executive council to investigate possible colony sites.[40] In his letters to Gaston during his two month trip, Bellangee demonstrated his concern over the availability of an adequate water supply and accessibility of fertile land. Although they considered sites in western Tennessee, Bellangee and Mann favored a location in Baldwin County, Alabama. When the choice was put to a vote by the membership, the Baldwin county site won by a large margin.[41]

As the day for the departure to Alabama approached, however, very few members appeared ready to go.[42] The pioneering group eventually numbered only twenty-eight and was so small because economic conditions which prohibitted the accumulation of funds in 1890 had not essentially changed by 1894. In fact the differences

[38]E. B. Gaston to T. H. Jones, 9 October 1890, FSTCA.

[39]E. B. Gaston to Fogarty, 3 November 1890; E. B. Gaston to E. Dechamps Jr., 6 November 1890; E. B. Gaston to H. A. Buffington, 1 December 1890; FSTCA.

[40]Minutes Book, Fairhope Industrial Association, 11 May 1894, FSTCA.

[41]Alyea, pp. 24, 25.

between the National Co-operative Company and the Fairhope Industrial Association lay not so much in altered conditions on the national scene, but rather in the more sophisticated approach Gaston adopted when organizing his effort. A colony newspaper, a well-thought-out theoretical plan, and a larger initial core of supporters -- in short, a more practical approach -- made the difference in Gaston's second utopian effort.

By 1898 two well-known colonies had failed because of a lack of a water supply and a lack of fertile land: Topolobampo and the Colorado Co-operative Company. Just like Bellangee four years earlier, Cyrus Willard therefore made water and land primary considerations when investigating different sites. After criss-crossing the country several times during 1897 and 98, Willard finally visited Washington state and found what he considered an almost perfect locale.[43] It consisted of 1000 acres of fertile bottom land on the shores of Henderson bay. According to the first edition of The Co-operator, nearly all foods could be grown there and the nearby Burley creek could supply water for drinking and power for factories and mills. Meanwhile, the water frontage would keep the colony independent of railroad monopolies, and an ample supply of timber would provide an excellent first industry for the colony.[44]

Even more important, the Co-operative Brotherhood purposed to select "one of the states of the union ... for the concentration of our supporters and the introduction of co-operative industry."[45] Perhaps the most radical state in the union at that time,

[42]Alyea, p. 28.

Washington was an ideal location for the Co-operative Brotherhood to begin. During the recent Populist revolt, the Washington electorate had provided strong support for Alliance candidates. Moreover, many cooperative colonies already existed in the state. These included the Puget Sound Co-operative Colony, Equality colony, Freeland, and Home. In short, a radical tradition thrived in the state of Washington, and the Burleyites thus possessed the relatively strong prospect of achieving their goal of societal transformation there.[46]

After a year of travelling and trying to raise support for the colony, Willard and the other colonization commissioners submitted a report on its activities to the second convention of the Social Democracy of America. After the convention heard the report, however, a large faction began to dispute the plausibility of a utopian colony. This anti-colonization faction favored political action on the part of the SDA, and when the convention voted down their platform, they bolted en masse. Bereft of the support of its leader Eugene Debs, who had left with the anti-colonizationists, the emasculated SDA, quickly dissolved in the ensuing months.[46]

Yet during that summer, the colonization faction, with the separate organizational structure of the Co-operative Brotherhood, managed to maintain their momentum. Along with a core group

[43] Social Democrat, 21 October 1897.

[44] Co-operator, 19 December 1898.

[45] "Declaration of Principles of the Social Democracy"

[46] Charles Pierce LeWarne, Utopias on Puget Sound, 1885-1915, (Seattle and London: University of Washington Press, 1975), p. 3.

consisting of Willard, Borland, and their associates, the members of the Colorado chapter of the Co-operative Brotherhood remained determined to start a colony that autumn. With the money he raised equalling nearly $2500, Willard incorporated the Co-operative Brotherhood in September of 1898 issuing 500 shares of stock at $10 a piece to acquire the necessary funds to capitalize. Finally, on 20 October 1898 J. C. Armond with his son and a few of his Colorado followers arrived at the colony site and began clearing the land near Burley creek.[47]

At the eve of their colonizing ventures, few of the communitarians foresaw the upcoming difficulties they would encounter. On May 11 1886, Davitt D. Chidester, the secretary of the Credit Foncier company wrote:

> In all these migrations, occurring throughout long periods of time, there must have been those who led the way: enterprising, and courageous, humanity. Our Pacific colony will be the first practical application of the new and sublime truth that declares the 'solidarity' or oneness in destiny of the human race.[48]

Despite the "practical" considerations which Chidester as secretary of the colony must have encountered daily, he tempered his practicality with occasional this romantic rhetoric. Similarly, even viewing strenuous circumstances during his first months at Burley,

[46]Social Democracy Red Book, (Terre Haute, Indiana: Debs Publishing Company, 1900); Social Democrat, 16 June 1898; LeWarne, p. 135.

[47]Social Democrat, 23 June 1898; Co-operator, 19 December 1898; LeWarne, p. 138.

[48]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 11 May 1886.

Willard still retained a measure of idealism in his depictions: "we are healthy and rosy as children playing in the dirt ... wrestling with all the forces of nature." And as to the future of the colony, Willard wrote, "the hard work and contriving which lies before us serves but to arouse and stimulate us to further exertion."[49] Gaston also, though he did not have the romantic tendencies of the Topolobampo or Burley colonists, still in some ways idealized the nature of life in Fairhope. He wrote of two crops a year at Fairhope and spoke of the benefits of colony life -- "associated with congenial spirits and co-operating with them to secure the utmost of comfort and culture."[50]

The communitarians viewed their colonies as a way to return to nature and develop a society more congenial to individual growth. Yet this romantic view of their colonies, summed up best in Marie Howland's exclamation "we shall be pioneers!," contrasted with and created a certain tension with the notion that their colonies were, in the words of Gaston, "practical business propositions to practical men and women."[51] As each colony settled in and attempted to implement their practical theories, the tension between the role of the colony as a idealized refuge and the role of the colony as a place to demonstrate practical theories began to conflict. The success or failure of Topolobampo, Fairhope, and Burley depended in large part on the nature of their utopian plans. Do the plans rest on an idealized version of society, or are the plans in fact practical?

[49]Co-operator, 19 December 1898.

[50]Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism."

[51]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 9 November 1886; Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism."

IV

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The Good Theory

The communitarian founders began their utopian effort by creating a theory which represented their vision of a better society. In the process of creating their plans, the communitarians also sought to be practical, to erect a framework in which men and women could successfully live out their daily lives. Although all the communitarians tried to temper their utopian visions with a practical conception of how their colonies would work, very few of the Gilded Age communities succesfully attained a workable plan. The Topolobampo and Burley colonies essentially sought a change in human nature, calling for a "co-operative spirit." Gaston's plan for Fairhope, on the other hand, required less effort on the part of individuals to conform to societal demands. In many ways, then, Fairhope was less utopian than Topolobampo and Burley. It fitted into the surrounding society better than most of the other intentional communities, and compared to Topolobampo and Burley, Fairhope lasted much longer as a reform alternative.

Each of the utopian communities relied primarily on the writings of a single theorist. Albert Owen and Marie Howland adhered to the ideas of Charles Fourier. Ernest Gaston embraced Henry George's Single-tax theory. And, the Burley colonists relied mostly on the ideas of Edward Bellamy. Yet despite their dependence

on a single theorist, the communitarians never feared to incorporate other ideas into their plans. Some of Henry George's proposals appeared in Owen's theory of Integral Co-operation. Gaston included Populist monetary ideas in his theory "True Co-operative Individualism." And, the Burley colonists relied on both their Populist experiences and the methods used by earlier colonies. In short, eclecticism predominated as the communitarians created the organizational plans for their colonies.

A stated, fundamental law of human nature usually underlay the plans of the communitarians, and from this law they erected the framework for their proposed colonies. Gaston wrote of "two great laws of human nature and human rights:"

> "All men seek to satisfy their desires with the least exertion" and "Every man has freedom to do all that he wills, provided he infringes not the equal freedom of any other man."[1]

Gaston's "two great laws" differ markedly from the views of the Topolobampans and the Burleyites. The leaders of both Topolobampo and the Co-operative Brotherhood hoped that their colony would adhere to the Golden Rule: "do unto others as you would have them do unto you."[2] The founders of the Topolobampo and Burley colonies wished to attain the cooperative commonwealth and therefore relied upon a maxim which would promote harmonious relations among colony members. In Fourierist terms Owen simply suggested, "Co-operation is harmony," and did not dwell, as Gaston did, on the issue of equal rights.[3] Gaston, on the other hand, did not seek the cooperative commonwealth, but wished simply to attain equity through common land

[1]Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism."

ownership.

This dichotomy between the Fairhope plan and the Topolobampo and Burley theories reflects the essential difference between the liberal ideas of Henry George and the socialist/collectivist ideas of Fourier and Bellamy. George argued that "to command the land, which is necessary to labor, is to command all the fruits of labor." As production increases, the land's economic rent -- the price which labor pays to use the land -- increases, and wages then decrease. The producers, according to George, create the economic rent, but the rent goes to the capitalists. This rent, George argued, should belong to the entire community because the community, not the capitalist, creates the rising land values. To make this come about, George proposed common land ownership and the abolition of all taxation save that upon land values. A single-tax according to George, "is the taking by the community, for the use of the community, of that value which is, the creation of the community." George believed,

> When all rent is taken by taxation for the needs of the community, then will equality by nature be attained. No citizen will have an advantage over any other citizen save as is given by his industry, skill, and intelligence its full reward and capital its natural return.

George simply wished to restore equity to the American economic system. For George, the industrialization of the Gilded Age had thrown the classical economy out of kilter. He wondered why progress should create poverty. Through his single-tax solution,

[2]The Co-operator, 22 December 1898.

[3]Owen, Integral Co-operation, p. 11.

George hoped to restore balance to the socio-economy.[4]

Like Henry George, Charles Fourier presented a plan which would ensure an equitable socio-economy. Fourier proposed that men and women should be scientifically organized into a basic social unit, the phalanx. The 1600 to 2000 members of the phalanx would live, according to Fourier, in one huge building called a phalanstery which would provide both living quarters and the locale for most of the indoor activities. Such a method of organization would enable individuals to follow their "passions" and organize into "series" according to occupational fitness. Unlike George, Fourier envisioned a totally remade society as the phalanx would liberate human potential. He possessed little faith in the continuation of the capitalist, socio-economic system and hoped to hasten its disappearance through the reordering of society according to the phalanx system.[5]

Although Edward Bellamy's critique of the capitalist system resembles that of George, his utopian vision shared an essential kinship with that of Fourier's. According to Bellamy, an evolution of economic forms would occurr in which society would unite cooperatively. In his utopian romance, Looking Backwards, the hero Julian West falls asleep in 1887 and awakens in the year 2000 encountering an immensely changed world:

> Every quarter contained large open squares
> filled with trees, among which statues glistened
> and fountains flashed in the late afternoon sun.

[4]George, Significant Paragraphs from Progress and Poverty, p. 33, 36, 38, 40. Ross, p. 28.

[5]Nicholas Riasonovsky, The Teaching of Charles Fourier, Berkely and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), pp. 42, 43.

> Public buildings of a colossal size and an architectural grandeur unparalleled in my day raised their stately piles on every side.

Just as Charles Fourier's utopia consisted of an architectual phalanstery which would transform human nature, Bellamy in his utopia envisioned an entirely remade landscape indicative of the new harmonious order.[6] According to Bellamy, when both the means of production and the means of distribution became socialized, all the waste that occurred in the competitive system disapeared, the national income rose significantly, and people led a more leisurely, aesthetically oriented life. Here, Bellamy, like Fourier, adopted an organic view of the world forsaking classical liberal theory and adopting socialist/collectivist ideas.

The essential difference between Georgeian theory and the Fourier/Bellamy utopian vision lay primarily in their views of capitalism and their willingness to accept collectivist precepts. George believed almost exclusively in the necessity of common land ownership, while Fourier and Bellamy demanded the end of competitiveness and the introduction of the cooperative economy. Yet, it is important also to note that despite essential differences in the panaceas outlined by George, Fourier, and Bellamy, a common intellectual tradition existed behind their works. Both George and Bellamy had the evangelical, republican, artisanal roots shared by the communitarian reformers.[7] Even Fourier, a frenchman who wrote in the first half of the 1800's, retained the idea of a Christian god and an emphasis on republican freedoms so important to the communitarians.[8] Even more importantly, the three theorists,

[6]Bellamy, p. 25. Riasonovsky, p. 45.

incdluding the only semi-socialist George, provided a way to achieve a cooperative economy, an essential element in the communitarians' intellectual heritage. The utopian visions of George, Fourier, and Bellamy effectively enunciated the communitarian hope for a morally based, cooperative, equitable society.

Though they adhered to the essentials of the utopian theories, the communitarians when they created their colony plans needed to adapt the theories to ensure the success of the practical demonstration. Adding to and in some cases deleting from the ideas of George, Fourier, and Bellamy, the communitarians drew from their experiences in political reform movements, from tangential theoretical works, and from the plans of earlier communities. A curious mixture thus arose in the plans of George, Gaston, and Willard. Because the possessed common backgrounds and reform experiences, they adopted similar organizational methods. Yet, Gaston, Owen, and Willard emphasized different aspects of their common, radical, reform ideology, and steered their communities towards different goals.

Adhering to the views of Henry George, Gaston wrote in 1894, "kindness and unselfishness cannot be commanded, they must be volunteered."[9] Gaston set out to create a system which would foster voluntary cooperation on the part of Fairhopers. First, Gaston opposed institutionalized cooperative production because he, like

[7]Dictionary of American Biography, "Edward Bellamy," Volume I; "Henry George," Volume IV.

[8]Riasanovsky, pp. 34, 55.

George, believed it destroyed initiative and placed the rights of society over the happiness of the individual. Yet, Gaston, compared to George, put a larger emphasis on voluntary cooperative production, cooperative distribution, and public ownership of monopolies. Gaston outlined plans for a cooperative store and proposed an expanded currency both based on Populist/Alliance models.[11] Further echoing Populist proposals, Gaston supported public ownership of utilities: Fairhope would provide water, light, heat, and transportation facilities.[12] In short, Gaston in creating the Fairhope idea retained the essential premises of George's single-tax idea -- common land ownership and the liberal economy -- while adding other, mostly Populist, cooperative features.

Throughout his plan of "True Co-operative Individualism," Gaston kept in mind his overall goal of true socio-economic freedom. Gaston, along with the other communitarians, wrote of securing the full product of one's labor. Gaston, however, avoided the socialist methods of cooperative production seeking to limit the role of the colony in every-day life. He wrote,

> We hold that individuals have certain natural, inherent, and inalienable rights which society cannot possibly acquire any right to suspend or abrogate and that chief among these is the right of each to the exercise of his own powers for his own benefit and to the use and enjoyment, equally with others, of natural opportunities.

[9]Fairhope Courier, 1 September 1894.

[10]Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism." Fairhope Courier, 15 September 1894, 1 September 1894.

[11]Fairhope Constitution, Fairhope Courier, 1 March 1895.

Unlike most other communitarian theorists, Gaston spent more time outlining the rights of colonists than he did explaining the role of the community. With his plans for government, as with his monetary ideas, Gaston emphasized both liberty and equity. He advocated "pure democracy" and ensured the power of the Fairhope electorate by including demands for the referendum, initiative, and recall in the colony constitution. According to Gaston, "party tyrrany ... will be shorn of its power when measures are voted for instead of men." Less radical than other utopian plans, "True Co-operative Individualism," paralleling George's theory, stayed within the context of classical liberal ideas of society and the economy, and simply sought a way to restore balance and harmony to the system.[12]

Adhering to the ideas of Fourier, Albert Owen in his plan Integral Co-operation suggested both cooperative production and distribution. As in Fairhope, land would be commonly owned with lots parcelled out to homeowners. A Department of Deposits and Loans would maintain "units of account" for each person -- an idea later expanded upon by the Populists and used in a different form by both the Fairhopers and Burleyites. Moreover, the Credit Foncier would, "construct, equip, and operate passenger railways, water supplies, electric powers, motors, lights, etc.," in other words, run the public utilities. But while at Fairhope cooperation was subsidiary to a basic individualism in the socio-economy, at Topolobampo cooperation dominated. Not only cooperative monetary ideas, but also cooperative production would exist at Topolobampo. According to Owen, the Credit Foncier ."would instruct ...

[12]Gaston, "True Co-operative Individualism."

colonists, to the best advantage, in their trades, professions, inventions, and talents."[13] Embodying the ideas of Fourier, the Topolobampo colony originated from a more radical, collectivist premise than Fairhope -- cooperation not individualism prevailed.

Unlike the Fairhope plan which sought to restore balance to the classical economy, Owen's plan for Topolobampo attempted to attain the organic vision of society outlined in its essentials by Fourier. It is no coincidence that Integral Co-operation was the most comprehensive communitarian plan of the Gilded Age. Unlike other colony founders, Owen and Howland, like Fourier, feared to leave anything unexplained, outlining scientifically the details of colony life. For example, Integral Co-operation included plans for model houses and model kitchens, and Owen even suggested a standardized wedding ceremony based on Quaker ritual. The Credit Foncier, it appeared, would regulate all facets of colony life. For it to achieve success, individual interests would have to coincide those of the society. The Topolobampans governmental ideas, including the referendum, initiative, and the secret ballot, thus emphasized consensual not partisan politics. Indeed, one of the primary criticisms of the phalanx was its potential for tyranny, attempting to control the minute aspects of daily life.[14]

By 1898 when Cyrus Willard proposed his plan for the Burley colony in the pages of the Social Democrat, nearly all the communitarian organizational possibilities had been enunciated in

[13]Owen, Integral Co-operation, pp. 23, 31, 20, 32. Riasanovsky, p. 70.

[14]Riasanovsky, pp. 48-56.

earlier colony plans. The Burley plan resembled, in many respects that of the Kaweah Co-operative Commonwealth, Gaston's National Co-operative Commonwealth, and above all Wayland's Ruskin colony. It set forth a plan of cooperative production and distribution whose ideas would hopefully spread and create the evolution of economic forms Bellamy proposed in Looking Backwards. "Our principles," according to Willard, "are the collective ownership of land and the instruments of production and distribution with co-operative and associated labor applied thereto."[15]

The Burleyites emphasized cooperative production and distribution, accepting a consensual view of society similar to that of the Topolobampans. Willard spoke in Nationalist terms of a "co-operative army," and recognized the potential for discord if the idea of consensus -- which he labelled the cooperative spirit -- broke down. Admission to the cooperative army, according to Willard, depended in part on the applicant's "willingness to obey orders without grumbling." This apparently authoritarian demand for consensus, as with Topolobampo, further appeared in the Burleyites democratic political ideas -- the referendum and the initiative. The idea of consensus in the socialistic communities of the 1890's arose directly from Bellamy's conception of a future with no political parties -- a unanimity of public opinion. Bellamy wrote "it is regarded as so absolutely natural and reasonable that the idea of the [2000 system] being compulsory has ceased to be thought of."[16] Although in Bellamy's year 2000 the individual and collective interests coincide, the Topolobampo and Burley colonists faced the

[15]"A Proposed System," The Social Democrat, 3 February 1898.

fundamental problem of achieving consensus in 1886/1898. Clearly, the idealism of the Topolobampans and Burleyites, who adopted the Fourier/Bellamy organic view of society, conflicted with their stated practical aims. The practical, though less visionary, Fairhope single tax idea contained less hazards as it allowed for continued productive competition, job preference, and viable dissent among members. An essential dichotomy thus existed among Gilded Age colonies. Less utopian, less radical colonies like Fairhope and Home could thrive in the capitalist socio-economy whose precepts they retained, but the utopian, socialistic colonies like Topolobampo, Burley, and Ruskin faced future conflict with the values of the dominant culture.

The communitarian founders used utopian precepts, collectivist methods, and their own practical ideas to create colony plans which would hopefully lead to a realization of the good society. Albert Owen and Marie Howland hoped for happiness and harmony through a reconstruction of the entire social hierarchy. Ernest Gaston desired an equitable society resulting primarily from common land ownership. And, the Burleyites deired an evolution of forms to a society based on Christian Brotherhood. Although each colony possessed different goals, their visions of future society retained similar themes, a result of their common reform heritage.

Religion played an important part in nearly all the 1890's communitarian efforts. Although the Albert Owen was a devout Quaker and supported in his words "eclecticism in religious matters" at

[16]Bellamy, p. 42, 44.

Topolobampo, Owen feared the diversionary effect that religion could have on the Topolobampo experiment.[17] He therefore opposed the construction of any buliding specifically for religious purposes or the inclusion at Topolobampo of a paid minister or priest. In this matter, Albert Owen demonstrated his Fourierist need to scientifically regulate. Intellectually, Owen was unable to let the chips fall where they would in a matter such as religion. Later communitarians, such as Gaston criticized Owen's seeming intolerance and adapted their plans to ensure total religious freedom.[18]

Though Gaston in his Fairhope constitution assured members that the colony would never hinder freedom of worship and in fact deemphasized the importance of religion at Fairhope, other colonies like the Christian Commonwealth Company and the Burley colony gave religion an important place in their reform programs. Viewing the relative lack of success encountered by Gilded Age reform colonies when compared to the religiously based ante-bellum communties, the Burley founders believed a common religion, specifically Christianity, would help bind the colony together through an emphasis on brotherhood. But even more important, the Burley colonists adhered to the Christian Socialist tenets of the Social Gospel. A future colonist wrote in 1897, "When Christ was upon the earth doing good, his enemies cried 'Crucify him!' Christ fed the poor. Socialism would feed the poor, not by miracles, but buy giving the poor opportunities to work."[19] A different emphasis existed in

[17]Owen, Integral Co-operation, p. 38. The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 1 December 1891.

[18]E. B. Gaston to Albert Owen, 31 May 1891.

the Burley colony: not only would it educate society like Fairhope and Topolobampo, but the would also relieve the poor. In their plan the Burleyites proposed an insurance system whereby laborers could make payments to the Co-operative Brotherhood and then remove to the colony if they could no longer work.[20] This type of plan arose naturally from the Burleyites adherence to the essentially Christian ideas of Bellamy. Their colony, more so than Fairhope or Topolobampo, had a outspokenly moral purpose, a revival of the Christian idea of Brotherhood in the American system.

Besides the common religious background enunciated in the communitarian plans, the colony founders shared similar views on women's rights. Albert Owen wrote in 1886, "Our plan is to develop the man and woman physically; to make the woman free in her individuality and independent in her property rights from the man."[21] Owen's advocation of women's rights flowed to him from Charles Fourier through Marie Howland. Fourier emphasized sexual love, freedom, and along with it, the equality of women. Marie Howland adhered to Fourier's views, living in the Fourier-based, free-love Unitary Home in New York in the 1850's. Due to Marie's influence, Owen in Integral Co-operation came out strongly for the equality of women. In fact, of the Gilded Age communities, Topolobampo placed the most emphasis on women's role. Owen wrote, "[women] have been forced to one side in the affairs of home and state, have been humiliated, outlawed, and enslaved." "Men and

[19] Railway Times, 1 February 1897.

[20] "A Proposed System."

women to be free," according to Owen, "must solve the ... great problems of civilization together at the same time."[22]

Ernest Gaston echoed the sentiments of Owen and Howland when he created his Fairhope plan. In Article IV, section 2 of his Fairhope constitution, Gaston proposed "The husband or wife of a member shall, upon signing the constitution, also be considered a member entitled to a vote in the government of the association."[23] And, in a similar vein, the Burley founders guaranteed, "female relatives pay the same local fees as male members and have the same rights."[24] The founders of Fairhope and Burley appeared to be ahead of their times in guaranteeing equal rights to women; yet those guarantees did not initially prove that revolutionary for colony women. No women belonged to the executive council of the Fairhope Industrial Association, and no women possessed a directorship at the Burley colony.[25] At Topolobampo the influence of Marie Howland ensured women a real place in community affairs, while most other communties, at least in their initial stages, lacked such a strong presence.

Just as Topolobampo led the way for other colonies in the area of women's rights, it also forged a path in the area of education.

[21]Albert Owen to Edgeworth Lazarus, 2 January 1886.

[22]Owen, Integral Co-operation, pp. 7, 8.

[23]Constitution of the Fairhope Industrial Association.

[24]"A Proposed System."

[25]Minutes Book, Fairhope Industrial Association, 4 January 1894. The Co-operator, 19 December 1898.

Fourier again provided the essential basis for the educational ideas espoused by Marie Howland. Fourier emphasized physical development during the primary schooling and intellectual development in secondary education. Marie Howland echoed Fourier's views in an article in The Credit Foncier entitled "What Shall We Teach Our Children in Pacific Colony?" Howland answered,

> That which will best fit them to live healthful, happy, and useful lives, and to make those around them happy: that which will best aid them in the self evolvement of the perfect woman and man.[26]

For Howland, the organizational forms enunciated in Integral Co-operation would not be enough to initiate the transformation of society. Recognizing the individualistic, competitive natures of Gilded Age men and women, Howland recognized the need to remold attitudes from the beginning. If Topolobampo was to achieve Fourier's cooperative vision, men and women had to be reeducated from childhood, taught to live harmoniously.

Although the Burley colonists did not emphasize education to the extent that the Topolobampans did, they did retain the Fourierist idea that human nature would have to change for their system to work. According to the Burley founders, "Education comes from the Latin educo 'to lead out' It means to lead out or permit the evolution of the indwelling individual."[27] The individual, according to the Burleyites would have to evolve, and this evolution would come about through a method of education which, in the words of one colonist, "will discipline the mind, and enlarge the mental horizon to view men and the world in their proper

[26]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 2 November 1886.

relations." In short, men and women would have to view society differently for the Bellamy evolution to come about, and one of the main purposes of the Burley colony became to educate others as to the benefits of cooperation and brotherhood.

Interestingly, Gaston in his Fairhope theory initially deemphasized the role of education in his community. He wrote, "These plans are submitted ... not as plans requiring for their successful fullfillment (sic), qualities popularly supposed to belong to angels.[28] Gaston, in other words, did not deem a change in human nature necessary for the succesful operation of his community. While Topolobampans and Burleyites proposed alternate educational methods to create a cooperative spirit among colony members, Gaston initially believed the cooperative spirit would arise naturally form the circumstances of common land ownership.

As the pioneering efforts of the three communities, Topolobampo, Fairhope, and Burley, began, an essential divergence existed in their plans. Though they shared ideas common to their radical heritage such as the issuance of colony script, the creation of colony stores, common land ownership, democratic governmental forms, equal rights for women, and freedom of religion, the communitarian founders sought different ends. Gaston pictured an unforced collectivism occurring at Fairhope which would foster intellectual inquiry and individual happiness. On the other hand, Owen and Howland desired a totally remade society through,

[27]"A Proposed System."

[28]"True Co-operative Individualism."

apparently, enforced collectivism and the imposition of a preconceived phalanx structure. Similarly, the Burleyites desired Bellamy's evolution of the socio-economy and through collectivization would impose restrictions on individual freedom. Each colony contained a number of idealistic, utopian hopes, and yet all the colonists, at the outset, believed their practical natures would ensure the success of their colonies.

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The Plan in Action

The median life span of the twenty-five secular reform ommunities of the Gilded Age was only five years. Evidently, when the communitarians put their plans into effect, some breakdown occurred. Either external or internal conflict must forced the dissolution of the utopian communities. Interestingly, Topolobampo, Burley, and Fairhope lasted longer than average. Topolobampo lasted seven years, the Burley experiment six years, and significantly, Fairhope, as a reform entity, survived over thirty years.[1] What factors in the communitarian plans failed when the colonists put the theories to work? What gave Fairhope such staying power, compared to Topolobampo and Burley? And above all, what does the failure of the utopian colonies demonstrate about the willingness of Americans to accept cultural deviance?

Although Topolobampo began with widespread optimism on the part of its members, this optimism rapidly dissipated when they confronted the problems of the Pacific City site. Because the Fuerte Valley lacked water, the colonists almost immediately erected an alternate camp away from the bay at Mochis where water proved more accessible. The colony sufferred from continued mismanagment.

[1]Paul M. Gaston, Fairhope as Utopia: Refletions of a Fairhoper, speech given in Fairhope Alabama, 20 February 1986.

Instead of immediately sinking wells for a water supply, colonists first built thatched huts. Owen himself never set up a permanent residence with the colonists, but continued travelling in his attempt to initiate the railroad plan. The colony never possessed adequate financing, and thepurchase of supplies remained forever haphazard. During the first year, 1887, the colony faced starvation. Typhoid and smallpox took the lives of seven colonists during the first five months.[2]

After two years of colony settlement, the Credit Foncier company was in shambles. Kansas businessman Christian B. Hoffman joined the Topolobampo effort and created the Kansas Sinaloa Investment Company to help the Credit Foncier buy land. Yet even Hoffman's support over the next three years failed to ameliorate the dismal conditions in Mexico. Although Owen continued travelling to and from the colony site urging construction of the railroad, colony members in 1890 began building an irrigation ditch to bring water to the proposed Pacific City site. Recent settlers from Kansas provided much of the work force for the ditch, and the ensuing conflict over it in effect divided the members of the colony into two factions. This division, which would eventually bring about the downfall of the colony, arose over the issuance of labor credits for work on the irrigation ditch. A hyper-inflated currency, the ditch credits could not be used by the workers to purchase supplies. Eventually the colonists refused to accept them, stopping work altogether. In the pages of The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, Hoffman, Howland, and Owen all attempted to assure the colonists that their

[2]Ray P. Reynolds, Cat's Paw Utopia, 1973, pp. 59-68.

credits would attain value once the ditch was completed, but the internal disputes continued.[3]

By 1892, a division had even developed between Owen and Hoffman with Marie Howland occupying an ambivalent middle position. Owen still retained his faith in the supreme role of society and the necessity of adhering strictly to the plan of Integral Co-operation. Hoffman, on the other hand, wrote,

> The Credit Foncier Company and the Kansas-Sinaloa Investment Company, are business institutions and, as such, have nothing to do with the religion or morals of its members. As individuals we have a right to our views and habits, ... as long as these habits do not trench upon the liberty of our fellows.[4]

During late 1891, Topolobampans such as Hoffman began to lose faith in the authoritarian measures increasingly imposed by Owen. Owen ordered Hoffman to stop publishing his Kansas newspaper The Integral Co-operator, dissolved the entire board of directors, forbidded any elections without his approval, and insisted that noone else be admitted to membership.[5] Owen's megalomania continued through 1892 and 1893 and eventually became unbearable to the majority of the colonists.

By 1893, mostly because of the actions of Owen, the colony was on the verge of disintegrating. A large group of Topolobampans created a committee which drafted a list of complaints against Owen. These included lying, fraud, slander, opposition to free press, suppression of free speech, blacklisting of troublesome members,

[3]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 1 November 1891.

[4]The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 1 Novem,ber 1891.

[5]Reynolds, p. 108.

refusal to provision certain colonists, land specualtion, lack of financial accountability, and misrepresentation. According to the colony committee,

> A. K. Owen is wholly untrustworthy in matters of business, is irresponsible financially and morally, is possessed of a vast amount of self conceit and vanity, is petualnt, violent, and vengeful in his treatment of those who do not wholly agree with him, and is dominated in his actions by love of gain and by a morbid desire to be famous, and while posing as a philanthropist, does not scruple to use any disreputable means for the accomplishment of his infamous purposes.

Furthermore, the comittee with a certain finality declared the Credit Foncier Company insolvent, bankrupt, devoid of credit, possessed of almost no property, and hopelessy in debt. The sixty-seven colonists who signed the committee report reorganized into The Freeland Society based on the ideas of Theodore Hertzka's utopian novel Freiland. In short, the utopian vision proposed by Owen was dead.[6]

As the complaints of the colony members demonstrate, the central reason behind the decline of Topolobampo was the character of Albert Owen. Yet, it is important to note that throughout the course of his seeminglingly insane pronouncements, Owen believed he was in fact adhering to his plan of Integral Co-operation. According to Owen, Integral Co-operation with its consensual view of society left no room for dissent among colony members. Supporting Owen's actions, Marie Howland wrote in 1892,

> Only the shortsighted and the faithless are unhappy, and these are to be pitied. Faithless themselves, they laugh at the high hopes of others, and make it a business to

[6] The Integral Co-operator, 3 August 1893.

> poison the mind of every new comrade with a rehash of old calumnies against faithful and overworked leaders, who are too busy at their posts to answer or refute, even if they deemed it of any use.[7]

Howland believed that the colony leaders, specifically Owen, remained above criticism. Just as the critics of Fourier proposals feared, the attempt to institute a phalanx embodying cooperative production and distribution led, in Topolobampo's case, to authoritarianism. The members of Topolobampo learned the important lesson: "no autocracy can be trusted to establish any judicial or beneficial system of cooperation."[8]

Although the pioneers of the Burley experiment did not encounter the intense environmental difficulties that the Topolobampans faced, their problems share many similarities The colony's intitial leader, Cyrus Willard, treated other colonists in an authoritarian manner similar to that of Owen's. After continued, in Willard's words, "insubordination" on the part many members, Willard left the Burley colony and joined Katherine Tingley's Point Loma colony. To the good fortune of the Burleyites, Willard's departure did not create any undue stress on external colony support nor did it create a power struggle. The Burley colony proceeded for the next four years in its experiment in cooperative living.[9]

An essential problem, however, lay behind the Burley utopian vision. The Burleyites retained an outdated reform conception -- a

[7] The Credit Foncier of Sinaloa, 1 January 1892.

[8] The Integral Co-operator, 3 August 1893.

[9] LeWarne, pp. 141-144.

belief that Bellamy's evolution of socio-economic forms would create a cooperative economy. The colony newspaper, The Co-operator noted the advent of nearly every cooperative venture occurring in both the United States and Europe. The paper viewed these individual efforts as small steps in the gradual process of social evolution. "No doubt exists that co-operation is rapidly capturing the people," according to The Co-operator, "every day some new association is launched either in the line of distribution or production."[10] The paper spoke of a united front of farmers and mechanics cooperating together in the upcoming society; yet, in fact, the decline of Populism and the Knights of Labor precluded any sort of nationwide cooperation on the part of Americans.[11] Craft unions, not nationwide coalitions prevailed by 1900 and the Burleyites perception of cooperative gain remained, in the end, illusory. Adhering to the radical, collectivist ideology of the 1880's and early 1890's, the Burley colony was essentially an anachronism as it moved into the 1900's.

Along with the impossibility of their overall utopian plan, the Burley colonists faced more specific difficulties. From 1898 through 1904 when they reorganized the company, Burley ran a continuous deficit. Despite the establishment of a sawmill, a cigar factory, and a broom handle factory, trade with the outside world never conquered the debt created by the original land acquisition. Also, though they never reached the dimensions of the disputes at Topolobampo, internal dissension grew in the colony. Colony president L. E. Rader addressed a stockholders meeting in February 1903 at which he urged members to "throw aside all prejudice, envy,

malice, and fear-thought." Burley members found it hard to give up their freedoms and, in the words of one member, "submit to the overseers we have elected." Secretary W. E. Copeland asked in May of 1903, "the ideal social state is a co-operative commonwealth, but how can we ever bring about such a condition unless men and women learn to cooperate?"[12] Clearly, a tension existed at Burley, as it did at Topolobampo, between the right of the state to reguate production and the right of the individual to freedom of choice. In the utopias of Topolobampo and Burley, men and women had to learn to cooperate, in other words, learn to be an element in the organic society proposed by Fourier and Bellamy.

Through the uniqueness of its colony plan and its ability to avoid the problems that plagued other colonies, Fairhope was able to survive numerous initial difficulties and remain viable well into the twentieth century. The founders of Fairhope in their search for a colony location could not have chosen a more beautiful site for their utopian experiment.[13] The land, however, proved infertile, and Fairhope's distance from any large market handicapped its industry and agriculture during its early years. An early struggle for control centering on the issue of constitional revision, divided the colony into two factions through 1895 and 1896. In the end, however, the faction led by Gaston won out, and the colony retained its essential purpose. Another early problem concerned the acquisition of financing for ventures such as the wharf, the Fairhope school, and the public library. Fairhope relied primarily

[12]The Co-operator, February 1903, June 1903, May 1903.

on the help of wealthy single-tax supporters such as Joseph Fels, a northern soap manufacturer. By the early 1900's Fairhope had overcome early financial problems through both contributions and the emergence of a burgeoning tourist trade.[14]

Gaston's plan of True Co-operative Individualism initially thrived at Fairhope, yet problems soon arose in the workings of the colony's land-ownership system. Once the colony purchased land, it needed to quickly develop it so as not to lose money. Land was therefore leased to non-members who, hopefully, would eventually join the single-tax assocation. This failed to happen, and a large group of leaseholders grew in the Fairhope community who only marginally supported the Single-tax theory. With the incorporation of the Town of Fairhope in 1908, the colonists lost their control of the local government and their association with the parks and public utlities. Fairhope became, simply, a single tax colony bereft of many of its original utopian aims -- cooperative stores, colony script, pure democracy.[15]

Fairhope, however, even after 1908 remained a center for reform and did not really decline as a reform alternative until the Great Depression. The most important factor in the continuance of Fairhope's utopian vitality was the creation of the Organic School by Marietta Johnson in 1908. Marietta Johnson believed that the economic reforms suggested by Henry George and put into effect by

[13]Paul M. Gaston, Fairhope as Utopia.

[14]Alyea, pp. 70-77. Paul M. Gaston, A Utopian Heritage: The Fairhope Single Tax Colony, A pamphlet sponsored by the Alabama Humanities Foundation, 1986.

[15]Gaston, Reflections of a Fairhoper.

Gaston were not enough to bring about a changed society. Implementing the Progressive ideas of John Dewey at her Organic school, Johnson sought to educate children not according to competitive values, but in cooperative, interactive ideas. Visited by Dewey in 1914, the Organic School and Marietta Johnson put the spotlight of the first time on the Fairhope idea, and the colony retained its reform vitality until the Depression brought about a lack of funds for the Organic School and the deaths of both Gaston and Johnson.[16]

At the Topolobampo and Burley colonies internal dissent resulting from authoritarian measures hastened the downfall of the colonies. Their idea that men and women, socialized in the competitive, individualistic values of the larger society, could unite cooperatively proved to be idealistic. Cyrus Willard wrote in 1897, "Under brotherhood work will become play; men and women will move onward and upward; they will become veritable gods and goddesses."[17] Yet in his utopia this did not happen. Gaston, when he created the Fairhope plan, understood men were not "angels," and his community lasted as long as it did because he did demand a change in human nature. George's Single-tax idea facilitated the growth of the Fairhope community, and people in the community voluntarily cooperated building roads, parks, and the wharf. The success of Fairhope demonstrated essentially the victory of pragmatism over idealism.

The arrival of utopian communities at different periods in

American history almost always signalled a lack of alternative measures available to dissident elements of society. Essentially conceived as a utopia, a city on a hill, America during the 1840's, the 1890's, and, more recently, the 1960's failed to live up to many individual's conceptions of what society ought to encompass. The communitarians of the Gilded Age not only found society problematic, but they also found it unbearable, detrimental to their growth as individuals. They therefore searched for alternatives and became enamoured by utopian visions of theorists such as Fourier, George, and Bellamy. Fourier, George, and Bellamy effectively enunciated the communitarian desire for political freedom and economic equity at a time when both seemed to be disappearing. For Owen, Gaston, and Willard, the answer was obvious. Create a community which would demonstrate those theorists ideas, and the world, seeing their effectiveness, would quickly folow suit.

Yet, the communitarians of the 1890's, and indeed all communitarians, made a mistake in gauging the receptivity of an established culture to new ideas. By the 1890's hope for a collectivist economy was fading rapidly as potential supporters of radical reform sought their ends through more individualized methods such as craft unions. The rhetoric of collectivist ideas, including words such as "socialism," "communism," and "radicalism," was rapidly acquiring an anti-American cast. Socialized in a culture which commended individualism and competitiveness, Americans found

[16]See Paul M. Gaston, "The Mission of Marietta Johnson," in Women of Fairhope.

[17]The Co-operator, 19 December 1898.

communitarian ideas deviant.

Unable to convert society, the communities of the 1890's thus became mainly refuges for reformers who had failed in traditional reform efforts. Internal and external conflict then arose as the colonies tried to exist according to values not accepted by the dominant culture. The relative success of each colony depended, in large part, on its ability to avoid conflict by, in Fairhope's case, retaining essential values of that culture. In the end, however, all the utopian experiments failed, and their downfall demonstrates the essential inability of Americans, even to this day, to accept divergent forms.

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