

Book Reviews

North America in considerable numbers in an earlier period. Baker also totally ignores the subject of domestic tank houses, which are so much a part of the cultural landscape of California and the far western Great Plains. Finally, the discussion of the exportation of American windmills to Latin America fails to include perhaps the largest market, that of the Yucatan Peninsula of Mexico, where American-made windmills still dot the area and are used to draw water in this land where there are no surface streams.

These deficiencies do not materially detract from the value of the book. It is a superb work, lovingly put together by both author and publisher. It is an important work as well, documenting a material culture, landscape feature rapidly disappearing from the countryside.

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The Ephrata Commune: An Early American Counterculture, by E. G. Alderfer. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1985. xiii, 273 pp. Illustrations, appendix, notes, bibliography, index. \$21.95 cloth, \$8.95 paper.

The Salvation Army Farm Colonies, by Clark C. Spence. Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1985. vii, 151 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliographical essay, index. \$19.95 cloth.

Anyone interested in the history of intentional communities will find the volumes by E. G. Alderfer and Clark Spence welcome additions to the literature. Although neither book deals with an Iowa subject, both Alderfer's account of Ephrata, Pennsylvania, and Spence's of Salvation Army farm colonies in California, Colorado, and Ohio, include discussions of the ideological and economic currents that fed not only these experiments but others throughout the country and abroad.

Several comparable communities have, in fact, been established in Iowa. The Amanas are justly famous as one of the longest surviving communal societies in American history. Less well known were several communities established along secular lines: the Icarian settlement near Corning, in Adams County, which lasted from 1865 to 1895; the Iowa Pioneer Phalanx, in Mahaska County, which flickered briefly for several months in 1844-45; and Communia, near Elkader, in Clayton County, which was founded in 1847 by Swiss and German socialists and disbanded in factional strife nine years later.

Ephrata was one of the most remarkable of several fascinating intentional communities in colonial America. Located fifty miles from Philadelphia, in Lancaster County, Ephrata was founded in 1733 by

Johann Conrad Beissel, a mystical Pietist from the German Palatinate. Beissel proved to be a magnetic, complex, and ultimately flawed leader, but the community that crystallized around him endured until 1796, nearly thirty years after the founder's own death. Ephrata stood on the threshold of the modern age, but never truly entered it. Its main orientation was back to medieval mysticism and the mortification of self practiced in some monastic orders. The most pious members of the community led spartan lives, eating simple foods and sleeping on narrow planks with stone pillows. Yet the community also possessed a resolute originality that led it to develop the largest printing and publishing operation in the colonies, a Latin academy for young scholars from the eastern seaboard, and the first medical school in Pennsylvania.

Ephrata's story is told with sensitivity and erudition by E. G. Alderfer, a student of Ephrata for the past thirty years. Alderfer's ability to relate to Ephrata's remote and sometimes arcane theology is enhanced by his own Mennonite heritage, although in this volume he does not explicitly compare the doctrines of Pietism and Anabaptism. The book is generally well written, and, although directed at the nonspecialist, it assumes on the reader's part some general knowledge of theology and of American and European history. For example, Alderfer refers to New Lights, Philadelphianism, Theosophy, Gnosticism, and the Berleburg Bible without tarrying to explain them. If we find these names unfamiliar, it signifies only how out-of-touch we are with some of the formative influences on America's development. Alderfer strikes a good balance between assuming knowledge and imparting it.

The book is not free from defects, although most of them are minor. For instance, Alderfer omits the Shakers from his discussion of "successful" non-Germanic communes (193), clearly an oversight, since the Shakers are renowned as one of the most enterprising and creative of communal groups. More problematic is Alderfer's uncritical acceptance of community longevity as his sole criterion for success. Recent scholarship on communal societies has suggested other criteria, including member satisfaction and influence on the outside world. Inexcusably, Alderfer occasionally adopts the foolish prejudices of his sources, as when he describes an early leader of the Community of True Inspiration, later the Amana Society, as "fanatical" and the group's rituals as "wild and extreme" (25). Alderfer appears to adopt this view from James Ernst, though ultimately it may come from Beissel, Ephrata's founder, who had a falling out with this Inspirationist leader, possibly over Beissel's sexual indiscretions. Alderfer is also guilty of a few sins of omission. For example, he is so caught up in

offering a chronology of events at Ephrata that he fails to give a satisfactory description of the community's organization, and one is left wondering about the ethnographic details of day-to-day life. Occasionally, Alderfer does not adequately probe the significance of events, as in the case of Beissel ordering the destruction of the Bethaus, one of Ephrata's major buildings (88). Finally, the book is so full of place names that a map would have been helpful.

Despite these shortcomings, *The Ephrata Commune* is a valuable addition to scholarship on an important American communal group. Perhaps the most original part of Alderfer's book is the final chapter, in which he relates Ephrata to later experiments in communal living and discusses the decline of spirituality in modern Western culture in light of Ephrata's ethos. As the eighteenth century drew to a close, America developed a new political and mercantile culture in which Ephrata-like piety became increasingly anachronistic. Echoing Oswald Spengler, Alderfer calls for a reconciliation between the rationalism, materialism, and individualism of modern American society and the spirituality (which Alderfer terms "Zion-consciousness") of brotherhood and harmony that we have too much spurned. In his preface, the author comments that several readers of the book in manuscript suggested that this final chapter should be dropped. Such limited and parochial visions are too common in academic writing. Alderfer's inclination to explore Ephrata's relevance to our modern world should be applauded, not condemned.

In contrast to Ephrata, the communities described in Clark Spence's *The Salvation Army Farm Colonies* were decidedly part of the modern order, even though they existed in unstated opposition to it. At the end of the nineteenth century, the American branch of the Salvation Army, under the energetic leadership of Commander Frederick Booth-Tucker, son-in-law of Army founder William Booth, established three agricultural cooperatives. These "farm colonies" were seen as pilot projects for resettling the urban poor on the land, where they might regain their dignity and even prosper. Booth-Tucker envisioned a network of hundreds, even thousands, of such farm colonies. Prospective colonists would be selected on the basis of reliability and farming experience, trained, and placed on farms financed by the nation's "idle capital," the whole operation organized by the Salvation Army. The goal, in Booth-Tucker's words, was "to place Waste Labor on Waste Land by means of Waste Capital; thus combining this Trinity of Waste, the separation of which means the destruction of each, the co-operation of which means the prosperity of all" (21). As the colonists prospered, the theory went, they would repay the loans they received from the Army, allowing it to sponsor yet more colonists on other

farms. The result would be nothing less than a national social regeneration.

The more ambitious the plan, the less likely it is to succeed. In the first book-length treatment of the subject, Spence tells the story of the three actual colonies—Fort Romie, California; Fort Amity, Colorado; and Fort Herrick, Ohio—in a straightforward narrative form. All three colonies collapsed or faded away within a decade, victims of insufficient capital, high colonist turnover, or ecological misfortune. Spence's sources speak more to the economic history of the colonies than to the lives of the members, and so does he. This produces a less engaging account than Alderfer's, and one that neither makes nor invites broader philosophical reflection.

Nonetheless, Spence, like Alderfer, attempts to place his subject in the context of other back-to-the-land experiments in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In doing so, Spence sometimes errs in his comparisons. For example, he considers Amana and some other German religious communes to be "experiments" and "utopian farm colonies," implying that they were stimulated by "American optimism [and] confidence in social progress" (6). It is doubtful that such labels or explanations can help us to understand Amana, Zoar, Harmony, or Ephrata, which Spence does not mention. These communities were very different from the farm colonies Spence describes. Other agricultural cooperative settlements make for more appropriate comparison, and one wishes Spence had given more attention to the ones he cites. Like Ephrata, the Salvation Army farm colonies were intentional communities intended to serve as a model for societal betterment by emphasizing cooperation and brotherhood. But there the similarity ends. Ephrata's base was spiritual, whereas the Army required no specific religious attitude on the part of the colonists it sponsored. Beissel lived in Ephrata, while Booth-Tucker only visited the Army's colonies. The farm colonies were supposed to make money but did not, whereas Ephrata prospered overmuch to suite Beissel, who closed down some of the more lucrative businesses. Perhaps somewhere in the interplay of these differences can be found an explanation of the early demise of the farm colonies and Ephrata's long existence.

Ephrata and the Salvation Army's farm colonies are gone, but the principles on which they were founded linger in undercurrents of the culture. Alderfer refers to Ephrata as "an early American counterculture." While it may not have been so self-consciously, it did offer, as the Salvation Army farm colonies did, an alternative mode of social and economic relationship. Furthermore, Spence plausibly suggests, but does not demonstrate, that the Army's efforts to establish farm colonies facilitated its real contribution to reform, namely its social welfare

Book Reviews

work in American cities. Some contemporary critics of the American scene, such as Robert Bellah, suggest that we need to foster a greater sense of commitment and community in our society. Both of the books reviewed here can be recommended as part of the record of past attempts to do so.

GRINNELL COLLEGE

JONATHAN G. ANDELSON

The Germans in Missouri, 1900-1918: Prohibition, Neutrality, and Assimilation, by David W. Detjen. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1985. xi, 214 pp. Tables, notes, bibliography, index. \$23.00 cloth.

Of all the immigrant peoples who poured into the United States during the nineteenth century, none was more numerous than the Germans. In 1900 Germans constituted the largest single ethnic minority in more than half of the states. Although historians still debate the extent to which foreign-born and native-born German-Americans embraced a sense of *Deutschtum*, or "Germanness," at the turn of the century, there are ample signs that many German-Americans still saw themselves as culturally separate from the mainstream of American life. In addition to beer gardens, which blossomed wherever Germans settled, widespread support for German-language publications and theatre companies, a multitude of ethnic social organizations, and observance of various special days pointed to the continued vitality of German-American culture. But by 1920, in a process stunning for its swiftness, most German-Americans had assimilated, and outward signs of their once flourishing culture had largely disappeared.

In this tightly written volume, which despite its title is more about an elitist German-American organization in one Missouri city than about the Germans in Missouri, David W. Detjen traces the rise and fall of the St. Louis branch of the *Deutsch-Amerikanischer National-Bund* (DANB), the National German-American Alliance. Founded in 1904, three years after the national organization had been created in Pennsylvania, the German-American Alliance in Missouri soon claimed seventy-five thousand members. But in reality, Detjen asserts, "the Alliance . . . was no more than a loose federation of organizations, with no historical tradition and no established central organization of any permanency" (31). Consequently, the author directs his attention primarily to the dominant St. Louis alliance and the dozen or so men who led it. From 1907 to 1914 the alliance's central mission was to combat the drive for prohibition in Missouri.

With the onset of World War I, new issues began to emerge. At first, many German-Americans saw no conflict between their cultural

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