

The New Harmony Manuscript Collections

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A preliminary survey of manuscripts housed in the Library of the Workingmen's Institute in New Harmony has recently been completed by the Indiana Historical Records Survey as the inaugural activity of a program to discover and list all manuscripts located in Indiana libraries and other depositories.

A member of the staff of the Historical Records Survey, one of the Professional and Service Division projects of the Work Projects Administration, has estimated that there are 14,000 pieces in the manuscript collection maintained by the library of the Workingmen's Institute. For purposes of survey, manuscripts were defined as "private papers in unofficial custody as distinguished from public records in official custody." Thus manuscripts in this sense consist largely of letters, personal papers, old business records, notebooks, and the like, and exclude printed material, church archives, or current business records.

The New Harmony manuscripts were divided arbitrarily by the Survey into five collections and information was gathered concerning the housing, history, contents, quantity, cataloguing and accessibility of each collection and concerning the depository as a whole. This information, together with similar facts from other manuscript depositories, is to appear in a volume, *Guide to Depositories of Manuscripts in the United States—Indiana*, a publication of the Work Projects Administration. Similar volumes of the series have already been published for Florida, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, and Michigan, while those for eight other states have been approved for publication. In addition, the nation-wide Survey has prepared nearly forty check lists, guides, and calendars for individual manuscript collections or depositories.

Generally considered as part of the Library's "Special Collection," the New Harmony manuscripts deal principally with the history of the town since 1814, and, together with other items in the collection, treat of the founding, growth, and development of the Rappite and Owenite communities, adding the story of New Harmony through the years that have passed since the period of these experiments. With the

advice and coöperation of Miss Louise M. Husband, Librarian of the Workingmen's Institute, the Survey found the approximate total of manuscripts to be forty-six bound volumes, ten portfolios, ten notebooks and eight bundles of letters. In addition, there are 1,000 separate letters, miscellaneous pamphlets, drawings, and maps, and the 10,000 cards of the local history card files.

The collection is open to research workers of mature years who come recommended and notify the Librarian in advance. Researchers work under the supervision of the Librarian and desired material is supplied from the collections, although limited access to manuscript material is sometimes granted to well-qualified research workers. Only one bibliographical key to the manuscripts has been published, the *List of Books and Pamphlets in a Special Collection in the Library of the Workingmen's Institute, New Harmony, Ind.*, which was compiled and annotated by Rena Reese in March, 1909. This pamphlet has been brought up to date by a typewritten and handwritten addendum maintained by the Library. The publication of the proposed manuscript guide by the Historical Records Survey will inform research workers in advance what they may expect to find at New Harmony, as well as at the several college, university, public, museum, and historical society libraries in Indiana. Thus the scholar can carefully plan his search for source material, and the libraries will be relieved of the duty of conferring with research workers seeking information not in the collections.

Physically, the New Harmony manuscripts are housed in file cases, boxes, a safe, and on sixty-five feet of shelving at various places on the first floor of the library building. This two-story structure, erected in 1893, is brick with stone trim, has masonry walls and wood floors throughout, and is not fireproof. It is hoped to add a fireproof addition to house valuable items in the special collection when conditions permit. The library building also houses the 29,000 bound volumes and files of periodicals of the Institute's Library on the first floor and basement, and a museum and art gallery on the second floor.

Founded in 1838 as one of the many workingmen's institutes provided by William Maclure, the New Harmony Library is the only remaining one of the group. Its manu-

script collections have been built up through the years by gift and purchase, and the organization will buy from any source at "reasonable" prices manuscripts concerning New Harmony history. The library will neither sell nor exchange items, but will accept conditional deposits and loans.

About four-fifths of the present New Harmony manuscript collection has been arranged, the letters alphabetically by author, and the local history card-files alphabetically by author, subject, and title. Only one-twentieth of the manuscript material has been catalogued, and but sixty-three cards list single manuscript items exclusively. These cards are included in the special collection catalogue, which also lists books and pamphlets on New Harmony history. In general, enough information can be obtained from the few cards to determine whether the document is typed or handwritten. Also, the name of the author, the title and date are furnished. Occasionally a card carries a brief biography of the author or a summary of the content of the manuscript, and frequently the conditions of acquisition are stated. There are no cross references on the cards, nor is the location of the manuscript in the library stated, but the intimate knowledge of the librarian concerning manuscript material makes location a relatively easy matter. No manuscripts circulate, but there is a limited amount of desk space for users.

Outstanding among the manuscripts are records dealing with New Harmony social, business, and religious organizations since 1845; music for square dances written in the eighteen-thirties and 'forties; letters from Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi; business papers of Robert Dale Owen covering the years 1829 to 1869; papers of other members of the Owen family; notes, newspaper clippings, and biographical information on residents, buildings, organizations, and institutions of New Harmony since 1908; the correspondence of William Maclure, Thomas Say, Josiah Warren and others prominent in the early history of the town (some of the letters are as early as 1821); and the letters of Young Ewing Allison.

The Special Collection itself covers the dates 1821 to 1938, with the greatest concentration of materials from 1830 to 1840. More than forty volumes, in addition to bundles of letters, notebooks, pamphlets, drawings and maps make up this collection which, with the exception of a few typed copies

of letters, is all original material. Here are the early records of New Harmony and Posey County organizations. Typical are the minutes of the Adelphi boys' debating society, which flourished before the Civil War; the account books of the New Harmony Fire Engine and Hook and Ladder Company from 1848 to 1872; financial records of a plank road built between New Harmony and Mt. Vernon in the eighteen-fifties; the constitution of the New Harmony Society for Mutual Improvement; and many library records since 1838. Other manuscripts in the Special Collection include the original 1825 deed of George Rapp and associates to Robert Owen; local family genealogies; correspondence of David Dale Owen and Robert Dale Owen concerning the Smithsonian Institute; photostats of the minutes of the Preliminary Society of the New Harmony Community of Equality, 1826; a charge account and register book of the Owen Community tavern of the same period; old maps; the New Harmony Methodist Episcopal Church papers, 1845 to date; and an occasional public record, such as a justice of the peace docket of 1840.

An estimated one thousand letters, all originals, throw additional light on their authors and on their ideas concerning the "New Moral World" which was to rise on the banks of the Wabash more than a century ago. The collection includes letters by William Amphlett, C. A. Leseur, Madame Fretageot to William Maclure concerning the school at New Harmony, William Maclure, Thomas Say, Josiah Warren, and others. Additional correspondence of early Owen community members is in the Julian Owen Collection, presented by the collector—a son of Robert Dale Owen—to his granddaughter, Mrs. Grace Zaring Stone, who in turn gave them to her aunt, Miss Eleanor Cooper (Julian Owen's stepdaughter), who loaned the papers to the Library. The seventy-five piece collection includes: business papers; correspondence; New Harmony real estate records of Robert Dale Owen; the will of Frances Wright, made in 1831; letters and business papers of Richard Owen; early land deeds; house plans; and a map descriptive of Rappite occupancy of the community. The subject and date of each piece in the Julian Owen Collection was listed and filed with the collection in 1934 by Professor Paul H. Douglas, University of Chicago, and Miss Eleanor Pancoast.

Another collection to be summarized in the proposed manuscript depository guide of the Indiana Historical Records Survey is the New Harmony local history card files, an estimated 10,000 handwritten and typed cards containing a cumulative history of all phases of New Harmony life. To many of the cards are attached newspaper clippings supplementing the handwritten information. Apparently no important fact relating to the people, buildings, organizations, events, or daily life of New Harmony is too small to escape some mention in the card files, a truly astounding collection of miscellany. The cards themselves are cross referenced to books, pamphlets, newspapers and other sources in the library. This collection is all the more remarkable because it has been assembled entirely by the library staff, and was begun in 1908 by Nora C. Fretageot and since continued by the present librarian, Louise M. Husband.

The Young Ewing Allison Collection of about fifteen letters and six other pieces was assembled and loaned to the depository by the present librarian. It contains letters, a typed autobiography, a bibliography of Mr. Allison's works prepared by the Librarian of the John Crerar Library, Chicago; and other information by or about Mr. Allison, a former Louisville journalist, author, and poet.

Since undertaking the New Harmony manuscript survey, members of the Work Projects Administration staff assigned to the Indiana Historical Records Survey have been establishing contacts with custodians of other manuscript depositories in an attempt to make the proposed manuscript guide as complete and accurate as possible. The Indiana Survey is sponsored by the Indiana Historical Bureau in the hope that an enumeration of the holdings of manuscript depositories in a published guide will be of service to all who have occasion to use the source material listed.