

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

community history, her work emphasizes business developments. “Leaving myths behind,” Krause states in the preface, her account “is the real story of how several generations of one extended family gradually built up their furniture enterprise to national prominence while ceaselessly promoting Bloomington’s growth and quality of life” (p. xi). And a fascinating story it is. Krause shows how two brothers—building on their father’s earlier work, and aided by other family members, including women—created one of the world’s largest furniture makers around the turn of the twentieth century. Good management, the early adoption of mass-production methods, friendly labor relations based on welfare capitalism, easy access to raw materials such as wood, and the good fortune of being in the right place at the right time helped Showers Brothers Furniture succeed. Krause spends eleven of the book’s sixteen chapters telling this tale of success.

Conversely, in just three chapters, Krause examines how a number of factors contributed to the firm’s post-World War II downfall. She emphasizes poor managerial decision making, the deleterious effects of competition with furniture companies using low-cost southern labor, and the depletion of nearby hardwood stands needed in furniture making. As she tells the story of Showers Brothers, Krause

also delves deeply into the history of the Showers family, elucidating the many important roles family members played in Bloomington’s spatial, civic, educational, and philanthropic development. In a final chapter, Krause examines the company’s legacy in present-day Bloomington.

Spritely written and illustrated with numerous well-chosen photographs, this study will be of most interest to Bloomington residents. Basing her work mainly on newspaper research—few company records or family papers have survived—Krause fails to link her study to those of other historians. Readers will learn little about how the development of Showers Brothers compared to the growth of other U.S. businesses, not even to the firm’s competitors in furniture making, or how the development of Bloomington was part of a larger booster-driven growth of midwestern cities. Sparse notes and a limited bibliography lead readers to some additional sources. A solid local history, *Showers Brothers Furniture* makes for an enjoyable read but with limited appeal beyond Bloomington.

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