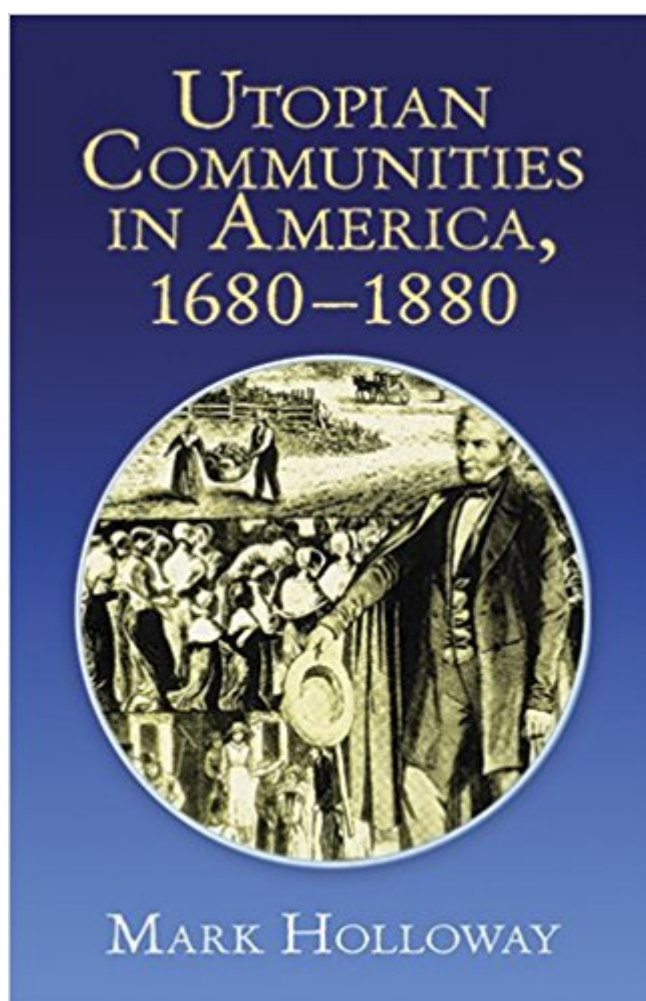


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Utopian Communities In America 1680-1880 (Formerly Titled "Heavens On Earth")



Synopsis

Throughout history, mankind has had the ever-recurring dream of creating perfection. In America, many of these dreams were put to the severe test of reality. More than 100 religious and socialistic communities were formed in the nineteenth century alone, in a widespread movement that involved over 100,000 men, women, and children. Though nearly all the communities were bitter failures and many seem to us today extremely naïve, they nevertheless made valuable contributions to American life — particularly in the fields of education, women's rights, and the abolition of slavery. For these contributions, as well as the communities' own great intrinsic interest, they deserve and repay our consideration. This book gives a fascinating account of the history of several dozen of the most important and typical American utopian communities, emphasizing the Shaker communities, New Harmony, Brook Farm, the Fourieristic phalanxes, and the Oneida settlements in particular. The book is crammed with details of human interest and material on daily life, often quoted directly from the writings of residents and visitors. There are descriptions and accounts of the constitutions, revelations, beliefs, tenets, etc., of the communities; their customs as dictated by religious belief or social principle; the physical appointments of living quarters, dining rooms and work areas; the arrangements for care of children; community dances, songs, and other amusements; the communities' attitudes toward sex; the character and personality of the leaders and founder; and much, much more. Stimulating and fascinating from beginning to end, this book is a popular but accurate study of one of America's most engrossing adventures. As interesting to the lay reader as it is to the historian or the sociologist, it promises absorbing reading and presents many ideas well worth mulling over long after the book is back on the shelf. "An entertaining and in some ways a very instructive book." — Times (London) Literary Supplement.

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Customer Reviews

Informative about parts of my family history of which I had little knowledge.

Excellent book. Used as a reference for my research paper

As previous reviewers have noted, this is still one of the finest books about the many attempts to create Utopian communities in America. How many of us, however briefly or idly, haven't sometimes felt like getting away from a shallow, soul-destroying lifestyle & finding solace in a small group of like-minded people? Author Mark Holloway gives us a thorough overview of such projects over two centuries of American history, describing the tenets of each group & the actual day-to-day details of living in them. He writes sympathetically & clearly, with personal asides that enliven his narrative & its flowerings of idealistic (and often naive) hopes. Yet if these Utopias eventually foundered, they often had a positive effect on society at large -- at the very least, they reminded mainstream society that there were alternatives to the status quo that so many take for granted as an innate law of the universe. It's a message that bears repeating today! And if nothing else, this fascinating book might well encourage its readers to consider their own lives, and whether the lives we're living are truly of our own choice & necessarily the best for us. Highly recommended!

In this 1951 book (revised and republished in 1966), Mark Holloway has written one of the most engaging surveys of "utopian" communities ever written, covering groups such as the Shakers, Rappites, Zoarites, New Harmony, Fourierism, Oneida, Icaria, and including chapters such as, "Utopia In Decline," and "Was it Worth While?" Holloway's observations are both insightful and sharp; such as: "The history of these experiments is one of few successes, many failures, and constantly renewed endeavor. Only three or four communities have lasted longer than a hundred years." "The Anabaptists were persecuted as much for their radicalism as for their religious faith." "The Shakers believed in the bisexuality of God, manifested in the creation of male and female 'in our image,' and duplicated throughout nature in the vegetable as well as in the animal kingdom." "What we would call 'amusement' was unknown to the Shakers in their heyday." "Mormon polygamy was part of the general attack that was everywhere being made on the institution of

monogamy."In John Humphrey Noyes, "All the unconscious sexual desires of the past ten or twenty years had at last found a spokesman whom nothing could daunt, a tactician who drove straight through the enemy's lines of defense armed with only an ingenuous shield of his own devising."Every observer agrees that life in the successful community was far superior to industrial or agricultural life in 'the world.'"For anyone interested in utopian communities, intentional communities, communes, ecovillages, and similar movements, this book is absolute MUST READING!

Much of America's history is dropped into what some refer to as a memory black hole. For a variety of reasons, many parts of American experimentation with lifestyle, living, and economics have been dropped into this hole, rather than celebrated. It would be interesting, if we could, to post facto test the survivability of such experiments in post-Waco America...A good, easy, bath-room compatible and memorable read.

I found this book quite remarkable and well written as well as researched. Few people know the origin of such companies as Onieda Silver or the Amana corp as stemming from religious communal societies of long ago.What this book has to offer those interested in bottom up economic development is hundreds of years of results of experiments both successful and unsuccessful.

I have a soft heart for people with soft heads.

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