AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Coralie Cassell Stanton for the M.A. in General Studies
(Pham) (Degree) (Major)

Date thesis is presented: June 1963

Title: The Aurora Colony, Oregon

Abstract approved: Redacted for Privacy
(Major Professor)

The Aurora Colony, Oregon, a nineteenth century religious communal settlement based on the dictum "love one another," provided its members with "cradle to the grave" security. However, the colony collapsed at the death in 1877 of their leader, William Kail. Kail's leadership in communal settlements had a thirty-three year history, but the colony collapse can be attributed more to a weakening of religious faith and a growing pragmatism among the people than to loss of leadership.

This investigation has attempted to unravel the misconceptions, myths and the personal bias interwoven in earlier considerations of the colony. An effort to separate fact from fiction and truth from rumor is made with the intention of establishing a more accurate historical perspective. As a result, this paper relies most heavily on documentation from original sources, on Kail's letters, on public records, rather than on hearsay, tradition or personal anecdote. New sources of information made available in publications of recent decades have been utilized where they suggested valuable guidelines for further investigation.

Despite attempts to sensationalize Aurora history, until some better evidence supports claims to the contrary, there seems little justification for viewing Aurora as anything more than a unique application of communal living to a religious community in which the family remained the basic unit of society.
THE AURORA COLONY, OREGON

by

Coralie Cassell Stanton

A THESIS

submitted to

OREGON STATE UNIVERSITY

in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the
degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

June 1963
APPROVED:

Redacted for Privacy

Professor of History, General Extension Division

In Charge of Major
Redacted for Privacy

Chairman, General Studies Graduate Committee

Redacted for Privacy

Dean of Graduate School

Date thesis is presented

1963

Typed by Edith Deck
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This study of the Aurora Colony, a 19th century communal religious settlement in the lower Willamette Valley in Oregon, was inspired by the writer's observation of the survivors' unselfish concern for each other's comfort and welfare. This was clearly evidenced among the older Aurora residents who participated in an Oregon Centennial year celebration at Champoeg Park in 1959. Although there were many Oregon pioneer descendants present and participating in the program, the Aurora people seemed to convey an impression of unusual and distinctive personality.

My first investigation of the background of these people was from a purely historical viewpoint, but as this background was delineated, it seemed apparent that an historical approach provided only the bare skeleton, without depth. It was felt that wider scope and a somewhat informed perception pursued in depth might provide an original interpretation of this nineteenth century communal enterprise. Religion, the cultural backgrounds of both the people and the region, the rich landscape of America's nineteenth century Utopian experiments, the place of education in the development and survival of the community, all contributed significant tints to the picture of Aurora, Oregon. This was a basic problem for general study.

The quest for bits and pieces of information that have been woven into this tapestry involved people and institutions far removed from the quiet little community of Aurora at the junction of Deer Creek and Pudding River, streams meandering through the village like muddy wisps of Colony-blue yarn. Pudding River joins the Willamette River which waters the rich agricultural valley of western Oregon.

The genuine interest with which so many people have contributed their time, knowledge and encouragement to this project has been an inspiration, and an acknowledgement of each contribution would entail another chapter to this work.

The writer's appreciation is expressed to the personnel of the Oregon Historical Society, the Missouri Historical Society, the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission and the Oregon State Archives for generous assistance on research problems. Staff of the Multnomah Central Library and Portland State College Library also proved consistently helpful.
Thesis advisor Dr. Clark Spurlock; Dr. Leroy Pierson, Dr. George Guy and Dr. Egbert Oliver, through the Portland Continuation Center, have provided various and invaluable assistance throughout this study. The writer is grateful to each. It is impossible to adequately acknowledge my indebtedness to the members of my Graduate Committee for their meticulous review of the tentative draft of this paper. They were individually contributors of many constructive suggestions. The kind cooperation of Mr. Clark Will, well known chronicler of the Aurora Colony and one of its descendants, of Mrs. Edward Buell and of Mr. and Mrs. John Krause, all provided unique contributions. The care for detailed accuracy exercised by artist Harold Cramer Smith in the pictorial orientation of the Aurora Colony and the route across the plains to the Northwest geography is appreciated. Mr. Robert Bogue, present owner of the Old Colony House, Mrs. Marshall Hooper and the Rev. Robert F. Graft opened many doors.

This project would not have reached fruition, however, without the understanding encouragement of my husband, Frank, to whom I am affectionately grateful.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter I - Blow the Trumpet!</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Background of William Keil and his followers, the settlement of Bethel, Missouri and preparations for the move to Aurora with the corpse of Keil's son Willie.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter II - Into the Wilderness</th>
<th>15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The trip West with discussion of relations with the Indians and other people encountered. The arrest and trial of Keil at The Dalles and the burial of Willie in Washington Territory.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter III - Land of Milk and Honey</th>
<th>28</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reasons for moving from Washington to the site at Aurora, Oregon. Economic success at Aurora and implications of education in the colony.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Chapter IV - Vision</th>
<th>46</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bibliography</th>
<th>60</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A-Some Significant Communal Settlements</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B-Aurora Constitution</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C-Bethel Constitution</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D-Tabulation of names of Harmony withdrawals</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E-Photographs</td>
<td>73</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE 1855-56 MIGRATION OF WILLIAM KEIL'S FOLLOWERS
Showing (1) the original destination and (2) the center of Keil's Communal Settlement in Oregon.
"When I blow the trumpet," wrote Dr. William Keil to those of his religious sect left behind in Bethel, Missouri, "then there is an uproar like an earthquake. Willie moves ahead and we follow him."

The year was 1855. "Willie" Keil, a posthumous pioneer embalmed in alcohol, led his father's wagon train on the Oregon Trail in a hearse pulled by two patient mules. To the devout occupants of the twenty-four wagons in its dusty wake, Willie's hearse was symbolic of the sanctity of a promise. Even the young man's death had not released the father from his promise to this eldest son that he might accompany their communal society's second contingent of settlers seeking a new land in the great Northwest.

This is the dramatic picture most exploited in stories of Aurora, Oregon, with little or no documentation. Such a picture can be drawn with either a sympathetic or contemptuous bias; and the passage of time has blended fact, hearsay and fiction.

A funeral procession of pioneers migrating across deserts and over mountains to the Pacific coast seems, a century later, like the script for a bizarre western movie sequence. It is difficult for practical, modern minds to consider the story in any light other than as proof that Dr. William Keil was rather "peculiar". The fact that he and his followers established communal settlements seems to provide
the conclusive evidence of their "strangeness".

Such conclusions, however, are superficial and tend to fall into the error of judging the behavior of people in an earlier century by the standards and social environment of a very different present. Comparison on this basis is as unrealistic as it would be to expect a horse and buggy to compete with the motorized traffic on a modern high-speed freeway.

Delineation must first be made not only of the social and economic or political environment of nineteenth century America, but also of the background of William Keil and his followers before the most sensational stories about them can be put into reasonable perspective. The foundation of most religious sects begins with the inspiration of a strong individual who draws on some aspect of fundamental Christianity to attract followers. There seems to be ample evidence of Dr. William Keil's ability to attract adherents with his doctrine of unselfishness and his very literal application of brotherly love. It was not a new or unusual precept. In fact, the ideas were fairly common among various denominations and new sects, like the Mormons, or the planned economy experiments, like Brook Farm, which sprouted, bloomed and died like desert wildflowers on the nineteenth century landscape. Orientation of the Keil settlements to some of the other communal experiments in this period is shown in Appendix A.

William Keil was born March 6, 1811, in Prussia (Silesia) and was, by most accounts, initially trained in the garment industry. He came
to the United States while still a young man, sometime before the Panic of 1837. There are various conflicting reports concerning Keil's activities prior to his emergence as leader of the group establishing Bethel in 1844. The origin of Keil's title of "Doctor" seems to be in treatment of the sick although there is no substantial evidence that he had any formal education in medicine. He was said to have had some knowledge of botany and is reported to have operated a drugstore in Pittsburgh. Since medical training in the early part of the century in the United States was likely to be quite informal and there was often little difference between the skill of the druggist and the practicing doctor, it seems logical to conclude that this was the source of Keil's title. There is little evidence that Keil himself used the term, for letters and documents are signed simply "William Keil". The same documents bearing this signature often have references to Keil, as in the 1866 Aurora agreement (Appendix B), which identify him as "Dr. William Keil". This could be interpreted as an indication that the title was used by his followers as a mark of their respect, but it is also known that Keil continued to administer to the sick even in the Aurora settlement. The reports of his treatment of the ill in Aurora, however, sound more like "faith healing" than medical treatment.

As in medical training there seems to have been the same informality of preparation for the ministry in this era of the frontier. There is no evidence readily available that Keil had any training as a theologian, but his identification with Methodism on the frontier of
western Pennsylvania is plausible. Methodism was still a somewhat new and struggling denomination in the early 1800's. It was strongly evangelical, practical and liberal, all of which appealed to men on the frontier, and this seems to equate with what is known of William Keil's later creed. Indeed, some of the basic tenets of Methodism (37, p.277-295) seem to be the same as the cornerstone of Keil's religious and social preaching: "to watch over one another in love," and to take seriously the teaching of Jesus about such matters as the laying up of earthly treasures.

The functions served by the circuit rider in Methodism--e.g., lead in divine worship, administer sacraments, adjudicate disputes, expel persons who had proved unworthy--all seem to be functions Keil continued to exercise in his own sect both in Bethel and Aurora. Documentation of Keil's theological development or connections appears to be nonexistent, and many of the statements that have been made about him on this subject are not only conflicting, but seem to be based on hearsay. A brief history of the Aurora Colony which appeared in the Champoeg Pioneer (17) states, for example, that Keil established Bethel as a missionary of the German Lutheran Church, yet there is little to suggest that there was Lutheran influence on these people until the present century. Perhaps Keil's break with Methodism came at the time he established Bethel, for this was the same year (1844) that a schism over the slavery issue divided the Methodist Church in America. There is agreement, certainly, that Keil broke with the
Methodist Church and denounced all organized religion as evil. He declared that unselfishness, if practiced in daily life, would prove the key to present happiness and eternal salvation.

Men with stubborn, dogmatic dispositions, such as Keil seems to have had, both attract and repel other people with almost equal intensity. Emotional reactions to an individual personality often lead to some confusion in later years when an attempt is made to find an unbiased description of the man and his ideas. Surviving descriptions seem to fit either a saint or a devil, not a man. Such is the case with William Keil, for even descriptions of his physical appearance do not agree, the differences seeming to reflect an individual's feelings about the man. One description (14) compares Keil to the famous nineteenth century evangelist, Dwight Moody of the Moody and Sankey revival team. According to this description, Keil was above medium height, weighed considerably over 200 pounds, had a powerful, upright bearing and direct gaze. Another description of Keil in his later years reports that he was short and burly with blue eyes, white hair and a beard (27, p.318). One point of general agreement is that Dr. Keil's eyes were a dominant feature. There are suggestions or inferences that he practiced hypnotism, that his eyes, "lighted up with the somewhat fierce fire of the fanatic," and that he "had a piercing look as if searching the very soul of his listener." (27, p.318)
There seems no doubt that William Keil was a forceful personality who could inspire courage, confidence and obedience in his followers and that his application of faith extended to healing the sick. He possessed that magnetism which seems to draw people to vital individuals who communicate their sense of mission, of purposeful living. William Keil, by his own statement in his letters, (24) saw himself as another Moses who would gather up his persecuted followers from Ohio and Pennsylvania and lead them to a "promised land".

Where, when and how Keil gathered his followers are questions that may never be satisfactorily answered. The existing statements, even from descendants of Keil's community members, as well as in such standard works as Charles Nordhoff's *The Communist Societies of the United States*, (27, p.307) do not stand up to the critical examination of even simple chronology. The usual public records to which the researcher can turn, such as census records, birth, marriage and death records, where they have survived, may be buried in attics or state archives from Pennsylvania and Ohio to Oregon and Washington. Little in the way of private letters or diaries finds its way into the historical and manuscript collections. Descendants who may have such material can rarely read or translate the German script used by some of the colonists, and not knowing what the contents may be they have a natural reluctance to share them with strangers.
This reluctance is understandable considering the past performance of some who have attempted to write about communal groups. In the case of Aurora, Robert J. Hendricks, in an unpublished manuscript (15) found in the Oregon Historical Society's files, attacked all the writings which dealt with that colony as a tradition of falsehoods based on an obscure book published in German in 1871, *Lebenserfahrungen* by Karl G. Koch. This volume was the basis of H. S. Lyman's history of the Aurora Colony (22) often quoted by writers today, but the volume of Koch's could not be located by the present author. Hendricks declares:

This Karl G. Koch was one of Dr. Keil's first disciples and preachers in Pennsylvania. But Koch wanted to supplant Keil as leader, hence the "rupture"...In that book he vented his jealous spleen. He charged against Dr. Keil the things that William G. Bok, editor of *German American Annals*, copied, that Nordhoff quoted as facts, that thesis students recopied. That is jaundiced statement based on jaundiced statement...running back mostly to Koch...Why did the colonists not reply? They did not think it was necessary. Knowing him they could not take him seriously. They did not hate Koch; they pitied him...and one of the colonists all the while was C. Frederich Koch, an elder brother...C. Frederich Koch lived his last days and died at the house of Dr. Keil and had a colony funeral and was buried in the colony cemetery (15).

Much misinformation has been perpetuated by loose statements and counter-statements regarding a connection between William Keil's followers and the Harmony Society of George Rapp which had settled Harmonie, Pennsylvania, New Harmony, Indiana, and Economy, Pennsylvania. Few of the statements are as close to fact as that in Alice Tyler's social history, *Freedom's Ferment* (35, p.123): "...among the seceders from
the Rapp colony of Economy who were duped by 'Count Leon' (Bernhard Muller) were a few of the disillusioned who formed the nucleus for a new community in Missouri under the leadership of a certain William Keil."

There is no agreement, even among the descendants of Keil's followers, as to exactly where Keil first organized his adherents. Some mention Phillipsburgh (this was the community established by "Count Leon" and the Rapp (8) seceders). Some say Pittsburgh. Some claim that Keil went into the Rapp Colony itself and attempted to proselyte. Even Nordhoff's account (27, p.307) is a somewhat confused statement on the relationship between Keil and the Economy seceders.

Robert Hendricks, in the manuscript previously mentioned (15), seems particularly anxious to refute a connection between the followers of George Rapp and the followers of William Keil, but although he denies such a connection at three points, he makes the statement that "...only three or four such families joined with Keil's followers."

Why did Hendricks wish to disassociate the Aurora people from the followers of Rapp? Probably the main reason was that the Rappists have had a poor public image as a result of their adherence to unusual customs and odd dress. There were also innumerable court actions in which the Rappists became embroiled as a result of their corporate wealth. Much folklore and fiction has been woven about this group which was not challenged until 1943 when John Duss, the trustee who managed final settlement of the Economy Colony affairs, published his
personal history, The Harmonists (9). Duss promoted a project to preserve the heart of the Economy settlement as an historical site and turned over a great many of the society's records to the Pennsylvania Historical Society. The Economy restoration is prospering and now has a resident curator, Dr. Lawrence Thurman, through whom a list of the seceders from Economy was obtained. A comparison of names on the list of seceders from Economy on February 1, 1832, (see Appendix D) with lists of signers of the Aurora 1866 agreement, and with names appearing in the settlement papers for the dissolution of the Aurora and Bethel communities, substantiates the presence of some ex-Harmonists in Aurora.

Although ex-Harmonists, or Rappists as some refer to them, are thus shown to have followed Keil, the confusion in chronology remains to be untangled. It hardly seems reasonable that Keil was proselytizing either before or at the time of the "Count Leon" incident, for in 1832 Keil was only 21 years old. Furthermore, Keil could hardly have been gathering followers in 1832 if he didn't come to this country until the approximate time of the 1837 Panic. This is the sort of contradiction found in many of the versions of the Aurora story. The gap of 12 years between the secessions from Economy and the establishment of Keil's Bethel community might be profitably investigated further. It is possible that a thorough search of the Economy records might determine whether Keil had any personal association with the Harmonists.
Examination of the history of the Harmony Society (8) brings to light a number of interesting parallels with Bethel and Aurora, most obvious being the procedures that were followed in establishing a colony. When George Rapp, the Harmonist founder, decided to move his flock from Germany to the United States in 1803, he selected three men to accompany him to select a site. The first group of 300 people arrived in Baltimore on the ship "Aurora" on the 4th of July, 1804. (This leads to speculation that there is some connection between the landing and the subsequent tradition of July 4th celebrations in the Aurora park to which Oregon historians make nostalgic reference.)

Temporary homes were found for all but the most able mechanics who accompanied Rapp to the Harmonia site to build the necessary community buildings and homes. Here the Harmony Society was formally organized in February, 1805, with a constitution providing for community of goods and labor, a uniform style of dress and housing. It seems more than chance that, when Keil began his settlement in Bethel nearly four decades later, he followed a similar pattern.

Although William Bak does not document the source of his information, he declares that the site for Bethel was chosen by Adam Scheule, David Wagner (both Economy seceders as shown in Appendix D) and Christian Presser (2). Keil and a few families, with some of the young people, broke ground in the new settlement and others followed as they sold their home property in either Pennsylvania or Ohio.
Keil's letters (24, p.146) identify these two states as the source of his followers: "...This was the reason for leading you from Pennsylvania and Ohio to lead you out of the perversity of your heart."

This is also verified by the Freeman research (11) which found Ohio and Pennsylvania listed in Oregon census reports as birthplaces of younger members of the Aurora community. According to Bak (3, p.263), Keil's influence in Ohio included the counties of Columbiana, Stark, Monroe, Washington and Trumbull. Reference to a map shows two familiar place names in the latter county, Donald and Hubbard—in almost the same relationship to each other as the communities by these names in Oregon.

Bethel, like Harmonie, had a written constitution. The basic conduct outlined in the Bethel Constitution of August 30, 1844, was the same in principle as that found in the Aurora agreement of 1866 to which the Oregon members of the colony, old and new, subscribed until Keil's death. Both documents appear in the Appendix.

The community established at Bethel prospered with the same basic pursuits which the Rapp settlements had been built on: a distillery, grist mill, sawmill, woolen mill, general store. One of the first buildings erected was the church where Keil preached his basic tenet: "Love one another, and in honor prefer one another." By 1855 there were, in addition to the Bethel colony, small hamlets in the vicinity (as in Rapp's original settlement) named Elim, where Keil lived in a
two and a half story brick and stone house, Mamri and Hebron. In neighboring Adair county the colony had a settlement called Nineveh.

The choice of place names, especially Keil's choice of Elim for his own abode, suggests that he was making a literal analogy between Moses and his own search for a "Promised Land". The Biblical Bethel in chapter twelve of the Book of Genesis was a holy place founded by Abraham, and in Bethel, Missouri, Keil built his first church. Hebron and Mamri were also names associated in the Bible with Abraham, but the prophet Keil made his abode in Elim. The Elim described in the twenty-seventh verse of the fifteenth chapter of the Book of Exodus was an extended encampment for the followers of Moses in their journey to the promised land. If Keil saw the development of his sect as a re-enactment of Exodus, as circumstantial evidence would seem to indicate, then the migration to the Northwest was an inevitable progression. The motive for another move into the wilderness of the Oregon Country, when Bethel seemed to be prospering well, has been the subject of speculation by historians of the Keil settlements. Most of the theories advanced Keil's desire to perpetuate or extend his power. Keil's letters indicate that his own intention was to relocate all of the Bethel people. Many were unwilling to move and used various delaying actions until Keil finally urged Bethel to establish an autonomous trusteeship along the pattern outlined for Aurora—a step the Bethel people never took.
When the decision was made to move westward from Missouri, Kail again moved cautiously. Once more Adam Scheule (Economy and Bethel veteran) was part of the scouting party that set out in 1853 to select a site in the Oregon Country for the new venture. With Scheule, in the group from Bethel, were Joseph and Adam Knight, Michael Schaefer, John and Hans Stauffer, John Ginger and Mr. and Mrs. Christian Giesy (14, p.19). They chose a densely timbered area on the Willapa River between Raymond and Menlo, Washington Territory. In the spring of 1855 the migration westward was underway with a small group under the leadership of Captain Peter Kline departing from Bethel on April 17 (1) for the Schaefer and Giesy claims.

The main wagon train, under Kail's leadership, was prepared for departure a little more than a month later, after delays caused by the serious illness of Kail's eldest son, Willie. When Willie died on May 19, the people expected another delay for the funeral, but the word came that they would leave next day. Legend says that men worked late into the night at the barrel factory to make a barrel that would hold the body. The body was placed in the barrel, filled with alcohol, and according to one account (17) sealed and placed in a casket, then mounted on a wagon that served as a hearse for the six-month funeral march. The story of the alcohol-filled barrel is repeated often. There is a passage in William Kail's letter from Fort Kearny (24, p.29) which makes no specific mention of either barrel or casket, but indicates that there was nothing about the wagon to suggest a hearse.
We reached the Platte last evening. At our camp ground is a grave, and William's wagon stands right at that place. William is leading us, and every one keeps his eye fixed on this vehicle, but no one has ever asked what this wagon contained. He, (William) is in exactly the same condition as he was when we left Bethel. We have not been obliged to add alcohol to preserve the body.

Like the Biblical patriarchs of old, Dr. William Keil followed his vision of a promised land into the wilderness of the Washington Territory. Like the ancients, too, he felt that he had sacrificed his first born son, but he was determined that Willie's earthly remains should rest in the promised land. In his sorrow he composed a funeral dirge that became a tradition of Aurora Colony burials: Das Grab ist tief und stille. This was first sung on the Oregon Trail.
CHAPTER II

Into the Wilderness

The Oregon Trail in 1855 was still a rugged test of men, animals and equipment. Indian uprisings were an additional tribulation for settlers as well as most wagon trains that year. Not all wagon masters could report, as Keil (24, p.34) did: "I have succeeded in bringing all souls and all wagons across."

Few writers on the Aurora Colony have been able to agree as to the number of persons comprising the "all souls" in Keil's party. Hendricks, for example, declared there were 250 in the wagon train while Freeman points out this would mean there would have been ten people in every wagon. The issue seems to be settled conclusively by Keil's letter (24, p.29) from Fort Laramie: "We shot several buffaloes. Of each carcass we had to abandon half of it because one hundred persons are unable to eat one buffalo." Keil's statement that there were one hundred in his group indicates that there were the average number of persons per wagon usually found in other westward migrations of the period.

Details of trail experiences most often related in the stories of Aurora Colony members seem to have been drawn exclusively from the first part of the trip. The result has been creation of the impression that the Keil group made the trip in absolute comfort in contrast to the usual stories of hardship and difficulty on the Oregon Trail. Some
of the statements made in Keil's letters from the Fort Kearney and Fort Laramie areas seem to have supplied the basis for the optimistic conclusions concerning the trail conditions encountered by the Keil pioneers.

Quotations from the Kearney letter (24, p.28) such as: "...The livestock is in better condition than it was when we left...We still have all our property. Not even a dog is missed...", give a cheerful tone to the report. Accounts from Fort Laramie (24, p.28) were equally encouraging: "...We have had a very good journey. Men and animals remained well. We still have everything that we started with, except one cow that strayed away...". The basis for the impression that the Keil people were able to negotiate the Oregon Trail in relative luxury is presumed to be the following sentences from the Fort Laramie letter (24, p.29) of June 12, 1855, which appears to have circulated more widely than others:

...I find all things different on the plains than had been reported to me. In general there is more wood on the plains than the people of Europe usually have. One doesn't need any crackers on the plains. I have never lived different than I lived at home. We had our spinach every day till we reached the Platte. From Kearney to Laramie we had currant pies and gooseberry pies of such quality as we have never eaten in Missouri....

The tone of these early letters is summed up in the observation (24, p.30-31): "The passage through the Platte and Laramie rivers is nothing." (This was probably in early July, as the letter seems to have been erroneously dated. The earlier letter from Kearney was
written in late June;) "It is astonishing that men at times make a
fuss about something which finally turns out to be nothing. Any dog
can run through this river."

All travelers on the Oregon Trail found that the last part was
invariably the most difficult and the long letter (24, p.32-34) Keil
wrote from the Willapa Valley reflects the depression which settled
over the wagon train as the journey roughened:

...Many people complain that Ash Hollow is the entrance
to hell and Devil's Gate its exit. But I maintain that
Devil's Gate is the entrance...We drove during the entire
night. Oxen fell exhausted and died before we reached
the ford. Cows dropped because of fatigue. No grass, no
water was to be found anywhere. The next morning we
finally reached the Green River and found good grass and
water. We stayed a day. A few more cows died....

...Many things happened between there and Fort Hall, which
I cannot describe here. Terrible mountains, very little
grass, poisoned water, loss of much livestock...A hideous
world, fearful roads, all grass poisoned, every day one
to three head of cattle dying, a killing heat, nothing
to see but the marks of death and destruction, the whole
road marked by graves and the bones of dead men. This
desert extends from Fort Hall to Grand Round Valley in
the Blue Mountains, where the seventh prince of all de-
struction has his abode. The whole desert preaches that
we are to be destroyed in it. We had to use cows to pull
our wagons and more cows than oxen died. It finally
seemed that we should not get any wagon across. The
animals that we hitched up today we had to abandon at the
campground the next night, and so it went nearly every
day....

This story of hardship on the trail parallels the experience of
other pioneers, but there was one notable exception: the freedom
from Indian attack. Relations between the Keil pioneers and the
Indians have been a subject for much conjecture, rumor and legend.
This year was a period of tension and unrest with clashes between the Indians and government troops common and the danger of Indian attack a constant menace to wagon trains. Worry over Indian attacks caused small groups to seek the protection of larger wagon trains. Keil records a number of applications to join him (24, p.30) and observes: ...It is peculiar that all these people seek refuge with us without even knowing us. Trains, which were stronger in men and arms than we, have asked for admission, but I have accepted none of them." Later (24, p.31), however, he did accept seven wagons which had been advised not to travel farther without a stronger train. They travelled together for several days and "...We saw only two Indians, who fled as fast as they could at the sound of the trumpet."

The explanation most frequently advanced for the freedom from Indian attack, which allowed the Kail followers to travel the Oregon Trail without being molested, is the theory that the Indians were awed by a wagon train led by a dead man. This reasoning has been repeated so often it is the accepted explanation given the inquirer by descendants of the Aurora pioneers. If one dismisses the Indian as an insensitive, superstitious barbarian, and if one were conditioned to believe that Dr. Kail practiced less than the Golden Rule on those who were different from himself, then this explanation might seem satisfactory. This theory relies, further, on the assumption that the lead wagon carrying Willie's body was recognizable to
Indians as a hearse, an assumption open to challenge on the basis of Keil's statement that even members of the wagon train were not aware of its cargo.

The evidence of Keil's own words: that he was a Christian who refused to practice racial discrimination and accepted any man as his brother, seems to be a more convincing reason for the peaceful relations with the Indians encountered. The usual attitude of pioneers was one of "shoot on sight" or the belief that "the only good Indian is a dead Indian". The contrast with this attitude is most vivid in Keil's description (24, p.32-33) of his acceptance of the Indian as a human being:

...We had to ford the Green River. An Indian came to our camp in the evening. He was very nice. I had some food cooked for him, and also gave him some for his children at home. He gave signs of gratitude, went behind a wagon and knelt down and prayed. Then he mounted his pony and rode away.

We next camped in the mountains at Ham's Fork. In the evening seven Indians came to our camp. It was a father with his grown sons. I had a meal prepared for them and joined them at the table. Such solemnity as this father and his children showed at the meal, and such appreciation of the gift of God, I have never found in any other father. He told his sons not to eat everything, but also should think of the little ones at home and take some of the good things to them...[X] gave him for his family of everything they had eaten. In addition Aurora gave him her blanket. I gave the old man an oxbow for making a bow, because one could not get such wood out there. All this aroused such pleasure that one could read the love and gratitude in their faces. At his departure I told him he should come to breakfast on the next morning and bring all his friends
with him. Instead of seven, twenty-five came at
daybreak and brought the oxen that had strayed into
the mountains to our camp. They came as one is
accustomed to come to great days of celebration.
They had painted their faces and were dressed in
their best garments. I fed them all and they were
united with us in a common bond.

Perhaps this evidence of goodwill was flashed ahead by an Indian
communications system, for all the contacts seem to have been uniformly
friendly (24, p.34):

...Many a time I have been surrounded by fifty to
sixty Indians. I gave them tobacco which pleased them
greatly. Our little children ran ahead of the wagon
train into the midst of the Indians. They gave the
Indian children bread and all sorts of other things,
which pleased the old Indians very much. We came to
places where there were so many Indians that we could
not count them. The smallest children, including
Samuel, ran among the Indians as if they were at home.
The Indians gave very rich presents of beads to our
little girls. In short, my only happiness on the
plains were the meetings with the Indians.

Such behavior on the part of the young would seem to indicate
that Keil's dictum of love and lack of fear or of prejudice was well
instilled in the children. The friendly Indian attitude continued and
in Oregon the Keil party camped among the "Cajases" the better part of
a week in the Grand Round Valley before crossing the Blue Mountains.
Keil was on such friendly terms with the four Indian chiefs that
they presented each of his four sons with horses (24, p.35):

"Camaspallo, the head chief, called my Fritz the little German chief,
and gave him his own pony as a present..." Again in the Umatilla
Valley the Keil train camped among the Indians (24, p.35), who this
time brought the newcomers gifts of potatoes, peas and onions. "...It was incomprehensible to the three Americans, who were in our train, that the Indians loved me so well, as if I belonged to them."

News of war between the Americans and the Yakima Indians north of the Columbia River reached Keil as he approached The Dalles and when his group camped near the Deschutes River the ferrymen and several settlers came to Keil (24, p.36) seeking protection.

...Also some Indians from Grand Round Valley arrived who drove cattle to The Dalles. When they saw me again, they were very much pleased. I gave them food and a tent for their night's rest. The Americans were very much annoyed at that, for their constant talk was that all Indians ought to be shot. I make no distinction among people. I considered it my duty to treat Indians just as well as I had treated Americans. Having said that, they remained quiet.

This was not the end of the matter, however, for it seems that Americans were just as unwilling to grant the Indian equal status one hundred years ago as some Americans are to integrate the Negro into their society today. At The Dalles Keil found everyone in a great stir, with troops on the move here and there and the American commander preparing for an imminent Indian attack. Keil decided to send the young men with the livestock to the Washington Territory by way of the pack trail, because there were only two boats that went as far as Cascades and they were kept busy moving troops for an expected Indian attack on The Dalles. The Keil party set up their tents near the steamboat landing and, after a few days, arrangements were made for one of the boats to transport the baggage and the remainder of the people.
Just as the group was ready to sail, Keil was arrested on charges of making derogatory remarks about the American people in the presence of Indians. Karl Ruge, the school teacher, remained with Keil to aid in his defense at the trial while the rest of the wagon train, including Keil's wife and children, continued by boat to the Cascades.

The charges against Keil had been brought by two of the Americans he had befriended and taken into his train near Fort Laramie. They had found employment with the Indian agent for The Dalles. The accusations were based on Keil's association with the Cayuse Indians whose chief, Camaspallo Ullman, had ridden after Keil for some eighty miles trying to induce him to stay with the tribe and make his home with them. The motives which prompted the charges can hardly be guessed, with only Keil's side of the story as a basis. Perhaps the Americans had a grievance and took this means of "getting even" with Keil. Perhaps this looked like a good way to find favor with their new employer, the Indian agent. Whatever the motives, the situation nearly proved disastrous for the instigators.

According to Keil's version of the trial (24, p.39-40), Karl Ruge, the schoolmaster, gave character testimony and then Keil was allowed to speak in his own defense:

Gentlemen, I stand here in your midst like a child, not knowing what to say about all this. It is known to all my fellow citizens of the whole Union how dangerous it has been for the emigrants to cross the plains during this year, because of the unrest of the Indians. Once on the road there remained no other means for me to protect my family and all those that
were in my train than to deal in a peaceful and friendly way with the Indians, whom we chanced to meet on the way. If I have now succeeded in bringing my train through thousands of Indians, in spite of all hindrances and adverse advice, bring it happily to this place by friendly and pacific disposition alone, and if I am now to be punished for succeeding in doing this, then I am ready to accept my punishment.

Keil was then allowed to question his accusers and he asked them if he had not cared for them as he did for his own children. When they admitted that Keil treated them better than any man had, the citizenry present at the trial became enraged. A flood of offers to testify in Keil's behalf forced the Justice of the Peace to exonerate him. The accusers became the butt of such derision that they made a hurried getaway to escape what threatened to become mob violence.

Keil's success in his trial, like his success with the Indians and with his own followers, seems to have been a triumph of personality and of his considerable power of persuasion. The fact that Keil was brought to trial for his sympathetic treatment of the Indians is indicative of the suspicion aroused by his personal application of the concept of brotherly love. Even though the pioneers' survival often depended upon cooperative effort and sharing of available shelter and food supplies, these people seemed to regard Keil's inclusion of the Indian on an equal basis as subversive. They did not understand Keil's behavior. He seemed a "dangerous outsider", so they reacted in a typical attempt at persecution through the law. After Dr. Keil's acquittal, he and the schoolmaster, Karl Ruge, took the first steamboat passage available to rejoin their people at Cascades and continue
the journey.

An arduous trip overland from the Columbia river to Shoalwater (now Willapa) Bay and a dangerous voyage in small boats on the choppy water made a rather harrowing climax to the long journey from Bethel to the promised land. To William Keil, the last straw was his first sight of the land his agents had selected. He climbed a knoll to survey the claims (see picture in Appendix) and at once declared the area unfit for a community enterprise. His tongue-lashing of the devoted Christian Giesy alienated some of Keil's supporters on the spot. The bitterness brought about by this disagreement over the selected site probably explains why little has been said in the past about the original destination of Keil's party or reasons for moving the group to Oregon. This disagreement between Keil and his major apostle is not in character with the amicable relations emphasized in discussions of the group. In view of Keil's theological attitude, he probably interpreted Christian Giesy's subsequent drowning in Shoalwater Bay as retribution and an indication that his own judgment on the area was correct. It is certainly clear that Keil remained firm in his original rejection of the Willapa site in spite of Giesy's strongest persuasion.

On the Willapa the wilderness was too nearly omnipresent as Keil described it in his letter (24, p.144) to his Missouri "Brothers and Sisters":
The existing pieces of prairie were created by forest fires in former days. They are densely overgrown with ferns and some grass grows between them. In the forests no trace of grass is to be found, because the earth is covered with three to four feet of an impenetrable primordial substance, consisting of broken down giant trees, mosses, parasitical plants and underbrush, so that it is absolutely impossible for man or beast to press through the forest...such forests are everywhere in the whole territory and all prairies are surrounded by such forests....

The economic analysis which Keil made of the Willapa site in this same letter (24, p.144-145) demonstrates the shrewd judgment which eventually dictated the move to the Aurora area. With no little irony Keil assessed the possibilities for survival on the Willapa site his emissaries had selected:

One doesn't need to feed the livestock here during the winter. Reason: Because there is no fodder...everything that is planted grows here in abundance. But no one knows what he is to do with the crops. For in the first place there is no market for these things, in the second place there is no prospect for such a market, in the third place all the articles one needs are too far distant and too expensive, and there is no way to earn the means of existence...the whole Willapa Valley could not pay for the expenses, which would be connected with the construction of a mill there...I could grind in eight days all the wheat they could grow here, and the mill would stand idle the rest of the year...it would be impossible for us to raise the material for our clothing. There are no sheep here...importation...is difficult...there would be no feed for them...neither could there be any tanneries for the hides would have to be imported...a distillery could dispose of its goods among the few oyster-fishers who live by the bay.

The Willapa Valley has changed very little since Keil wrote, "The Valley is very much locked in...This is enough of Washington Territory."

The photographs in Appendix taken July, 1962, on the Edward Buell farm
in Menlo, Washington, show that although the Keil claims became fine
dairy farms, the forest is still not far away, and Keil's estimate of
the community potential of that site seems vindicated.

The negative reaction to the Willapa site was probably intensi-
ified by the fact that Keil arrived with the annual fall rainy season:

Clothes and shoes rot on our bodies from mud and
moisture...We all would gladly go to any city in
Oregon to earn some money, but we can't get there
either by land or water. By water it is dangerous
and by land impossible. Twelve or fifteen men
have worked for three weeks on a log house, which
only yesterday they could get under a roof. From
this you can form an idea what kind of weather
prevails here....

The Yakimas were on the warpath and the countryside was full of
rumors. Many farmers had left their homes and fled to the towns for
fear of the Indians. By this time the Keil people were used to the
threats of Indian trouble and they seem to have accepted the fact that
their advance party had built a fort as part of their preparation for
the colony.

There was little to suggest that Keil and his people had found
their promised land and it is clear that Keil was determined to move
to Oregon to continue his search. Willapa was the end of the trail
for some of the Keil people, however, it was the end of the trail for
the remains of Keil's son, Willie. Nearly a month after the group
arrived on the Washington site, as his father described it: "...on
the 26th (of November) we buried William on the claim, where the
elder Schwader lives, in the evening by lamp light, the little boys
played the air of the song: Wie soll ich Dich empfangen. ("How shall
I receive thee?"). The funeral march was at an end but the search
for a new beginning for this communal society continued.
CHAPTER III

Land of Milk and Honey

Although the Willapa area turned out to be a disappointing wilderness, William Keil, like Moses, persisted in his search. Keil turned his attention south to Oregon. Perhaps he compared the Columbia River to the Jordan of his Bible and saw Mount Hood as his Nebo. The spot he selected is twenty-five miles south of Portland and even closer to the successful communities of that period: Champoeg and Oregon City. The area is still a flourishing agricultural center in spite of its proximity to major population centers of the state.

A mill had already been built on the site when Keil bought it in 1856. The existence of the mill is said to be the reason that the colony was originally known as Aurora Mills. "Aurora" was reported to have been taken from Keil's daughter's name. In any case, it seems an appropriate choice because of its literal meaning: "new beginning or rebirth". This was, in essence, the purpose of the community. It is interesting to speculate that Keil may have been influenced in choosing the spot by the fact that, in addition to the mill, there were also established orchards already producing quality fruit. Here was the promised land of Deuteronomy 6:10, "...to give thee great and goodly cities, which thou buildest not, and houses full of all good things, which thou filledst not, and wells digged,
which thou diggedst not, vineyards and olive trees, which thou plantedst not...?"

The physical description of the promised land, in Deuteronomy 8:7-8, has much in common with the Oregon area to which Keil brought many of his followers: "For the Lord thy God bringest thee into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey, a land wherein thou shalt eat bread without scarceness...."

In addition to the Biblical basis, there is indication that practical economic considerations entered into the choice of the Aurora site. At this period of development in the United States the German communities in general seemed to follow much the same pattern in selecting settlement sites. At this time the Germans were most likely to select a partially tamed spot where some of the amenities were already provided (38) rather than attempt to subdue the untouched wilderness as front line pioneers. They were also on the alert to locate conveniently near population centers that would provide both a market for their surplus and a source of supply for those things the colonists could not grow or manufacture; for Aurora these centers included Oregon City, Portland, Salem, and Champoeg. Gently rolling, partly timbered terrain, that would supply the raw material for the lumber mill as the land was cleared for farming, and a waterway
for transportation and communication were all assets considered in the selection of Aurora.

Despite the heavy expenses incurred by the migration, and the subsequent purchase of claims in the Willapa, Washington, area where Keil left as many of his people as he felt could economically survive there, the group was able to purchase 480 acres of land in the Aurora area. This original investment (11, p.3) was valued on the Marion County, Oregon, assessment roll for 1856 at $3,200. In the space of fourteen years this investment was built into a landholding of nearly 19,500 acres which on the 1870 census rolls had a value as farms alone of nearly $300,000. While farm crops ranging from tobacco (450 lbs. in 1865) and wool (500 lbs.) to hops, apples and beeswax formed the cornerstone of the colony economy, there was a broad representation of skills to provide manufactured products that not only met colony needs but provided additional income. The 1870 census lists colony occupations as varied as wagon maker, tailor, blacksmith, shoemaker, wheelwright, spinner, weaver, harnessmaker, carpenter and plasterer.

In assessing the Willapa country Keil had been discouraged over its lack of opportunity for lumber and flour mills to do business. In 1860 an Aurora sawmill was already employing two men to produce some 100,000 feet of lumber valued at $2,000 and the flour mill produced 1400 barrels of flour valued at $8400. By 1870 there was a wagon shop producing more plows than wagons, and also a woolen factory.
From an initial band of 300 sheep (11) the colony now had a raw wool production from 1432 sheep to supply the factory. The woolen factory represented a $2,000 investment employing two men and one woman to produce blankets, flannel and yarn valued at approximately $2,500.

Students of the Aurora Colony have been confused by such a seeming contradiction as a community that numbered only 112 in the census report of 1870 (counting every man, woman and child) yet it produced nearly $46,000 worth of goods. The confusion arises from a variance of opinion on the subject of the number of people in the Aurora Colony and how many were added in the various migrations. Instead of the 112 shown on census and tax rolls, Hendricks (14) asserts that there were at least 450 people in Aurora at this time. This figure is based on estimates made of the number of people composing the various early migrations. Two factors producing confusion for the current researcher may be pointed out. One is the fact that not all the people who came in the various migrations settled in Aurora; even some of those in the original Keil wagon train stayed in Willsap, Washington. Later settlements by Keil followers were made outside the community limits of Aurora and even outside Marion County. Many of the settlers who arrived in later trains were sent directly to Oregon’s Clackamas, Washington, and Yamhill Counties to make their homes. Secondly, not all the inhabitants of Aurora nor members of the various migrations were actual members of the communal society; in fact some of those most closely associated with the story of Aurora were in this category.
A case in point is the family name most often mentioned in connection with the musical side of Aurora, Conrad Finck. Finck's son, Henry, became the first Oregonian to qualify for Harvard and later became a famous music critic in the East. The elder Finck was Aurora's music maestro, as he had been earlier in Bethel. At Bethel Conrad Finck had also served as apothecary, postmaster and, most surprising, as Keil's alter ego in the days of westward migration. Although deeply involved in both communities, Finck was never a member of the communal society. In Aurora Finck owned private land about a mile from the center of town, a mature apple orchard which provided his family with income. So far as can be learned from records, and the statements in Henry T. Finck's biography (9), none of the crop, nor income from the Finck orchards, found its way into the Aurora community funds. Conrad Finck did contribute his personal services, however, to the musical life of the community and is considered responsible for its fine bands and other music organizations. In return for his services to the community, Finck's children benefited from the teaching of the university-trained men in the community. There is indication of a serious break between Finck, the elder, and Dr. Keil in the early 1870's around the time that Henry T. Finck, the son, left for Harvard. Perhaps there was some connection between Henry's desire for broader horizons and the family's removal to Portland from Aurora. There is also another unexplained item in the Aurora papers which indicates that Finck, Senior, made two sales of property to Dr. Keil during the 1860's, although he didn't leave the colony until after 1872.
Economic success does not seem a fair criterion to use in judging the Aurora Colony even though the colony prospered under the leadership of Keil. Monetary gain was not the primary concern of the individuals involved, if their own statement can be considered a reliable index of their aims. In the late sixties the Aurora trustees dispatched a letter (24, p.148) to their "Brothers and Sisters in the Bethel Community" in which they urged that segment of the commune to draw an agreement similar to the Aurora 1866 agreement. This letter indicates that the basic aim of the influential members of the Aurora group was for a congenial and peaceful society free of the jealousy engendered by private property. This aim is stated in the salutation:

You men, dear brothers, and all of you who have remained true to the pure teaching of Christ: It is well known to you that at the founding of our communal fellowship it was not so much the purpose of amassing material goods, but rather the procuring and unimpaired enjoyment of such treasures which make possible the Kingdom of God on Earth. You know, moreover, that under the guidance of our faithful leader and teacher, in spite of all tribulation and affliction, we have lived a unique, peaceful life that was pleasing in the sight of God.

The problems involved in a rededication to the principles of the society (24, p.149-150) were pointed out in the same letter:

...A considerable part of the joint property may be required to satisfy the claims of those who do not desire to join the society reorganized on such a basis. Great sacrifices also had to be made by our brother Keil here in Aurora to satisfy the demands of members who severed their connections with the society. But the greatest sacrifices are preferable
to seeing the life and prosperity of the whole community endangered by the unreasonable demands of the seceding members.

This unfortunate possibility has been cared for for all time by the Constitution, and we, your brothers, the undersigned elders and members of the Aurora community, who have subscribed their names, assure you that we are very well satisfied with the practical results of our new constitution....

The practical seems to have been a major concern of Keil as well as the elders: the practical application of religion to the everyday life of the individual rather than the assignment of religion to one day, one time, one place. The evidence seems to indicate that Keil conducted church services on alternate Sundays rather than every Sunday and, condoned what has been called the German Sunday observance: that is, the use of the Sunday holiday as a day of relaxation, with perhaps a picnic in the park with band music and singing. There was a regular Wednesday night church service, however, and Keil seems to have been in the habit of supplying sermons when needed in daily life: admonishing, encouraging and counseling. The Colony boasted that it had no crime, no prison, no paupers. Keil supplied whatever discipline his people needed and they seem to have accepted his judgment quite gracefully.

Exactly what inspired the personal devotion of William Keil's followers can be defined only on the basis of surviving evidence. Much that has been repeated about Keil seems to be based entirely on hearsay such as the assertion that Keil announced himself as divine
and declared that he would be spectacularly sacrificed for his people. Although none of Keil's sermons are known to be extant, there are some allusions in his letters which may have provided a basis for such stories.

Statements made by Keil in his letters indicate that he believed himself a divinely inspired leader, a Moses for his generation, that his mission in life was leadership and this sense of mission seems to be the magnet with which he attracted and held his people. Several statements Keil made near the close of his lengthy 1855 letter (24, p.146-147) from Willapa seem to express this Mosaic self-conception in his own words:

...the reason for leading you from Pennsylvania and Ohio was to lead you out of the perversity of your heart. That was the reason that Moses had to lead the children of Israel through the desert because they had not obeyed the voice of the Lord, in order that each one might be led to the place decreed for him by Providence. But Moses was a very plagued man for their sake, as I am among you...But no reproaches. God has called us in peace. He is reconciled. You are a poor unbelieving people without me. If I had not taken upon myself the reproaches of the devil, that rested upon you, then you would have succumbed on the day of judgement. But now you have a man who has deprived the spirit of evil of his power and you can return once more to the place of peace for I have led a part of your young men through the desert...It would be a good thing if all young men and women in Bethel were thus guided through all the vicissitudes of life as those who are with us at present have learned to know Jesus Christ in truth.
Where a strong leader assumes the roles of both religious and temporal authority he is likely to be charged, by both outsiders and some followers, as motivated by a selfish desire for personal aggrandizement and power. As might be expected, there are statements of this nature about Keil made by various people at various times. There are also inferences and straightforward claims that Keil was an autocratic, uneducated boor and even such scholars as William Bek seem to be self-contradictory. Bek, for example, in an article (3, p.260) written in 1909, conveys the idea that Dr. Keil lacked education on the basis of the letters he had secured from Jacob G. Miller of Aurora. Most of these letters, Bek says, "were written by his secretary (Karl Ruge) a college bred man, and are in fairly good style. The ones which, according to Keil's own statement, were written by himself are wretched illustrations of letter writing and show a most imperfect knowledge of his own language." These are the same letters Bek translated and which are quoted from in this paper. The translations were published by the Missouri Historical Society nearly forty years after Bek's derogatory remarks. There is no indication that the letters were significantly edited in translation. They do not seem to be the work of an unlettered man.

Many writers have repeated Charles Nordhoff's evaluation (27) of the people who constituted Keil's Aurora Colony as simple peasants. They have failed to note that, in his concluding summation of communistic societies in the United States, Nordhoff admitted that
he was probably making a somewhat supercilious comparison. He recognized his tendency to use the better class urban standards of the East as his norm rather than comparing the Aurora colonist and his life to that of the typical neighboring farmer in Oregon. The same belittling of the education of Keil and the colonists also fails to note the statement (3, p.269) made by Bak in 1909: "After deliberate, impartial and unbiased examination I am prepared to gainsay the statement that the Colony consisted of ignorant men only."

If Dr. Keil was as indifferent and even hostile to education as Nordhoff (27, p.317) implied, it would be hard to explain why he would have gone to the expense and trouble of making provision for "the little red school house of the plains" described (14, p.89) by Hendricks. For the trip from Bethel, the group had devised a portable classroom consisting of a light weight, red tent and folding furnishings which could be set up quickly and easily at each camping spot and the schooling of the children continued on the trail. Nordhoff, among others, noted that in Aurora there was a common or free school where reading, writing and arithmetic were taught all the year round: "which is not the case generally with country schools." Signatures to the Aurora Constitution of 1866 indicate that there was a high degree of literacy even among the older members of the colony. There are very few "marks"; those which do appear are for women. This was not uncommon at the time. An education was not considered necessary for girls.
Although both Finck (9) and Nordhoff (27) claim that, aside from the Bible, there were no books in the colony, there appeared to be a number of German books among the Aurora heirlooms. Nordhoff claimed that no accounts were kept, yet the ledger of the Aurora Hotel is in the microfilm collection of the Oregon Historical Society. Records of amounts contributed by various members at the time Bethel was founded formed the basis for distribution of property when the commune was legally terminated, and these records form a part of the microfilmed documents preserved in the Oregon Archives. In addition, contrary to statements that Keil made no accounting of the use of colony funds to the members, there seems to be evidence that Keil was in the habit of reporting financial matters to his people in the letter (24, p.145) written from Willapa. Keil detailed money transactions involved in the movement of the wagon train from Bethel to Washington Territory:

...To bring the families by boat from the Dalles cost nearly $740, exclusive of what the young men expended in bringing the cattle over the pack trail. Christ owed more than $1000 for boats, claims, store articles and other things, which I paid...Though I should have liked to save the expense, I found myself obliged to buy the two claims at Crockett’s Landing, which have a real value as the home of a few families. /This was in Washington./ I have also bought two adjoining claims on the same prairie from some Americans for $700 and a mule. I intend to turn this valley over to Michael Schaefer and Christ Giesy and as many of their relatives as may be able to make a living here....

Since there is a dollars and cents valuation of not only the land but also of the productivity of the colony to be found on the tax rolls of Marion County it seems reasonable to believe that
records were kept. These German people were regarded as notably thrifty by nature. One of the most often repeated stories about the thrifty practices of Keil and his people is that of how they bought apples from farmers for one dollar a bushel and saved the parings to make vinegar which they sold back to the same farmers for a dollar and a half a gallon. The Aurora people were anxious to stay on the right side of the law, consequently they were not likely to deal in guesses and estimates, especially where taxation of community resources was involved.

Aurorans' concern for the keeping of accounts is further demonstrated in the Aurora Agreement of 1866 (Appendix B) which directed the trustees to keep accounts. This same document indicates the corporate concern for education since it guaranteed the individual would not be taxed to support the school or church.

No doubt one reason for the impression that Dr. Keil and some of his associates were not too well educated might be some correspondence which survives, for example, a letter in the Oregon Historical Society's manuscript collection dated 1876 and written to Judge M. P. Deady. This same letter is also probably responsible for some of the statements about Keil's autocratic attitude (e.g. the title "King Keil" attributed to him in the Dictionary of Oregon History). The latter, written on the business stationery of
"F. Keil and Co., dealers in Dry Goods, Clothing, Boots and Shoes, Hats, Hardware, Groceries, Notions, Etc., Etc." states:

Regarding of Holding a Sabbath Picnic Mick in My Park and in Reply Will State that You are Welcome to it Free and will be pleased to Meet You With them...

Several factors seem to indicate that this letter was written by someone other than Dr. Keil: Letters that were undisputedly written by Keil were written in German rather than in English as this is. Keil's signature on such letters and on legal papers of record appears as "William Keil", no title preceding and no abbreviation of his given name, while the signature on the Deady letter is "Dr. Wm. Keil". Moreover, the notation "for W-" appears to be written under the signature to this letter. If the letter was written by someone else the use of the phrase "my park" could just as well reflect the attitude in the writer's mind toward that facility rather than Keil's own words, therefore the validity of this letter as proof of Keil's paternalism seems open to question. It seems probable that members of the community might regard the park as either "my park" or "Dr. Keil's park" depending on whether they were full-fledged economic members of the commune or private land-owners.

Simple peasants with a minimum of education could hardly have written or understood the so-called Bethel Constitution of 1844 or the Aurora Agreement of 1866, but the text of these documents, as given in Hendrick's work (see Appendix C and D to this paper) is
fairly well authenticated in the legal proceedings that accompanied
the 1881 dissolution of the two communities. The Bethel agreement
was not well known among the Aurora people, probably because it seems
to have been drawn specifically to cover the problems involved in the
first three years required to establish the colony and its economy.
The spelling out of the exact terms upon which a disgruntled member
might withdraw seems to have been prompted by some earlier experi-
ence with the problem:

Should a brother who has brought property in leave
us, then one-fourth of this will be refunded to
him, and within three years the other three-fourths,
that is in every year one-fourth, without interest.
The house or land is left to the society with all
its belongings; the same with the craftsmen in
town.

This provision obviously made necessary the keeping of the
records in the so-called "Bethel Book" which played such an important
part in the eventual settlement of the commune's affairs.

A misinterpretation, perhaps, or a superficial reading of the
Bethel agreement may also be the basis for the recurring statements
that Aurora was locally referred to as "bachelortown" and that
Dr. Keil preached against marriage. Under the Bethel agreement a
single man, who married during the first three years while the com-
munity was being established, could not make a claim for a house or
land until all those who already had families were taken care of--
a circumstance which probably caused postponement of marriage and
a certain dissatisfaction among the young people. The same provision
also forbade marriage with any who did not share the community belief, though persons of the outside world who would become converts were not included in the ban. This was quite different from a celibate society such as evolved in the later days of the Rapp group at Economy. It is possible that some of the statements made about Aurora on this score were made on the basis of the Rappist background of some of the colonists, with outsiders drawing loose conclusions by association. It is true, however, that unattached young men and the older bachelors were lodged together in the Keil home and boarded at the Keil table.

The Aurora Agreement was a more involved document which sought to define precisely the obligations of the trustees who were charged with the management of community affairs and to enumerate the obligations, benefits and rights of the individual members. Although couched in the approved legal jargon of "whereas" and "do covenant", the entire document which can be copied in less than five typewritten pages, quite simply and directly provided for all considerations. The document began with the qualifications for membership, enjoined mature contemplation of the consequences before accepting the regulations and principles by signing, and detailed all the social concerns including "old age" and "survivor's" benefits. The framework for perpetuation of the "community or cooperative association at Aurora Mills" was provided in the agreement. Until this time title to most of the land and capital of the group, as well as the tax liability for all, was
vested in Dr. Keil. In this agreement Keil relinquished his control over everything except two dwellings and the pair of mules that pulled Willie's hearse across the Oregon Trail and had, more recently, supplied the motive power for the children's merry-go-round in the Aurora park. The people of the community had reservations about accepting life under the more democratic trustee system the agreement established. Many expressed their objection to continuing in the commune, without Dr. Keil's leadership, by such prefaces as "under Dr. Keil only" to their signatures. This is probably the reason that Keil continued to be the actual head of the group until his death on December 30, 1877. This was also the basis of the move to divide the assets of the commune among the individual members as soon as Keil was buried.

Further proof of the legal and economic capabilities of Keil and his advisers might be cited in the plan submitted by Keil, Samuel Miller and John Giesy in an open letter (24) to the Bethel community written in the late 1860s. In the letter a plan was outlined for the orderly legal procedure by which the group could be re-organized as independent, free of Keil's control. There is no indication of the source of the legal procedures outlined but comprehension of the plan seems to call for more than a basic education.

The letter (24, p.150) cannily points out that the only impediment to the prompt reunion of the entire Bethel community with their brothers in Aurora was the abandonment of principle which made individuals in
Bethel exert proprietary rights over property to which they had become attached. The activity of private enterprise was supplanting the original commune idealism: "We all wish fervently that you might all be reunited with us and the sooner the better. But how is this possible when one sells his property, another rents his estate to another party, or still another bequeaths it to his children?"

Both the Bethel and Aurora agreements repeated the concern for the care of each individual in the community in time of need and without concern either for how much he had contributed or for how long. The basic principle went further than care for each other, however, for it also provided that the community should "do good and distribute" as their religion prescribed. The Aurora agreement in article five specifies "that all sick, disabled or indigent persons outside the community, who ask and receive our assistance, shall be relieved as far as the means of our community can afford it."

Hospitality is still graciously extended to the stranger by the sons and daughters and grandchildren of these people who covenanted together for their general welfare. They still cook and serve cherished old German recipes. They seem to be farmers, craftsmen and small business people of simple taste. Even in the older generation, however, one soon finds many who have been to or through "the University". They do not seem to have any brittle veneer of sophistication nor patronizing attitude toward those who have not shared their
experience. They seem, rather, to radiate a quiet confidence and to find pleasure in the ordinary facets of their lives—an unusual legacy in the hectic atmosphere of this century, and one many urban families might covet.
Aside from its emphasis on consideration for others, as admonished in the New Testament, and its unusual acceptance of private enterprise in the midst of a communal society, there is little to suggest that life in the Aurora Colony was unduly restricted or governed by peculiarities. Family life was provided for, each family having its own house or apartment and an adjoining garden spot where flowers and a few vegetables were cultivated. The community vegetable garden supplied the larger, space-consuming crops, and the well-tended orchards and vineyards provided the fruits. Small family enterprises like the keeping of a few hives of bees to provide a little outside income were accepted.

Aurora had fewer restrictions on pleasures than other religiously oriented colonies of the time. The economic records of the colony production show that there was a fair crop of tobacco grown and there are still stories current about the unusual pipes smoked by men like Karl Ruge, the schoolmaster, who is said to have used a pipestem three feet long. Hops figured in the crops grown early in the colony history and Keil makes mention of enjoying "his best brandy" with an army officer at the Dalleas. Bethel had a distillery as a community enterprise, but it is not mentioned as an Aurora project. There is no indication, however, that there was any prohibition on drinking in Aurora.
In Oregon, Aurora's local fame rested on the excellence of its music and food. Music was an integral part of the Aurora life and, while all the musical groups were excellent, the brass band was the most popular. The Aurora band was active as early as 1857, when it played at the Butteville celebration of the 4th of July. In 1858 the band numbered thirty-five pieces and was hired to play for the Old Settlers' Ball in Oregon City. The band was already making such appearances in Oregon although the man credited with developing Aurora musicians, Carl Finck, was still in Bethel. When Ben Holladay, early-day-Oregon tycoon, arranged an excursion to interest California banking groups in the Northwest he hired the Aurora band to entertain aboard ship. The band was also a feature of the graduation exercises at Philomath College.

Music lovers that they were, even Dr. Keil mentions playing the harmonica; the Aurorans also enjoyed dancing, and Dr. Keil is reported to have participated in order to include even the young children in the fun. There were classical music lovers in the community who performed on various stringed instruments and attempted the now familiar music of the German masters. Several people in the community composed music, including Dr. Keil, and there was even an official Aurora song. Many hours went into the laborious hand-copying of musical notes, as a few surviving notebooks from colony attics testify.
As might be expected, much of the Aurora-composed music was religious music. When the Aurora church was built, it was provided with a balcony from which the Aurora musical groups could perform. The church, according to a history of Aurora which appeared in the Champoeg Pioneer (17) in 1956, was erected in 1864 and finished for dedication in 1867. The church bell was cast in the East in 1844 and came by ship around the Horn. The church is said to have served as a gathering place for town meetings as well as for the non-denominational services at which Keil presided. It was wrecked in 1911-1912, some five years after Keil's own home burned down.

Another Aurora landmark, the Aurora Hotel, favorite stopping place for epicures who travelled the railroad or who came on excursions from Portland, was also razed—but not until 1934. Before the hotel was built Keil's home, known as Das Grosse Haus served the community to entertain visitors. The Keil dining table, which has been restored for use in the Old Colony House Restoration, is of such massive proportions as to suggest that no less than 30 persons were expected to dine at it regularly. This practical reason, in addition to the people's expression of regard, seems to explain the reservation of larger and choicer cuts of meat and the best quality of food products for the Keil table.

The Aurora reputation for fine food and the agricultural basis of the community combined to involve Aurora with the earliest history of the Oregon State Fair. Dr. Keil was one of the patrons
of the very first such fair, which was held in the war year of 1861 on a site two miles south of Oregon City. Among the premiums awarded that September was one to Dr. William Keil in Class IX, "Miscellaneous: Equestrianism, Music, Essay." It might be assumed that the entry had something to do with music; perhaps it was the entire Aurora band! Premiums at this first fair were: three large silver medals, four medium and one small; eight plates, and $65 in cash. The fair charged a dollar for membership.

When the state fair moved to its own land in Salem and became a state institution, the Aurora Colony became an integral part of the fair with a food concession which patrons looked forward to as much as the colony members. Providing the labor for the justly famous food service at the fair was a privilege rotated among the members of the Colony. In time the Colony had its own building on the fair grounds which was equipped for most efficient operation and this food center continued to be operated by people from Aurora long after the original colony was just a pleasant memory.

It is more difficult to pinpoint the influence the Keil colony of Germans may have had on the politics and social thinking of the rest of Oregon. Contacts the colony had with people from the rest of the state, through their part in the state fair and their activities with musical groups, may well have had a subtle influence that has not been specifically recognized. The rationalist movement,
which got its stimulus in Germany from Hegel, influenced not only the religious life in the United States but through the German immigrant "free-thinkers" this influence spread through American political and social thought. Today the origins are forgotten and the concepts are accepted as basically American. The German rationalist movement is pointed out by Carl Wittke in his book, *We Who Built America*, (38) as the motivation for the wave of independent congregations which, like the Aurora Colony led by William Keil, broke with organized religion. Political, economic and religious liberalism generally tended to combine with radicalism, according to Wittke. Some of the ideas expressed by Keil no doubt seemed radical to those of New England background who were neighbors of the Aurora Colony in Oregon.

By 1854 the German "free-thinkers" had spread their influence across America and in many states were holding conventions by this time. Some of the ideas embraced by these Germans seem to have been held by Aurora colonists but formal statement of them never seems to have been made. Resolutions presented at a national convention of Germans in 1876 (the year before Keil's death) included denunciation of blue laws which interfered with observance of the "German Sunday" (observed in Aurora), favoring humanitarian and political reform, opposing prayers and Bible reading in the schools and such holidays as Thanksgiving Day (Aurora had its own holidays like Dr. Keil's birthday). They proposed free schools, free trade and new political devices like the initiative, referendum and recall.
Considering the fact that Oregon became nationally recognised for its adoption and use of the progressive ideas of initiative, referendum and recall in the early twentieth century, it would seem reasonable to assume that some influence, such as that of a community of Germans, might have created a climate favorable to the introduction of progressive ideas. The available evidence, however, seems to indicate that the Germans of Aurora followed Dr. Keil's lead in accepting the status quo rather than advocating any political reform. Wherever there seemed to be indications that they held a minority opinion, or where the support of one cause or another might provoke recriminations, they seem to have resorted to neutral attitudes.

In the Civil War era Germans in general tended to support the Union Cause. In Missouri the German element in the population is credited with holding Missouri in the Union by raising four German infantry regiments, an artillery regiment and a home guard for the ten-month conflict there in 1861.

There seems to have been a marked difference in the way the people of Aurora, far from the conflict, publicly expressed their sympathy in the critical year of 1861 as contrasted to the restraint imposed on the people of Bethel. One of the first Union Clubs in Oregon was organised in Aurora on May 17, 1861 amid ringing oratory and the music of the brass band. A resolution was passed supporting the government against all foes from without or traitors within.
Henry T. Finck was a boy in Bethel, Missouri, at this time and in his memoirs (9, p.11) he has recorded that while mostly favoring the North, the "men in Bethel had to observe neutrality as well as they could" probably the result of William Keil's directives. "I remember seeing them drill, but nothing in particular was done."

Finck remarks that all the boys played "soldiers" and made wooden guns and swords for themselves. Judging from an August 1861 letter (24, p.150-151) that Keil dispatched to his people in Bethel, some of the young men rebelled at the neutral position the Bethel Colony pursued, for Keil wrote:

> With regret I hear that some of the young men at Bethel have endangered the whole community by raising the Union flag on the Fourth of July. Of course, we are all Union men, and are bound by our oath to uphold the Constitution, however, in the present conflict among the Americans, we are expected to act only when the government requests us to fulfill our duty as citizens. Hence, in the present state of war between the political parties in Missouri to display the colors of our party unnecessarily, and thereby, to a certain degree challenge the enmity of the far stronger opposition party is very careless and incomprehensible. It is fortunate that these young citizens in the eleventh hour realized their error, otherwise the whole community might have faced disaster. It is to be hoped that this incident may serve as a warning, and that in future they may show more respect and obedience to the advice of their elders.

This advice of Keil's doesn't seem to have proved strong enough for a month later (September 29, 1861) he wrote (24, p.151) to the people of Bethel again:
In my former letter I have pointed out that we, as immigrant citizens, have absolutely nothing to do with the present controversy among the Americans, and we are only duty bound to actively assist the government when we are requested to do so. The greatest care and caution must, therefore, be observed on the unavoidable contact with both parties, and if some of you should by boastful and senseless talk and action invite hatred upon the whole community, then you have to admonish them seriously and warn them, and if they do not obey, it will be your duty to expel them completely from the Bethel community.

The political problems engendered by the presence of Civil War conflict in Missouri became unbearable for many of the families who were peacefully inclined. Some moved to Aurora by boat while others joined the wagon train of 1863 which brought Christoph Wolff to Oregon. Wolff brought with him an obsession for books and is said to have read the works of Cabet, Babeuf, Fourier and Marx with the consequence that there has been some speculation that Wolff influenced Keil in social theory. The pattern of Aurora's economic political and social life was well established, however, by the time Wolff arrived and the colony seems to have grown away, rather than toward, pure communism in the following years.

Just as the Aurora Colony and its leader, William Keil, became a part of the emerging pattern of Oregon life, so the pattern of the typical cult or sect can be traced in the Aurora Colony's history. This pattern (23, p.49) of malcontents, idealists and opportunists in a slightly original design emerges again and again in all faiths and all times.
The original cult begins with an exclusiveness which rests on a return to primitive Christianity. The early fascination with this idea is replaced by the voluntary association of people with similar background which characterizes the sect. Gradually the exclusiveness fades and is replaced with emphasis on the universalism of the gospel and so the sect reaches the status of a denomination composed of powerful, educated and intelligent middle class people. Keil and his group did not make this last transition and the group collapsed after just about the maximum life—30 years—attributed to a successful sect.

The Bible says that Moses lived to the age of 120 but the prophet Keil lived a little more than half this span. Keil's death in 1877 spelled the end of the communal enterprise although the formal settlement of affairs through the courts was not accomplished until 1881.

The student of religion is interested in the sect for its influence on denominations. The political scientist or the historian studies a communitistic group for its influence on the political development of the society. The sociologist investigates a community for its effect on individual development. An educator examines a social group to discover how it provides for the growth and perpetuation of its ideas and ideals. The student of literature looks for the philosophy that motivates the group.
The justification of a study of the Aurora Colony in Oregon is deeper than any or all of these objectives for it seems to plumb the depths of the weightiest and most probing problems of mankind: what is the chief end of man and what is the "good life"?

Beneath the surface of men's daily lives there is a yearning and a questing which now and then pops to the surface to confront men with difficult decisions. In the intellectual debates one voice insists, "Man does not live by bread alone," while another retorts that freedom and human dignity are not won on empty bellies. One thinker will contend that communism is a primitive social order dictated by necessity, while a naturalist will counter that the exclusive notion of private property is basic with all animal life. A doctor seeking the answer to longevity in human beings will travel to a remote Tibetan tribe reported to have a remarkably fit people of advanced years and he will pronounce that their diet of apricots and highly mineralized water is the secret of their long life. Another observer will infer that the key is the Hunzakuts practice of communism just the same as American communal experiments like Economy and Aurora, where people also lived to a venerable old age.

The story of Aurora is more than a report of a small German religious sect which fell apart when its leader died. In the story of Aurora, and similar experiments, there seem to be some guideposts for thought about a new Utopia. "No map of the world can be complete which does not include Utopia," it has been said (16) "for it is here that humanity keeps returning."
Men have dreamed of Utopias and the dreamers have been ridiculed, but each Utopian dream has inspired some practical men to realize a part of it. Much of the Utopianism of the past has been directed toward minimizing the drudgery of living. The dreamer sought ways to make necessary washing, cleaning, buying, selling, building, growing, harvesting, cooking, all incidental to life instead of the major concerns of life. Much of the mechanics of such Utopias has been realized in America, but even here men have stalled on the same problems that the Utopia dreamer failed to solve: human relations.

One of the most persistent questions that recurs in the study of communal enterprise through the years has been the question of what weakened the group. Most consistently the answer has been that the communal society dominated by a strong leader does not tend to nurture new leadership, but instead is likely to develop a dependent, self-centered second generation. An anthropologist, Medford E. Spiro, made a study in the past decade of a strictly Marxist, communist, materialistic group in Israel which shows signs of disintegrating, and it is interesting to discover that some of his findings apply neatly to a community like Aurora. Many of the sources of tension which Spiro found in the twenty-five year old "venture in Utopia", Keryat Yedidem (32) appear in an examination of Aurora. One significant finding is that since an alternative of life outside the group exists the colonists blame their irritations on group living. The
personal decisions, like moving a place of residence or changing the style of dress, when subordinated to the group or delegated committees, creates problems out of all proportion to their importance for the group. The group finds itself unable to cope with the problem of private property, a notion which first crept into the Israeli colony with books, and now has reached the proportion of gifts of automobiles or refrigerators to individuals rather than the community. Workers from outside the group excite envy because they share the benefits of the group but escape the rigor of life there. Women resent the fact that they are back in the same domestic and non-income producing service from which they had supposedly been freed. Vanity has re-appeared among the second generation of women who desire cosmetics, ornaments and simple luxuries.

Given the freedom from fear of want, men and women might be expected to devote their thoughts, energies and imagination to the solving of other problems that best the world. The effect in the past seems to have been for individuals to become more self-centered and to eventually lose all altruistic impulses so that the basic economic structure, as well as the spiritual structure, of their life finally collapsed. Spiritual failure may be the basic reason for the structural breakdown of the Aurora Colony, as some residents in the area suggest. This would carry the parallel between Moses and the Israelites and Kail and the Aurorans to a climax. There is the
evidence in Keil's letters that he consistently warned the people to hearken to the voice of the Lord, an admonition which Moses had given his people. Moses warned that if the people prospered in the promised land to such an extent that they forgot that their power to gain wealth came, not from their own strength, but from God, they would surely perish. Aurora flourished while faith and selfless concern for others dominated the life of the community. This innate concern for another's welfare was still noted as characteristic when the colony affairs were settled. It is a characteristic still to be found among the people of Switzerland, and Switzerland was the home-land of some of Keil's followers.

The same candle that men and women of Aurora lit in the wilderness of Oregon has been lit since in many places and many times, by one man like an Albert Schweitzer or by many men. The candle does not depend on an economic or political system but upon the willingness of an individual to care. To care or to love one must put self in a secondary role, and this does not come easily to materialistic men.

William Keil lit a candle he believed in, and in his lifetime that candle attracted many moths. Even a century later the light still glimmers faintly. Walking the same byways, handling old letters, sitting beside the same hearth that warmed another generation, it is easy to imagine Keil's spirit still looking for a
sympathetic hearing. There is more of the Aurora story to be dug out and patiently fitted together before fact and fiction become too thoroughly fused to be isolated. The deeper the researcher probes the more complex become the questions to be answered. What begins as local history becomes a philosophical problem difficult to weave into whole cloth from strands as tangled as though they were the aftermath of a kitten's playful encounter with a hundred balls of different colored yarn.

There is, nevertheless, a thread woven in the warp of the history of man, sometimes lost in tweedy confusion, sometimes bright in the brilliant plaids of hope and utopian dream. The beginning of the thread is lost in the weave of the fabric and there is no neat and tidy end. The Aurora Colony is a portion of this thread with the origin of its ideals subdued in the texture of the past but with bits appearing still in the gentle demeanor and cooperative instincts of remnants in the area. To know such individuals restores hope and faith. All things are possible to those who believe; it could be this simple.

2. Baezert, Michael et al; Phillip Miller et al. Dissolution of the Aurora, Oregon and Bethel, Missouri communities. U. S. District Court, Oregon. File 752, Judgement Docket 663. 1881-83. (Oregon State Archives, Salem. Film 11, item 1) (Microfilm)


11. Freeman, James. Aurora colony. Salem, Ore., Willamette University, Jan. 1954. 24 numb. leaves. (Manuscript prepared for credit in Northwest History Research, compiled from materials on file in the Oregon State Archives, Salem, Ore.)


**Appendix A**

**SOME SIGNIFICANT COMMUNAL SETTLEMENTS IN NINETEENTH CENTURY AMERICA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Settlement</th>
<th>Founder</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1805</td>
<td>Harmonie, Pa.</td>
<td>George Rapp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1818</td>
<td>Harmony, Ind.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>Economy, Pa.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1824</td>
<td>New Harmony, Ind.</td>
<td>Robert Owen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1826</td>
<td>Nashoba, Tenn.</td>
<td>Mannie Wright &amp; Robert Dale Owen (Robert Owen's son)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1831</td>
<td>Independence, Mo.</td>
<td>Joseph Smith</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1835</td>
<td>Kirtland, Ohio</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Nauvoo, Ill.</td>
<td>&quot; &quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1838</td>
<td>Putney, Vt.</td>
<td>John Humphrey Noyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Brook Farm (Mass.)</td>
<td>George Ripley</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1841</td>
<td>Hopedale</td>
<td>Rev. Adin Ballou</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1843</td>
<td>Fruitlands</td>
<td>Bronson Alcott &amp; Charles Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1844</td>
<td>BETHEL, MO.</td>
<td>DR. WILLIAM KEIL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847*</td>
<td>Oneida, N.Y.</td>
<td>John Humphrey Noyes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1847</td>
<td>Salt Lake City</td>
<td>Brigham Young</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1856</td>
<td>AURORA, OREGON</td>
<td>DR. WILLIAM KEIL</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(The Communist Manifesto was issued by Marx and Engels.)*
APPENDIXES
Appendix B

AURORA CONSTITUTION

Introduction to Constitution

This agreement, made this 5th day of April, 1866, between Dr. William Keil at Aurora Mills, Marion County, Oregon, of the first part, and Samuel Miller, Jacob Koenig, John Giese, Fred Scholl, Andrew Vogt, Adam Steinbach, and Fred Koch, trustees and aldermen of the Aurora Community co-operative association, of the second part, Witnesseth:

that the said Dr. William Keil, in consideration of the covenants of the party of the second part, does covenant and agree to and with the above named trustees and aldermen, to convey and transfer to them all his real and personal estates, situated in the counties of Marion and Clackamas, to wit: all and singular the lands, dwelling houses, grist and saw-mills, stores, stage restaurant, workshops; livestock, farming implements; tools and other appurtenances thereunto belonging with the only exception of his two dwelling houses, garden and a mule team; all in accordance with an inventory to be taken up of the property confided to them.

To have and to hold the same under the following conditions:

1. that they keep all the property thus entrusted to them in as good order as they receive them,
2. that they make no burdening debts thereon,
3. that they pay all state and county taxes for persons and said property,
4. that they use all the income and net proceeds of the whole property with particular care to the sustenance and comfort of the families and persons who constitute the Aurora community,
5. that they take care of erection of the necessary buildings for families; workshops and machineries,

But if the income should not be sufficient for such purposes, they must limit themselves to the preservation of the property they have received and act in all things in the same provident sense and manner as the party of the first part had done up to the present time.

And the said parties of the second part, in consideration of the covenants on the part of the first party, do for themselves and in the

---

1. See XI and XII of Oregon State Archives microfilm cited in the Bibliography (2) from which this text was transcribed.
name of the Aurora Community gratefully accept the munificent gift thus conferred on them, under which the administration of said property is confided to them, to the best of their ability, especially in following the praiseworthy example which is set them by their beloved leader and protector.

In witness whereof, we have hereunto set our hands and seals, the day and year above written.

Signed, sealed and delivered in presence of:

Adolph Pflugh
George Scribner
Jacob G. Miller

William Keil
Samuel Miller
Jacob Koenig
John Giesy
F. Scholl
Andrew Vogt
Adam Steinbach

ARTICLES OF AGREEMENT

Whereas Dr. William Keil at Aurora Mills in the County of Marion and State of Oregon, has made with us, the undersigned trustees and aldermen of the community or cooperative association at Aurora Mills, the annexed agreement.

Therefore, in virtue of the authority vested in us as in execution of our trust, we, the said trustees and aldermen, of the first part, do herewith covenant and agree to and with the undersigned members of the Aurora community or cooperative association, of the second part, in consideration of the covenants herein after contained.

1) that all persons with or without families, so long as they remain in said community, shall receive free lodging, board, clothing and washing and in case of sickness free medical attendance, medicine and nursing;

2) that there shall exist no preference in disposing of the necessaries of life; on the contrary, all shall be treated alike, as far as circumstances allow it, and there be made no discrimination on that account between the first and last members of the community;

3) that all taxes and necessary expenses, to which the single members may be subjected, shall promptly be paid for them;

4) that all members of the community shall be free of expenses with reference to church and school purposes;

5) that all sick, disabled or indigent persons outside the community, who ask and receive our assistance, shall be relieved, as far as the means of our community can afford it;

6) that all members of the community, who by accident, sickness, or old age may become disabled or incapable to perform their daily labor any more, shall receive their sustenance and all other necessary accommodations out of the means of the whole community for the
remaining part of their natural life, provided that they remain in
the community, but not otherwise. In like manner proper care will
be taken for the surviving widow and orphan children of a deceased
member, as long as they remain in the community;
7) that every member of the Aurora community shall in no wise be re
strained in the full enjoyment of his personal rights as a citizen
of the United States, and therefore, if he chooses to dissolve his
connection with the said community he is at full liberty to do so,
without objection of any one, provided that before his leaving, he
delivers up to the trustees all the implements, tools and other
property of the community which has been confided to him in particu
lar. As for the rest, the understanding is, that the enjoyment of
the above enumerated benefits and privileges during his membership
is mutually regarded as a full compensation of all his labor for
the community and that he has no right to claim any other payment
for his labor, except the sum of 25 dollars, which every person,
who has stayed one or more years in the Aurora community, shall re
ceive before his leaving as extra-compensation or present from said
community;
8) that every person joining the Aurora community must be full 21
years of age and of good moral character, that is, he must conduct
himself in all his dealings with honesty, faithfulness, and dili
genae; besides he must faithfully perform his daily labor assigned
to him by the trustees or foremen of the community according to
his trade or ability; and if a work of common interest is to be
done, whereby more as the usual hands are necessary, then every
mechanic or shopman is bound to follow the call for temporary help
of the trustees or foremen. In particular every member must take
good care of the tools and implements confided to him and not suffer
or allow that any of them should be injured or wasted.
9) that, whereas the trustees are made responsible for the proper
management of all the business branches in the community, therefore
every member is bound to follow their advice and direction; and in
cases of difficulties or disputes among the single members, the
board of trustees has to decide the matter amicably; and if a mem
ber should refuse to obey or to acknowledge their decisions or
admonitions, then the trustees shall have a right to exclude such
a member from the community. Furthermore the trustees have the
right to appoint a member of treasurer of all the income of the
community and every foreman or single member who receives money
belonging to the community is bound, to make a monthly settlement
of his account with the appointed treasurer, and pay over all moneys
in their hands;
10) that no person is allowed to join the Aurora community by sub
scribing his name to this agreement, who has not previously con
sidered maturely the importance and consequences of this step, and
who does not sincerely approve all the regulations and principles
laid down in this agreement.
Appendix B (continued)

And the undersigned parties of the second part, in consideration of the covenants on the part of the first party, do herewith covenant and agree to and with the said trustees and aldermen of the said first party, that they accept freely and without persuasion, fear or compulsion of any one, the membership of the Aurora Community or co-operative association, and that they pledge themselves to comply faithfully with all and singular the regulations and conditions, contained in their agreement, as long as they remain in the Aurora community.

In witness whereof we have hereunto set our hands and seals this 5th day of April 1866
Signed and delivered
in presence of

(signatures follow)
Appendix C

NITHEI CONSTITUTION

 August 30, 1844 Bethel

Rules of the Christian Community

"Having united ourselves into a Christian society we have drawn up the following rules for a faithful observance and have unanimously adopted them:

1. Every member must lay all he possesses into a common treasury and labor for the common welfare of the society during three years, in order to establish the beginning of the common welfare, so that each one might come to his own during these three years.

2. This society must not rest on anything else than the love of God, so that every opportunity for selfish gain be excluded. But our diligence and activity must be as an open fountain in order to do good to the poor, that by our means we might be of benefit not only to the brethren that are with us at present, but also to the poor in the future. To this end also shall serve those of the poor who are strong. Therefore a common treasury is attainable, wherein all diligence and activity on the part of each member is shown in abundance, and this must be the source from which we must draw continuously.

3. If one or another brother should leave us during these three years, we cannot promise to any one a large requital, because the purpose of this society is not to lay up treasures, but to administer continuously help to the poor, and in this we base ourselves on the Word of God: "Having therefore food and raiment let us be content." But should one or another brother be no longer willing to remain with us, the Word of God also says: "You shall not let your brother go away from you empty." Thus, in this matter also, we shall find a way to deal with the brother, that we might abide in love.

4. Although we cannot promise much to any one at the beginning, nevertheless to the single brother who leaves the society shall be given, from the society, yearly twenty dollars and to the single sister twelve dollars, provided she is eighteen years old, and this applies to such as live with their parents as well as to those who live outside their families. In regard to the fathers (men who have families) who leave us, it shall be granted for them, for their wives and their children, under age, the sum of forty dollars, for each year, as a compensation.

1. This translation of the Bethel agreement appears in the text of Robert Hendrick's Bethel and Aurora p.16-17.
Appendix C (Continued)

5. Should a brother who has brought in property leave us, then one-fourth of this will be refunded to him, and within three years the other three-fourths, that is in every year one-fourth, without interest. The house or land is left to the society with all its belongings; the same with the craftsmen in town.

6. In case some one should marry within these three years and make a claim for a house or land, this shall not be conceded to him, until all other families which have already been with us are taken care of, after which they shall in their turn be also taken care of. This society, moreover, does not permit them to marry with such as do not believe in our teaching. This, however, does not mean that no one shall marry with a person of the outside world, because if such a person is or will be a believer in the Word he is welcomed by us.

Twelve men from among us must be elected who will look after the welfare of the society in all things; every single community having the right to choose two men, to whom it must bestow its full confidence, so that when a person wishes to give money for the good of the society it will be handed and entrusted to their care. These twelve men also have the right for the good of the society and for the advancement of the same, from time to time, to draw up rules which are suitable to circumstances, so that we may always be enabled to abide in love and peace. Amen.
Appendix D

Members of the Harmony Society at Economy, in the county of Beaver, Pennsylvania, who left February 1, 1832, with the "Count DeLeou". 1.

Aigner, Fredericks  
Antrieth, Christian  
Antrieth, Salome  
Bauer, Eugen  
Bauer, John 2.  
Baumann, Michael  
Bendel, Wilhelmina  
Bentel, Arnold  
Bentel, Gottilib  
Bentel, Gottilib 2nd  
Bentel, Israel  
Bentel, Jeremias  
Bentel, Philippe  
Bentel, Regina  
Bockle, Conrad  
Bockle, Ernestine  
Bockle, Jacob  
Bockle, Katharina  
Bockle, Louise  
Boer, George  
Beim, Jacob  
Belhas, T. Hubert  
Durr, Jacob  
Duvexashter, Wilhelmina  
Ehres, Magadalena  
Erb, Caroline  
Erb, Katharina  
Erb, Lewis  
Erb, Martin  
Erb, Salome  
Erb, William  
Epple, Lewis  
Fauch, Andrew  
Fauch, Barbara  
Fauch, Christina  
Fauch, Christians  
Fauch, Elisabeth  
Fauch, Jacobina  
Fauch, Matthew  
Fegert, Michael  
Fischer, Anna Katharine  
Fischer, Barbara  
Fischer, Christian  
Fischer, Frederick  
Fischer, George  
Fischer, George Adam  
Fischer, Henry  
Fischer, Jonas  
Fischer, Johanna  
Fischer, Katharine  
Fischer, Mathias  
Fischer, Melchoir  
Fischer, Phoeben  
Fischer, Wilhelmina  
Forstner, George (A?)  
Forstner, Maria  
Forstner, Michael  
Forstner, Sara

1. List compiled for this study by Dr. Lawrence Thurman, curator, from Old Economy records.

2. Identified by Bak (3) as Bethel's prominent individualist.

(A) Same name appears in Aurora records.

(A?) There is some evidence of the same individual or family appearing in Aurora but such identification here is not intended as conclusive. Spelling variations for the name of an identified individual have been noted in the personal papers examined, so conclusions are tentative.
Appendix D (Continued)

Harmony Withdrawals Continued:

Frank, Elizabeth
Frank, Reinhold
Fritscher, George
Fritscher, Jacob
Fritscher, John
Fritscher, Margaret
Frueh, Elizabeth
Frueh, Eva
Frueh, Fredericka
Frueh, Maria
Gama, Conrad
Gama, Raimond
Geyer, Henry
Gerhard, Katharina
Gerhard, Yost
Gerhardt, Christiana
Heinle, George
Heinle, Marsallus
Hohr, Christopher
Hopfinger, Carl
Husz, John
Jung, Eva
Jung, George Adam
Jung, Margaretta
Kent, Fredericks
Keller, Adam
Keller, Rudolph
Killinger, Barbara
Killinger, Christoph
Killinger, Katharina
Killinger, Olena
Klein, Christiana
Klein, Dorothy
Klein, Jacobina
Klein, Matthew
Klingenstaat, Jacob
Knauper, Angelie
Knauper, Anthony
Knauper, Henry 2nd
Knodel, Conrad
Konig, Christiana
Konig, David
Konig, Jacob
Krall, Jacob
Krauss,Margaret (A?)
Krauss, Wilhelmine (A)
Krus, Katharina
Krus, Jacob
Laid, David
Laid, Elizabeth
Leis, Jacobina
Leis, Louisa
Laubscher, Barbara
Laubscher, Henry
Laubscher, Jacob
Laubscher, Katharina
Laubscher, Phillip
Laupple, Deborah
Leucht, Sirena
Lichtenberger, Christoph
Lus, John
Maeenknecht, Jacob
Mauruardt, Adam
Mauruardt, Jacob
Martin, Barbara
Martin, Christian
Martin, Christian 2nd
Martin, Christoph
Martin, Juliana
Martin, Margaret
Martin, Margaret Barbara
Palmsch, Judith
Reiff, George
Rocher, John
Sander, Jacob
Schaal, George
Schafer, Jacob (A?)
Schafer, Regina
Schmid, August
Schmid, Christian
Schmid, Christiana
Schmid, Fredericka
Schmid, Jacobina
Schmid, Tobias
Schmid, William
Schmidt, Catharina
Schmidt, Fredericka
Schmidt, Katharina
Schmidt, Magdalena
Schmidt, Margaret
Appendix D (Continued)

Harmony Withdrawals Continued:

Schmidt, Maria
Schmidt, Wilhelmine
Schmauer, Christiana
Schmauer, George
Schmauer, John
Schreiber, Samuel
Schule, Adam 1.
Schule, Leoste
Schule, Matthew
Sieglar, Leonard
Stahl, Jacob
Stag, Jeremies
Stag, Peter
Stag, William
Stahl, Elizabeth
Stahl, Jacob 2nd
Stahl, Sara
Steiger, Katharina
Steiger, Nahum
Strait, Jacob
Strohaker, Jacob
Trantwein, Margaret
Trompeter, John
Vaihinger, Jacob
Vogt, George (A?)
Vogt, Magdalena
Vogt, Tryphena
Wagner, David (A)
Wagner, Jacob
Wagner, John George
Wagner, Jonathan (A) 2.
Wagner, Simon
Weinberg, Verona
Weinberg, William
Weinberg, Caroline
Weinburg, Joseph
Weinburg, Ulric
Weissert, George
Weissert, Thecla
Widmayer, Andrew
Widowmeyer, Mathilda
Welhaf, Jacob
Wolfer, Agatha
Wolfer, Lora
Wolfer, Maria
Wolfer, Rudolph (A)
Wolter, Frederick
Yost, Christoph (A? Jost?)
Zanger, Elizabeth
Zeigler, Julia (A?)
Zeigler, Juliana
Zeltmann, Henry
Ziegler, Frans
Ziegler, George (A)
Zundel, Henricks
Zundel, Jacob
Zundel, Katharina
Zundel, Margaret
Zundel, Fenotur

1. Adam Schule is identified by Bek (3) as a Harmonist seceder who was in Keil's scouting party for both the Bethel and Willapa sites.

2. "...Jonathan Wagner, Keil's prime minister, came to Portland to buy some beer for Keil..." quoted from a letter written to Henry T. Finck by his father. (9, p. 40)
This is the stone which marks the final resting place of Willie Keil, eldest son of William Keil. This is one grave among a number of later graves in a private cemetery near Menlo, Washington. Although no mention is made here of the fact that Willie died in Bethel, Missouri, highway signs tell the saga of the corpse that travelled the Oregon Trail preserved in alcohol.
Willie Keil's grave is on knoll, upper left corner of picture above and upper right of lower picture. The signs do not agree with each other nor with available records. This is west side of highway and graves face east, as in Aurora graveyard.
The Old Colony House in Aurora as restoration began. House was built in 1860 for Keil's son. Family burial ground is on knoll to the rear. Furniture below was made about the same year for the Case home in Salem by Aurora craftsmen.