

## Book Reviews

*A Documentary History of the Indiana Decade of the Harmony Society, 1814-1824. Volume I, 1814-1819.* Compiled and edited by Karl J. R. Arndt. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1975. Pp. xxiii, 837. Notes, illustrations, index. Clothbound, \$17.50; paperbound, \$8.00.)

New Harmony is one of the most fascinating towns in Indiana. Historically, interest focuses on the village's origins in the communal societies of George Rapp and Robert Owen and upon its later importance as a center of science, education, and the arts. Currently, attention is attracted to the historic restoration and revitalization of New Harmony being carried out amid a renaissance of its religious and cultural heritage.

Arndt's *Documentary History* contributes a new dimension to the understanding of this town. Through sources first printed in this book it is revealed that the Harmonists laid out and constructed the town according to a symmetrical design prepared in advance by Frederick Rapp, the society's business manager and the adopted son of spiritual leader George Rapp. Such information already has proven invaluable for the development of the comprehensive plan by which the historic district of New Harmony now is being physically restored to its nineteenth century appearance.

This first of two proposed volumes is drawn from decades of Arndt's research and supplements the publications that have made this professor of German the principal scholar of the Harmony Society. The book presents carefully selected and minimally edited letters, many translated from the difficult Swabian dialect, describing the German Separatist Rappites between 1814 and 1819 when they moved from Harmony, Pennsylvania, to build their New Harmony in the Indiana Territory. Most of these source materials are in the Harmony Society Archives at Old Economy, Ambridge, Pennsylvania, where their processing continues. Harmonist correspondence in other repositories, such as the Western Reserve Historical Society Shaker collection in Cleveland, remains to be researched.

With its informative introduction, exhaustive annotation, extensive index, and adequate illustration, Arndt's volume is a fine reference work. It is also much more. The book's chronologically arranged letters, interspersed with appropriate public documents, make it an intimate narrative of

the interaction between a major religious communal group and the economy, politics, and many of the outstanding people of the early Middle West. The reader is transported to the era of twenty-five cent per pound sugar and one dollar per gallon whiskey. There he witnesses the rapid growth of New Harmony from Father Rapp's first optimistic appraisal of the frontier site on the Wabash in 1814 to an English traveler's assessment of its thriving appearance in 1819. By then, eight hundred Harmonists had cleared and cultivated about 1,400 acres, planted orchards and vineyards, and built a three story brick church, a school, a store, and an inn. They had become virtually self sufficient while establishing an interstate commerce from their distillery, brewery, mills, and woolen and cotton factories.

Although no new interpretation of the Harmony Society is likely to emerge from this first volume of Arndt's *Documentary History*, it includes welcome details of Harmonist history, more of which might be anticipated in the second volume. Of particular interest are the Harmonists' persistent refusal to perform military service despite local opposition and state fines, their cultural and religious orientations as indicated by their book and painting orders, their benevolence and skepticism toward other communitarians evident in their correspondence with Shakers and Zoarites, their neighborliness as shown in their cooperation with the English pioneers at Albion, Illinois, and their political influence as illustrated by Frederick Rapp's membership in the Indiana Constitutional Convention of 1816.

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*Indiana Historical Society Lectures, 1973-1974: Human and Cultural Development.* By J. T. Robinson, Melvin L. Fowler, and Brian M. Fagan. (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1974. Pp. 65. Notes. Paperbound, \$1.50.)

Today scholars are used to reading of fresh archaeological discoveries shedding light on man's past. Only infrequently, however, is there an opportunity to read clearly written assessments of the state of knowledge of man and his prehistory. This volume, which includes three essays