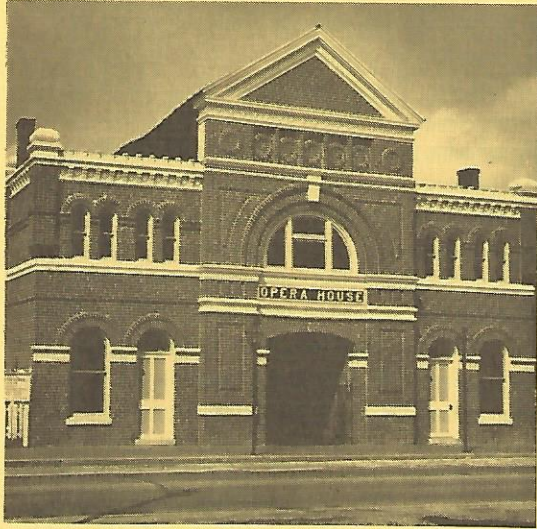


New Harmony



STATE MEMORIAL

THE EXPERIMENTS

New Harmony was founded in 1814 by the Harmony Society led by George Rapp and his adopted son Frederick. The Harmonists were Lutheran Church dissenters from Wurttemberg, Germany, who had previously established a colony in Pennsylvania. They believed the second coming of Christ would occur within their lifetimes and that they should consequently subjugate all personal desires to the good of their community.

They practiced celibacy both as a form of self-denial and because they believed the imminent coming of Christ made the bearing of children superfluous. The Harmonists' principal aim was to make money enough to transport the entire community to Jerusalem to receive the Lord. Therefore, their practice of celibacy was also intended to eliminate the cost of rearing children. Single members of the society lived in dormitories, while members who had been married before joining the Society lived platonically in separate homes with their families.

The tangible results of the Harmonists' self-denial and industriousness were most impressive. Before leaving New Harmony they had 2,000 acres under cultivation; large vineyards and orchards; a portable greenhouse for raising oranges and lemons; four multi-storied brick dormitories; a massive brick church; a large fort-granary; 126 brick, frame, or log homes; two distilleries; a brewery; woolen, cotton, hemp, and saw mills; a mechanics' shop; tanyard; and shoe factory.

Rapp decided to move his community from Indiana because of the great distances to market and because he feared it might be difficult to keep his followers together without the hard work required to build a new town. In 1825, after selling the town for \$190,000 to Robert Owen, a Welsh industrialist, and William Maclure, a Scottish philanthropist, the Harmonists returned to Pennsylvania.

Owen and Maclure, believing that education was the key to a new and better way of life, assembled a group of renowned teachers and scientists from Europe and America to help establish their "empire of good sense" in New Harmony. However, the members of the community soon began to quarrel about the relative importance and difficulty of each other's work. Without practical businessmen and farmers to produce the basic needs of the community, the experiment failed and was dissolved in 1827.

Many of its most brilliant members remained in New Harmony, providing Indiana with a valuable "brain trust" and contributing many cultural and scientific achievements to the town's "afterglow period."

New Harmony contributed many "firsts" to present day society: the first kindergarten; the first infant school; the first trade school; the first free public school system; the first free library; the first civic dramatic club; and the first seat of the U.S. Geological survey.

THE MEMORIAL

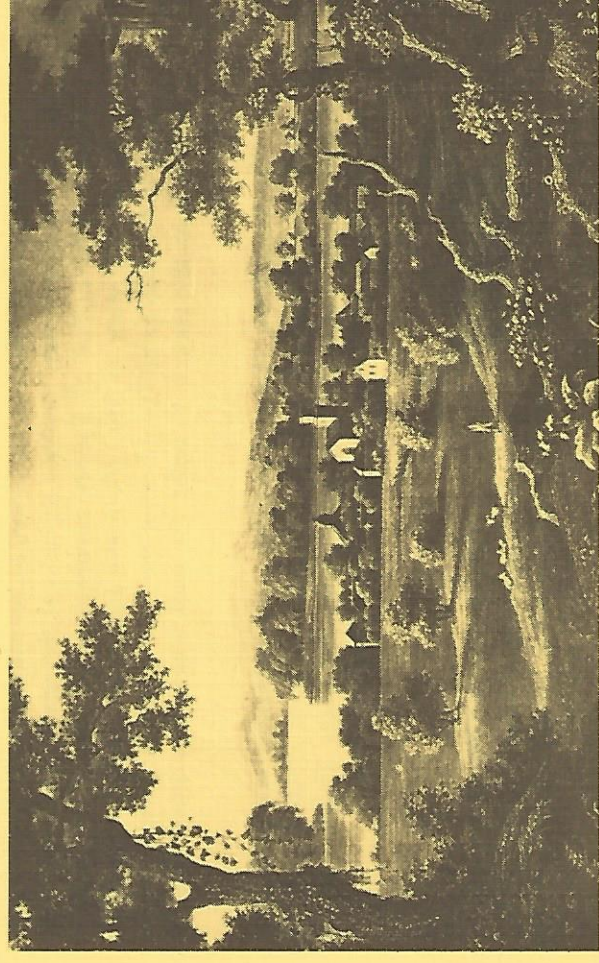
The New Harmony State Memorial preserves five historically significant structures and sites.

The *Fauntleroy Home*, erected in 1815 by the Harmonists, was occupied by several different families during the Owen and Rapp experiments. During the "afterglow" period it was the home of a succession of outstanding scientists, educators, and statesmen. The home was enlarged and remodeled by Robert Fauntleroy after he purchased it in 1840 and thus became permanently associated with his name. The Minerva Society, the first organized women's club in the United States, was established in 1859 in the home.

The home is furnished with simple items typical of its earliest period, as well as rare items brought from throughout the world by some of the community's most famous nineteenth century residents.

Dormitory Number Two, one of the Harmonists' four large brick community buildings, served as a men's dormitory until Owen's followers converted it into a school where the Pestalozzian system of education was introduced in America. In later years it served at different times as the headquarters for many scientists, the home of the Society of Mutual Instruction, a tavern, library, post office, telephone exchange, and fraternal lodge.

The Dormitory presently houses a collection of artifacts from the Harmonists, Owen, and "afterglow" periods. The Slater print shop,



New Harmony during the Owen Experiment

which operated in the building for seventy-five years, is also still preserved here.

The *Opera House*, last of the communal dormitories built by the Harmonists, was used as a ballroom by members of the Owen community and later became a boarding house. By 1857 the building had been remodeled by the local Thespian Society, and it was enlarged in 1888 to provide more space for theatrical activities. At one time it was the second largest theatre in Indiana, featuring many nationally known performers. In 1914 it was converted into an auto repair garage.

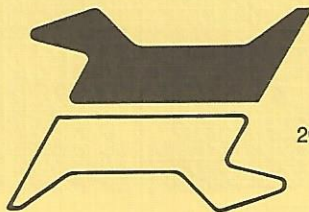
Today the building looks much as it did when it was an opera house and is once again the home of many theatrical performances. The lavish interior is reminiscent of the "golden age" of the American theatre when it provided an impressive setting for the many theatrical "greats" who performed here.

The *Labyrinth* is an intricate maze of shrubbery-bordered paths leading to a small temple. The non-permanent nature of the shrubbery reflects the Harmonist belief in the imminence of the millennium, and the winding paths symbolize the difficulty of achieving harmony. The rough exterior of the temple indicates that harmony offers few allurements to those who do not possess it, while the beautiful interior symbolizes the rewards of harmony when finally attained.

The original Harmonist Labyrinth fell into disrepair and was destroyed in the years after the Harmonists departed. It has been reconstructed on a site immediately adjacent to the original.

The *Harmonist Cemetery* contains the unmarked graves of more than two hundred Harmonists as well as several Indian burial mounds. It was the Harmonists' practice to conceal the exact location of individual graves so that all Society members would remain as equal in death as they were in life. When the Harmonist church was taken down in the 1870's some members of the Society returned and used the bricks from the church to build the wall which now surrounds the cemetery.

The Fauntleroy Home, Cemetery, and Labyrinth are open year round. The Dormitory is open during the summer months, and the Opera House is open for large group tours and plays. There is an admission charge for the Dormitory and Fauntleroy Home.



Division of Museums & Memorials

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

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