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Fourierist Communities of Reform

The Social Networks of
Nineteenth-Century Female Reformers



Amy Hart

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Palgrave Studies in Utopianism

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Utopianism is an interdisciplinary concept which covers philosophy, sociology, literature, history of ideas, art and architecture, religion, futurology and other fields. While literary utopianism is usually dated from Thomas More's *Utopia* (1516), communitarian movements and ideologies proposing utopian ends have existed in most societies through history. They imagine varied ideal beginnings of the species, like golden ages or paradises, potential futures akin to the millennium, and also ways of attaining similar states within real time. Utopianism, in the sense of striving for a much improved world, is also present in many trends in contemporary popular movements, and in phenomena as diverse as films, video games, environmental and medical projections. Increasingly utopia shares the limelight with dystopia, its negative inversion, and with projections of the degeneration of humanity and nature alike. This series will aim to publish the best new scholarship across these varied fields. It will focus on original studies of interest to a broad readership, including, but not limited to, historical and theoretical narratives as well as accounts of contemporary utopian thought, interpretation and action.

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ABOUT THE BOOK

This book explores the many intersecting social reform movements that took shape during the mid-nineteenth century, specifically highlighting the experiences of female socialist communitarians. Delving into the little-known history of women who joined income-sharing communities during the 1840s, this book examines the myriad ways their experiences and social interactions within these communal environments created networks of reformers that extended beyond the communal setting. The communities examined in this book were inspired by French writer and social commentator Charles Fourier. Fourier's writings prompted the creation of over two dozen intentional communities across the United States during the 1840s, a period of economic instability and social division across the country. In a time when women in the United States faced a spectrum of legal and social restrictions ranging from coverture to slavery, women who joined these radical communities found opportunities and support for engaging in social activism. Though these communities existed only for a few years before dismantling, they nevertheless served to create links between social reformers that existed for years, and even generations, afterward. Using numerous sources including letters, journals, meeting notes, and newspaper articles among other written media, Dr. Hart argues that these female communitarians helped shape the ideological underpinnings of some of the country's most enduring and successful social movements, including the women's rights movement and abolition movement. Instead of viewing these reform movements as consisting of distinct organizations, Dr. Hart argues that they should be seen as intertwined and interdependent, consisting of many of the same individuals and supported

within unexpected settings, including within cooperative communal experiments. Due to the role of female communarians in shaping and contributing to various nineteenth-century social reform movements, Dr. Hart contends that intentional communities should be analyzed as a critical force in the history of social activism in the United States.

Parts of this book have been previously published as articles. These articles are:

“On Earth as It Is in Heaven: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Religious Communal Experiments in the United States,” Amy Hart, *Religion Compass* Vol. 14, Issue 1 (Jan. 2020). © 2019 by Wiley.

“‘All is Harmony in that Department:’ Religious Expressions Within the Fourierist Communal Experiments of the 1840s,” Amy Hart, *Nova Religio* Vol. 23, Issue 2, pgs. 18–41. © 2019 by The Regents of the University of California.

Praise for *Fourierist Communities of Reform*

“Finally communal women get their due! Amy Hart’s meticulously researched and most readable book demonstrates that modern feminism did not begin at Seneca Falls, but was part of a milieu of reform movements, many of which crossed paths frequently with the intentional communities of the first half of the nineteenth century.”

—Dr. Timothy Miller, *Professor Emeritus of Religious Studies, University of Kansas*

“This is a fine book and a significant contribution to the study of American Fourierism. Amy Hart’s big theme—that her four communal experiments *lived on* in the post-communal lives of their members—enables her to make fascinating connections between various reform movements. Her resourceful research in private correspondence enables her to discuss individual experience with a rare specificity. The personal histories come alive on the page thanks to shrewdly chosen quotes and sharp commentary.”

—Dr. Jonathan Beecher, *Professor Emeritus, Department of History, University of California Santa Cruz*

“This innovative study of nineteenth century female social reformers chronicles the lives of women whose identities were forged during their residence in Fourierist intentional communities of the 1840’s. It vividly depicts the idealism of those farflung utopian experiments without glossing over their inner contradictions and sometimes misguided ideologies. It explores ways their unique opportunities and constraints inspired women to fight for racial justice, gender equality and economic equity long after their return to mainstream society.”

—Steven Marx, *Emeritus Professor of English, Cal Poly University, San Luis Obispo*

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Introduction to Intentional Communities and Social Change

In the 1840s the United States was a country in transition. Reeling from an economic panic in 1837 that had led to a prolonged depression, the residents of the country were facing uncertain futures in a dynamic and evolving market economy they were only just beginning to learn to navigate. At the same time, the federal government continued to acquire control of new territory to the west of the Mississippi River through treaties and warfare with Indigenous populations, and thus the United States was geographically expanding despite the economic downturn. Congress grew increasingly divided between Northern and Southern factions as the nation failed to decide a clear path forward for introducing or prohibiting the institution of slavery in western territories. A social and political divide was forming, which would culminate in Southern secession and the Civil War.

During this period characterized by instability and unease, a series of grassroots social reform efforts found expression across the country, as individuals sought to initiate change outside of formal political institutions. Reform-minded individuals formed themselves into organizations that advocated for a variety of causes from temperance to abolition, and some of them chose to enact their reform goals by creating planned communities where they could live out their ideals together without distraction from outsiders. These plans for communal organizations were diverse and numerous enough among some social circles that Ralph Waldo

Emerson commented in 1840, “not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waistcoat pocket.”¹ While many intentional communities arose during this period, this book is centered on the series of socialist communities inspired by French utopian Charles Fourier.

Fourier created a blueprint for the ideal society based on “attractive” labor, religious pluralism, and gender equality.² His plans were adopted and executed by individuals across the United States during the 1840s who found his challenge to economic, social, and religious norms appealing. Women of various economic and social backgrounds joined Fourierist communities for their promise of recognizing women’s labor as equally valuable to society as men’s labor. Though most of the Fourierist communities were dissolved by the end of the decade and largely fell short of their social reform goals (including gender equality), women who joined them nevertheless gained material and social benefits from their time at these communities. As part of their participation in these cooperative organizations, women cultivated social networks and learned organizational skills that they brought with them when they joined or led other social reform movements in later years. This book highlights the experiences of those women, focusing particularly on the ways these communities shaped the rest of their lives.

UTOPIAS, COMMUNES, AND INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

Individuals were forming themselves into planned communities with other like-minded people long before the creation of the United States. Though written references to “utopia” reach as far back as Thomas More’s first usage in 1516 in his book, *Utopia*, the planning and formation of utopian communities also found expression beyond the pages of literature.³ Within both literature and the material world, utopias represent an imagined response to current problems. Proposed utopian solutions typically take the shape of a nostalgic longing for the past combined

¹Letter, Emerson to Thomas Carlyle, Oct. 30, 1840, in *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson, 1834–1872, Vol. I*, ed. Charles Eliot Norton (Project Gutenberg EBook, 2004 [1883]).

²Unlike other socialists of the period, Fourier did not see labor as inherently unappealing, but believed it could be made enjoyable, or in his words, “attractive.” See Charles Fourier, *Selections from the Works of Fourier*, trans. Julia Franklin (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1901), 163–170.

³Thomas More, *Utopia* (1516).

with an incorporation of present technology in order to produce a more just, equitable future. The communities imagined by Fourier were no different: they both recalled the simplicities of a rural agrarian past while also harnessing elements of industrial technology for the purpose of maximizing human pleasure and fulfillment.

The term “intentional community” is unfamiliar to most individuals outside of the academic niche of communal studies scholarship. Yet the term becomes more familiar to historians and literary critics when its other iterations are referenced, including “utopias,” “communes,” or “cooperatives.” These names for planned communities have enjoyed popularity at various periods throughout the decades of communal studies scholarship, but the object they reference has remained relatively constant: those groups of people who consciously formed themselves into communities with a shared goal in mind. The term “intentional community” remains the most widely utilized among scholars in recent years due to its relative lack of pejorative connotations, unlike “commune,” which conjures ideas of countercultural youth, or even “utopia,” which itself now conjures ideas of naïve fantasy.

While many definitions of an “intentional community” have been proposed, the prevailing definition currently utilized by communal studies scholars was offered by Timothy Miller, who defines intentional communities as including the following criteria: a sense of common purpose and of separation from the dominant society, some form and level of self-denial, a voluntary suppression of individual choice in favor of the good of the group, geographic proximity of members, personal interaction, economic sharing, real existence, and critical mass (at least five people who are not all related).⁴ Throughout United States history, various religious, ethnic, and social groups have formed themselves into intentional communities that meet this definition, starting arguably as early as Jamestown in Virginia and the Plymouth colony in Massachusetts.⁵ Their goals have

⁴Timothy Miller, *The 60s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1999), xxii–xxiv. A clear summary of the definitions offered by communal studies scholars is also provided by Eliezer Ben-Rafael, Yaacov Oved, and Menachem Topel, eds., *The Communal Idea in the 21st Century* (Boston: Brill, 2013): “All in all, communal societies have gone by many names depending on their time, place, and economic arrangements. All can be broadly defined as voluntary social units, whose members usually share an ideology, an economic union, and a lifestyle.” (6).

⁵See “Intentional Communities in the United States and Canada,” In *Encyclopedia of Community: From the Village to the Virtual World Vol. 1*, eds. Karen Christensen and David Levinson (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2003), 762–763.

been alternatively religious, economic, or social in nature, though in many cases the community attempts to address all of these issues in some form.

Intentional communities have traditionally been analyzed as isolated, semi-autonomous communities of extremists. Undoubtedly, some intentional communities were relatively self-isolating, attempting to exist apart from society and discouraging interactions with those outside of the community. These were often religious groups who feared persecution from outsiders, including the Shakers, the Oneida community, and the Mormons.⁶ However, some groups who formed intentional communities in United States history did not desire to escape from society, but instead to transform it through the influence of their communal experiment. Those socially integrated intentional communities attempted to provide a model of alternative living for the rest of society, consciously making their goals and lifestyles visible by printing publications, welcoming visitors, holding events or lectures, and advertising their way of life. This latter kind of community, which integrated social reform activism into communal life, constitutes the subject of this study.

Among the collection of new communities organized in 1840s United States were a loose collective of living experiments inspired by the socialist writings of Charles Fourier.⁷ Their distinctive character included a focus

⁶Yaacov Oved analyzes the extent to which religious communities achieved total isolation from surrounding society, concluding that while retreat might be stated as a goal of the community, complete isolation was impractical as community members often had to engage in business dealings, land purchases, and petitioning the government. See Yaacov Oved, "Communes & the Outside World: Seclusion & Involvement," *Communal Societies* Vol. 3 (1983): 83–92.

⁷The socialist-leaning intentional communities of the nineteenth century are often referred to as "proto-socialist," or "utopian socialist" to indicate their distinction from Karl Marx's "scientific socialism." The notion of a utopian and scientific form of socialism was introduced by Friedrich Engels in his attempt to uplift Marx's socialism as the truly modern, rational response to capitalism. Engels's critiques of utopian socialism include the argument that the utopian vision was only gradual, implementing few people at a time who would join utopian societies based on the founder's singular vision. Instead, Engels argued, Marx's response to capitalism addressed the source of class struggle: the ownership of the means of production. Thus, only Marx's response could alleviate the systemic exploitation of the working class. In addition, Engels contended that utopian socialists lacked an overarching theory of history that explained the trajectory of economic and social systems, thus making their plans short-sighted. Though these two visions differed in many ways, both offered critiques of capitalism and unregulated industrialization, and provided a blueprint for an alternative economic system. These alternative economic theories reveal that capitalism was not universally viewed as

on facilitating social reform activism among their members. Daily life within the Fourierist community setting often provided opportunities for collaboration, organization, and correspondence among interconnected groups of reformers. This book centers these communities as essential sites for cultivating reform networks for numerous reform efforts, including abolitionism, temperance, women's rights, labor rights, Spiritualism, and health cures.

In this book, I highlight the social networks that were developed within the Fourierist communities and argue that these communal environments inspired future social and political activism among community members. This study focuses primarily on female members, who are often overlooked in the study of Fourierist communities due to the primarily male leadership that acted as the public face for these communities. While men left numerous written records that shaped the historical memories of these communities for subsequent generations, those (comparably fewer) written records left by women reveal that women often experienced those communities differently than their male counterparts. Instead of seeing the communities as public platforms through which bold ideas and proclamations could be made, women often viewed the communal environment as a space to cultivate friendships and find educational and financial opportunities. Though women left fewer written records during their time in the community, the lasting imprint of communal living can be uncovered by following their lives after they left the communities, as well as the lives of their children who were influenced by the communities.

By highlighting these female community members' sustained social reform efforts, as well as their political engagement during and after their time in an intentional community, this book challenges prevailing notions of intentional communities as universally serving as places of isolation and withdrawal from the surrounding society. Many studies of intentional communities approach the communities as "dots on a map," separate from each other and their surrounding society.⁸ In this book I reimagine that map as a series of overlapping lines connecting communitarians to

the inevitable global economic system during the nineteenth century, or even most of the twentieth. See Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1918 [originally published 1880]); see also Jonathan Beecher's introduction of the term "romantic socialism" as an alternative to the terms "utopian" and "scientific" socialisms in *Victor Considerant and the Rise and Fall of French Romantic Socialism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), esp. pgs. 3–7.

⁸ Robert P. Sutton, *Heartland Utopias* (Northern Illinois University Press, 2009), 181.

each other as well as to other social reformers not directly involved in the communitarian movement. While scholars have previously explored the interconnections between intentional communities themselves, sparse attention has been paid to the interactions between communitarians and their contemporaries within other, non-communitarian reform movements.⁹ By expanding the study of intentional community members beyond the time frame of their community's organized existence, the influence of the communal environment on shaping subsequent reform movements in the United States becomes clear.

The book's chapters are organized around four specific communities: Trumbull Phalanx in Ohio, Northampton Association of Education and Industry in Massachusetts, Wisconsin Phalanx in Wisconsin, and Brook Farm in Massachusetts. Each chapter highlights select female members of the communities, tracing their lives from their time in the community through their lasting dedication to social reform activism afterward.¹⁰ As will be explored in the subsequent chapters, many female communitarians experienced social and material advantages in these intentional communities compared to their lives before joining the communities, but these advantages only partially represented the ideals proposed by the communities' constitutions and bylaws. While women's equality was a stated goal of many Fourierist communities, social norms and material realities in each community often prevented communitarians from enacting these ideals to the fullest extent possible.

Female communitarians who joined Fourierist communities in the United States adopted those elements of Fourier's communal vision that best fit their own social context and specifically the race, gender, and class dynamics within that context. Charles Fourier's ideas lie at the center of this study, and so understanding his lived experiences, and his vision for the world that developed out of those experiences, is essential. Only through contextualizing Fourier's worldview can scholars appreciate the myriad ways that his followers in the United States both succeeded and failed to enact that worldview.

⁹ Otohiko Okugawa analyzes the interdependence of nineteenth-century communities through a variety of interpersonal ties among members. See Otohiko Okugawa, "Intercommunal Relationships among Nineteenth-century Communal Societies in America," *Communal Societies* Vol 3. (1983): 68–82.

¹⁰ The form of this book is inspired by the organization and writing style of Natalie Zemon Davis's *Women on the Margins: Three Seventeenth-Century Lives* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1995).

THE LIFE AND WORLDVIEW OF CHARLES FOURIER

Charles Fourier was motivated to create blueprints for the ideal society following his own disappointment with economic and political instability in his home country of France. Born in 1772 to a family of merchants, Fourier reluctantly entered commerce at the behest of his father, who threatened to withhold his inheritance if Fourier chose a different path. While apprenticed to a cloth merchant in Lyon, Fourier maneuvered through the violent years of the French Revolution and subsequent insurrection in Lyon, barely escaping with his own life.¹¹ His disgust with the chaos and abuses of power instigated by his government mirrored his opinions of industrial factory life. As a merchant he saw laborers completing seemingly meaningless and repetitive tasks for little pay. In a cruel cycle, he recognized that as the government set price controls on goods, producers refused to sell their products, leading to both widespread poverty and hunger as the working class possessed little money and could buy nothing with it. Disillusioned with both his government and the industrializing economy, Fourier began to imagine a better world where individuals found fulfillment in their labor and had their personal needs met. In his early nineteenth-century texts, Fourier described this world as comprising multiple planned communities existing in mutual harmony.¹²

Fourier's ideas were also largely a reaction against the French Revolution and its supporters' apparent ideological commitment to engineering economic and social equality through violent and unjust means. Instead, Fourier posited that humanity is made up of diverse groups that possess natural talents or predispositions that must be put into balance by placing them alongside proportional groups of people with complementary talents. Individuals should not be forced to become identical, but instead should allow their natural differences to flourish. Communities that had achieved this balance of talents would form self-sustaining and mutually beneficial microcosms of society in which every person could follow his or

¹¹ Fourier's early adulthood during the French Revolution is chronicled by Beecher and Bienvenu in *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier: Selected Texts on Work, Love, and Passionate Attraction*, eds. Jonathan Beecher and Richard Bienvenu (Boston: Beacon Press, 1971), 3–7.

¹² Fourier's first book was a meandering text called *Théorie des quatre mouvements et des destinées générales*, published in 1808. An English translation of the text was first published in 1857 titled Charles Fourier, *The Social Destiny of Man, or, Theory of the Four Movements*, by Charles Fourier, Henry Clapp, Jr. and Albert Brisbane, trans. (New York: Robert M. Dewitt, 1857).

her desired vocation without being forced into conformity nor restricted by social forces like gender norms, poverty, or discrimination. To Fourier, planned harmonious communities such as these represented the future of the world and the best response to the cruel and unstable societies being produced by unchecked capitalism and violent governments.

Fourier's vision of the world depicted humans as generally good, though corrupted by institutions. He believed the political and economic systems of his day were imposing undue limitations on individuals based not on their personality differences, but on superficial differences, including gender. Fourier represents an early feminist voice in France, who traced many societal ills back to the unequal treatment of women. Combating the oppression of women became a primary goal of Fourier's utopian vision as evidenced through his writings, in which he repeatedly pointed to the degradation of women as harming society as a whole. As he summarized: "As a general proposition: Social progress and changes of period are brought about by virtue of the progress of women towards liberty, and social retrogression occurs as a result of a diminution in the liberty of women."¹³ Fourier's female disciples in France were part of the early women's rights movement there, including Jeanne-Désirée Vêret and Flora Tristan, who fought for women's economic independence as the key to liberating women from their present servile state.¹⁴ In many ways, the women who were attracted to Fourier's ideas in France were combating similar social and legal restrictions as those women in the United States who would later join Fourierist communities. Under the Napoleonic Civil Code of 1804, divorce was essentially illegal, the father held legal custody of children, and husbands controlled all family property.¹⁵ Similar laws existed in the United States throughout the early nineteenth century and were partially addressed in Fourierist communities, where women

¹³ Charles Fourier, as quoted in *The Utopian Vision of Charles Fourier*, 195.

¹⁴ For more on Flora Tristan's feminism, as well as her involvement with Fourier and his ideas, see Susan K. Grogan, *French Socialism and Sexual Difference: Women and the New Society, 1803–1844* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1992), esp. Chap. 8: "Flora Tristan and the Moral Superiority of Women," 155–174. Vêret was involved with both Saint-Simonian and Fourierist social circles as a means to promoting women's equality. She founded *The Women's Tribune* to enable female writers to offer women's perspectives on social issues of the period. See Grogan, *French Socialism and Sexual Difference*, 100–103.

¹⁵ For more on the Napoleonic Civil Code and its impact on women, see Jennifer Ngaire Heuer, *The Family and the Nation: Gender and Citizenship in Revolutionary France, 1789–1830* (New York: Cornell University Press, 2005), esp. Chap. 5: "Tethering Cain's Wife: The Napoleonic Civil Code," 127–142.

could buy shares in the community property and earn their own wages. Fourierist ideas thus appealed to women in both France and the United States who were battling legal restrictions regarding marriage, divorce, and financial independence.

Fourier's feminist ideas would gain him popularity among the political left in France by the end of his life, as well as posthumously, once his writings were condensed and distributed by his followers across France and the United States. But during his life, the meandering and unfocused style of his writings left most of his contemporaries baffled, as his social theories weaved fantasy with reality and often blurred the line between the two. Despite his eccentricities and their effect on delaying his positive reception by the public, Fourier succeeded in influencing his fellow European utopian writers, who would also have a large impact on the utopian movement in the United States.¹⁶

Unlike other European utopians of his era, Fourier died before he could witness his writings brought to life in the form of communal experiments initiated across the United States, though there is little doubt that each of the experiments would have been a disappointment to him.¹⁷ Fourier's model for the ideal society was meticulously crafted through mathematical equations and formulas based on the exact number of different propensities or "passions" existent in humanity and, thus, approximations of these formulas would not suffice.¹⁸ Based on the number of passions in humanity, Fourier deduced that 1620 people would ideally inhabit each community for each passion to be adequately represented. To Fourier, achieving these population numbers was crucial to the success of a community, though it was a requirement that each of the Fourierist communities in the United States failed to achieve.¹⁹ Even as Fourier

¹⁶ On Fourier's feminism paired with his eccentricity, see Claire Goldberg Moses, *French Feminism in the Nineteenth Century* (Albany, State University of New York, 1984), esp. 92–93.

¹⁷ The terms "communitarian" and "Fourierist" are now used by scholars to describe Fourier's followers and the communal experiments they initiated across the United States, though at the time these reformers primarily referred to their communal projects as experiments in "Association" or "social science." See Carl Guarneri, "Importing Fourierism to America," *Journal of the History of Ideas* Vol. 43, No. 4 (Oct.–Dec., 1982): 583.

¹⁸ Fourier describes the passions and passionate attraction in his first book, translated most succinctly as *Theory of the Four Movements*, eds. Gareth Stedman Jones and Ian Patterson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), esp. 74–78.

¹⁹ See Charles Fourier, *Design for Utopia: Selected Writings of Charles Fourier*, trans. Julia Frankli (New York, Schocken Books, 1971); Charles Fourier, *The Utopian Vision of Charles*

mocked philosophers as fools who were disconnected from actual human suffering, he simultaneously advocated his own all-encompassing theory of humanity based on his purportedly superior powers of observation. Despite the rigidity of his utopian vision, eager communarians across the United States chose to adopt Fourier's principles and goals in the creation of their own international communities.²⁰

UNDERSTANDING THE LONG-TERM IMPACTS OF THE FOURIERIST COMMUNAL EXPERIMENTS

A perennial question surrounding the study of intentional communities revolves around the judgment of their "success" or "failure." Until the late twentieth century, assessments of a community's success were determined largely through the length of time that those communities existed; communities that existed for less than twenty-five or perhaps fifty years could be dismissed as failures, while those who boast lifelong members across multiple generations could be deemed successful, at least until their eventual failure. In 1870 John Humphrey Noyes, the founder of an intentional community known as Oneida, published his survey of communal experiments in United States history; his conclusions on the success or failure of those experiments were based almost solely on their longevity.²¹ In 1972, Sociologist Rosabeth Moss Kanter published *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective*, in which she analyzed a series of factors that make intentional communities "successful." In her discussion of nineteenth-century communities, she concluded that certain "commitment mechanisms" are necessary to ensure the longevity of a community, including sacrifice, investment, shared ideology, and group loyalty.²² Her book offered tools for analyzing the success of intentional communities, but continued to employ the same framework that judged communities as successful only based on their longevity.

In 1983, Communal Studies scholar Donald Pitzer rejected this focus on longevity as the primary measurement of success for

Fourier, 49; Beecher, *Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 241–242.

²⁰ Fourier, *Theory of the Four Movements*, 65–66.

²¹ John Humphrey Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Mount Tom Printing Press, 1870).

²² Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1972).

communal experiments.²³ Instead of arguing that a community “failed” when its communal group dispersed, Pitzer and fellow communal studies scholars began advocating a “developmental communalism” approach, which “examines whole movements and how they change over time, from their idealistic origins to their communal stages, and beyond.”²⁴ Pitzer argued that intentional communities should be approached as a means to an end, rather than an end in themselves, for the goals and visions that inspired the communities were often incorporated later into the wider society.²⁵ With Pitzer’s intervention, the notion that communal experiments live on through their individual members emerged as a more nuanced approach to the study of communities and their social impact.

This book builds upon Pitzer’s thesis by arguing that the failure or success of a community should not be determined by their longevity alone, as a communities’ impact on individuals or localities does not necessarily end when the communal structures are abandoned or repurposed. Instead, I consider whether the community’s stated goals and missions lived on through the actions of individual members following their departure from the community.²⁶ In using this framework, this book upends the most

²³Donald Pitzer, “The Uses of the American Communal Past,” Presentation, National Historic Communal Societies Association Conference, New Harmony, Indiana, October 13, 1983. His critique found echoes in 1997 with the release of his edited volume *America’s Communal Utopias*.

²⁴Donald Pitzer, “Introduction,” in *America’s Communal Utopias*, Donald Pitzer, ed. (Chapel Hill: University Of North Carolina Press, 1997), 12. Joshua Lockyer built upon Pitzer’s theory by advocating “Transformative Utopianism,” or an approach to analyzing intentional communities that highlights the ways their utopian idealism lives on as part of larger social movements. This book builds upon both theories. See Joshua Lockyer, “From Developmental Communalism to Transformative Utopianism: An Imagined Conversation with Donald Pitzer,” *Communal Societies* Vol. 29 (2009): 1–21.

²⁵Donald Pitzer, “The Origins and Applications of Developmental Communalism from Amana to Zoar,” Presentation, Communal Studies Association Conference, Zoar, Ohio, October 6, 2017.

²⁶While communal studies scholars have, in recent years, almost unanimously rejected longevity as the sole indicator of success, Kanter’s work is still commonly cited, and thus requires continued response. Many communal studies scholars continue to end their narrative of communities with the end of the collective communal experiment, implying its expiration, or irrelevance beyond this point. See, for instance, Sterling Delano’s *Brook Farm: The Dark Side of Utopia*. For a critique of this success/failure framework within a contemporary study of intentional communities, see Jade Aguilar, “Assessing Success in High-Turnover Communities: Communes as Temporary Sites of Learning and Transmission of Values,”

common approach used in traditional studies of intentional communities, which applies a time frame that bookends the beginning and end of the communities themselves. By extending the period of focus beyond the lifespan of the community, the leadership roles that communitarian women adopted in later reform movements come into view, revealing a new picture of the influence of communitarian women in various reform efforts.

In addition to challenging prevailing notions of intentional communities as failed experiments due to their brevity, this book also approaches intentional communities as an important contributor to the burgeoning women's rights movement of the 1840s, as well as other social reform movements of the period. While women utilized various outlets for political and social reform activism throughout the nineteenth century, including unions, churches, and clubs, intentional communities have typically not been included within these studies.²⁷ By overlooking or excluding

Journal for the Study of Radicalism Vol. 6, No. 1 (2012): 35–57. This book builds on recent scholarship that has advanced Pitzer's thesis, including that of Joseph Manzella and Paolo Magagnoli, who argue that memory, nostalgia, and the tie to geographic place stimulate continued bonds with the intentional community among former communitarians. Joseph Manzella, *Common Purse, Uncommon Future: The Long, Strange Trip of Communes and Other Intentional Communities* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2010); Paolo Magagnoli, *Documents of Utopia: The Politics of Experimental Documentary* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015); Eagle Glassheim contributes to the discussion of nostalgia in his analysis of utopianism as a tie to a region, analogous to the German notion of *Heimat*. Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016). The historical community that perhaps most upends the notion of longevity indicating the "success" or memorability of a community is arguably "Fruitlands," the vegetarian, quasi-transcendentalist community founded by Bronson Alcott. This community is frequently referenced by historians as one of the most well-known and frequently studied of New England nineteenth-century communities, often placed alongside the other transcendentalist community, Brook Farm. But while Brook Farm existed as a community for six years, Fruitlands lasted merely seven months. Despite this brevity, it remains a paradigm of success today, if only in the level of historical research dedicated to it.

²⁷A series of books on women's history published in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries approached the topic of women's involvement in social reform primarily through churches and clubs. See: Lori Ginzberg, *Women and the Work of Benevolence: Morality, Politics, and Class in the 19th-Century United States* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990); Nancy Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: "Woman's Sphere" in New England, 1780–1835* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977); Lori Ginzberg, *Women in Antebellum Reform* (Wheeling, Illinois: Harlan Davidson, 2000); Nancy Isenberg, *Sex and Citizenship in Antebellum America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998); Megan Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (New York:

intentional communities as an avenue through which women cultivated social ties and focused their reform efforts, scholars have neglected a key element that may produce a more complete genealogy of reform efforts during the nineteenth century.

Relatedly, this book also challenges conventional timelines that position the women's rights movement as beginning in 1848 with the Seneca Falls convention, and instead looks to the political and social activism conceived by groups of women within the intentional community setting during the early 1840s.²⁸ In doing so, this book aligns with the scholarship that traces the women's rights movement back to the national anti-slavery societies of the 1830s. By extending the timeline of the women's rights movement, women's social reform activism in the communal environment can, appropriately, be included within the larger history of the movement.²⁹

ACCESSING THE HISTORY OF INTENTIONAL COMMUNITIES

The chapters of this book are not ordered based on the chronological beginnings of each community, but instead on the social and political links created by community members, which expand in each chapter until the interconnectedness of these communities with the principal social reform movements of the period becomes evident. These social links culminate in

Houghton Mifflin, 2006); Carroll Smith-Rosenberg, *Disorderly Conduct: Visions of Gender in Victorian America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985); Nancy Hewitt argues that the various social movements that women in Rochester, New York engaged with during the nineteenth century depended on their socioeconomic status, religious backgrounds, a geographic setting. See Nancy Hewitt, *Women's Activism and Social Change: Rochester, New York, 1822–1872* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984); While she focuses primarily on women of the late-nineteenth century, Lillian Faderman also analyzes women's use of moral benevolence to further social reform while evading male dominance in *To Believe in Women: What Lesbians Have Done For America—A History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999); Ellen DuBois briefly mentions the role of “utopian socialism” in the early years of the emerging women's rights movement in “Woman Suffrage and the Left An International Socialist-Feminist Perspective,” in *Woman Suffrage and Women's Rights*, (New York: New York University Press, 1998), 254.

²⁸ Lisa Tetrault challenges the traditional timeline of the women's rights movement in *The Myth of Seneca Falls: Memory and the Women's Suffrage Movement, 1848–1898* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2014).

²⁹ While this book focuses primarily on the period of the 1840s, the women's rights movement can be traced back to anti-slavery organizations of the 1830s, including the Female Anti-Slavery, which advocated women's equality as well as African American equality. As Bettina Aptheker argues, “By 1840, the American anti-slavery movement was committed to women's equality, at least in organizational principle.” Aptheker, *Woman's Legacy*, 20.

the final chapter on Brook Farm, where social and political reformers from across the country convened for lectures, attended social gatherings, or connected through correspondence. The links grow more complicated with each chapter, and the connections more overlapping.

In the following chapters, the voices of female communarians will be highlighted, along with broader analyses of the social and political trends of the period, meant to contextualize these voices. At times, those voices will be contrasted with those of male voices in the community to show the differences in the ways men and women experienced communal living, as well as to show their occasional overlapping experiences. Male communarians often held progressive views toward women's rights, and some served as allies who supported female leadership at their Fourierist communities. However, their allyship was often limited and conditional, as some men found that the Fourierist communal model strayed too far from the male-led household model and challenged the legal advantages they enjoyed within marriage. Exploring the voices of male communarians can reveal the extent to which their ideologies aligned with female community members, and the areas where they diverged.

Chapter 2 contextualizes mid-nineteenth century understandings of gender and social activism through the case study of Trumbull Phalanx, highlighting the lives of social reformer Angelique Le Petit Martin and her daughter, Lilly Martin Spencer. This Fourierist community in Ohio focused primarily on industrial pursuits and was home to numerous social reformers engaged in the emerging women's rights, abolition, labor, and temperance movements. Martin's participation in the Fourierist movement connected her to women involved in these other social movements, creating expansive social networks of activists who encouraged and supported one another. Lilly Martin Spencer continued many of her mother's social reform efforts, though she took a different approach from that of her parents. Instead of advocating for the communal living environment as offering liberation to women, as Martin did, Spencer instead lived in the "isolated household" with her husband and thirteen children, but embodied the emerging understanding of feminism promoted by Fourierists through her career as an artist and position as the breadwinner for her family. While Fourierism and communal living was not pursued by the next generation in the case of Angelique Le Petit Martin and Lilly Martin Spencer, the social reform efforts advocated at the community were carried on in unexpected but significant ways.

Chapter 3 focuses on the reformers who participated in the communal experiment known as the Northampton Association of Education and