

## REVIEWS

### *New Harmony*

#### *Then & Now*

By Donald E. Pitzer, photographs by Darryl D. Jones

(Bloomington: Quarry Books, 2011. Pp. xvi, 204. Illustrations, notes. \$39.95.)

The oversized pages and slick, glossy photos of *New Harmony: Then & Now* might lead a casual observer to mistake it as a coffee-table book. But looks can be deceiving. In the first eighty pages, Donald E. Pitzer provides a rich, detailed history of the numerous men and women who called New Harmony home in the nineteenth century. This account traces two groups of communitarians as they attempted to build a utopian paradise in the wilds of western Indiana. The second half of the book presents nearly one hundred pages of images from photographer Darryl D. Jones. These photographs, which depict present-day New Harmony over the course of four seasons, provide vivid illustrations for Pitzer's portrait of the past. Together, Pitzer's history and Jones's photos make for a beautiful rendering of New Harmony, both then and now.

Pitzer chronicles two separate but connected southwest Indiana communities. Rather than simply recount their limited experiences in New Harmony, he traces each community to its European origins (and follows them after they leave Indiana). Pitzer begins in eighteenth-century Württemberg, Germany, where George Rapp emerged from a countryside marred by death and destruction to gain a small following of religious dissenters. From Germany, Rapp led his followers on an exodus to Pennsylvania and then to the banks of the Wabash River in Indiana Territory. There, the Rappites forged an egalitarian community that successfully engaged in a larger frontier economy and accumulated great amounts of wealth. Despite European visitors who proclaimed New Harmony the "Wonder of the West," internal dissension emerged and eventually led

Rapp to move the community back to Pennsylvania.

Scottish industrialist Robert Owen purchased Rapp's community, buildings and all, and viewed it as a place where he might build a secular utopia. Pitzer traces Owen's ideals back to Scotland. Captivated by a "science of society," Owen believed that he could redeem the working class through education and adult learning. "In America," Pitzer points out, "Owen stood at center stage with a unique opportunity to communicate and demonstrate a plan to transform the human character and condition" (p. 51). Unfortunately for Owen and the workers at New Harmony, the United States was not Scotland. Owen's attacks on established religions, devotion to rationalist Enlightenment concepts, and faith in America's elite led most Americans to eschew the experiment.

Pitzer ultimately concludes that these two communitarian movements illustrate larger themes in nineteenth-century American history. First, despite its short tenure in Indiana Territory, Rapp's "Wonder of the

West" ushered in an American communal tradition that included other European experiments—most notably by Morris Birkbeck and George Fowler. Second, Owen's emphasis on adult learning has left a long legacy on trade and vocational schools in the United States. Additionally, the Scottish industrialist's failures at New Harmony expose American attitudes toward class and social position in the time period.

*New Harmony: Then & Now* provides a highly readable account of the communitarian movements in New Harmony, Indiana, alongside beautiful images that provide a window into the vibrant community that still exists along the banks of the Wabash River. While this book was clearly produced for a general audience, academic historians might glean much about nineteenth-century American society from its pages.

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### *Showers Brothers Furniture Company*

#### *The Shared Fortunes of a Family, a City, and a University*

By Carrol Krause

(Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2012. Pp. ix, 285. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. Paperbound, \$25.00.)

A member of Bloomington's Historic Preservation Commission and the writer of a weekly column in the *Bloomington Herald-Times*, Carrol

Krause has prepared a chronological narrative of the local Showers Brothers Furniture Company. Part business history, part family history, and part