

U.S. History *Pre-Columbian to the New Millennium*

[BACK](#) [HOME](#) [NEXT](#)

[Suggest a Link](#)

ON THE WEB

Hancock Shaker Village

Hancock Shaker Village is now a historic site that interprets the lives of the men and women who lived in the community from 1790 to 1860. This website offers background information on the Shakers in general and this community in particular. Don't miss the tour of buildings which includes some nice images.

[Report broken link](#)

New Harmony

New Harmony, Indiana, was the site of two Utopian communities. The first was a "brand" of George Rapp's successful Harmonic community in Pennsylvania. The second was British Socialist Robert Owen's Utopian vision. This "official website of New Harmony" gave histories of each Utopia, along with a picture gallery, maps, and current events.

[Report broken link](#)

Old Economy Village

In 1803 George Rapp formed a community called the Harmonies, believing that the Second Coming of Christ was imminent. Members of the community settled in Pennsylvania and lead punitical lives, to the point that even married couples vowed to remain celibate. The Harmonies (sometimes called the Rappites) eventually failed, but you can see more about their beliefs from this website.

[Report broken link](#)

Robert Owen, Social Reformer

b. Experiments with Utopia



[Cite This Page](#)

[Share Your Thoughts](#)

26b. Experiments with Utopia



The town of Amana, Iowa operated as a communal society for 89 years. Most of the settlers were immigrants who had left Germany in 1842 and came to Iowa in 1855.

As 19th century America grew larger, richer, and more diverse, it was also trying to achieve a culture that was distinct and not imitative of any in Europe. At the same time, the thirst for individual improvement had local communities creating debating clubs, library societies, and literary associations for the purpose of sharing interesting and provocative ideas. Maybe, people speculated, if any society were completely reorganized, it could be regenerated and, ultimately, perfected. **UTOPIA**, originally a Greek word for an imaginary place where everyone and everything is perfect, was sought in America through the creation of model communities within the greater society.



The Shakers believed in celibacy in and outside of wedlock, therefore Shaker children were usually orphans given to the church.

Most of the original utopias were created for religious purposes. One of the earliest was devised by **GEORGE RAPP**, a German zealot, who took 600 followers to western Pennsylvania in 1804. Using shared funds to purchase land, the **RAPPITES** created a commune where they isolated themselves from others while waiting for the Revelation. Because of their extreme views on sex and marriage, and their strict, literal

interpretation of the Bible, they failed to spread goodwill or gain converts. More hospitable to their neighbors and able to attract about 6,000 members by the 1830s, twenty successful **SHAKER** communities flourished. They followed the principles of simplicity, celibacy, common property, equal labor and reward espoused by their founder **MOTHER ANN LEE**.

Buy a
History Po
REWARD
Declarations
Constitutions,
and more!

4

When Robert Owen's son tried to convert him to Protestantism, his reply was this, "There are probably twelve hundred millions of people in the world. So, out of every twelve persons only one is a Protestant. Are you quite sure that the one is right and the eleven wrong?" Yet Owen tried to create heaven on earth in his community at New Harmony, Indiana. Read about Robert Owen in this biography that includes some information about the utopian community, links to related sites, and an image of the reformer.

Report broken link

Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village

Shakers were a part of American history, but at Sabbathday Lake Shaker Village in New Gloucester, Maine, they are more a part of the present. This community has been active since its founding in 1783, and with a website of their own they are ready to enter the 21st century. There is some historical background on the Shakers as well as the community's basic principles and beliefs and a daily schedule of activities at their homepage.

Report broken link

The Amana Colonies

The "Community of True Inspiration" moved west to Iowa in 1855 and founded a total of seven villages known as the Amana Colonies. The communal way of life ended in 1932, but the towns are still thriving, as this website maintained by the Amana Colonies Convention and Visitors Bureau demonstrates.

Report broken link

The Oneida Community

This insightful article explores the origins of the Oneida community in New York, based on the radical religious doctrines advanced by its founder John



Courtesy of the Longman History Place

Religious and Utopian communities dotted the countryside during the 1800s.

Gradually, **UTOPIAN COMMUNITIES** came to reflect social perfectibility rather than religious purity.

ROBERT OWEN, for example, believed in economic and political equality. Those principles, plus the absence of a particular religious creed, were the 1825 founding principles of his **NEW HARMONY, INDIANA**, cooperative

that lasted for only two years before economic failure. **CHARLES FOURIER**, a French reformer and philosopher, set out the goal of social

harmony through voluntary "phalanxes" that would be free of government interference and ultimately arise, unite and become a universal perfect society. **JOHN HUMPHREY NOYES** designed **ONEIDA COMMUNITY** in upstate New York. Oneidans experimented with group marriage, communal child rearing, group discipline, and attempts to improve the genetic composition of their offspring.



The founders of Brook Farm tried to create a society of equality for its members.

Utopian Communities

Which Utopian Community do you find most appealing?

- Amana
- Brook Farm
- Fruitlands
- New Harmony
- Oneida
- Rappite
- Shaker

Vote!

Self-reliance, optimism, individualism and a disregard for external authority and tradition characterized one of the most famous of all the American communal experiments. **BROOK FARM**, near Roxbury, Massachusetts, was founded to promote human culture and brotherly cooperation. It was supposed to bestow the highest benefits of intellectual, physical, and moral education to all its members. Through hard work and simplicity, those who joined the fellowship of George Ripley's farm were supposed to understand and live in social harmony, free of government, free to perfect themselves. However, **NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE**, who wrote about his stay here in **THE BLITHEDALE ROMANCE**, left this utopia disillusioned. Finally, it was romantic thinker and strict vegetarian **BRONSON**

ALCOTT, father of author **LOUISA MAY ALCOTT**, who devoted himself to tilling the soil at **FRUITLANDS** from June 1844 to January 1845 in the hope that love,