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**Not your usual boardinghouse types: Upton Sinclair's Helicon
Home Colony, 1906–1907**

Brown, Margaret Ann, Ph.D.

The George Washington University, 1993

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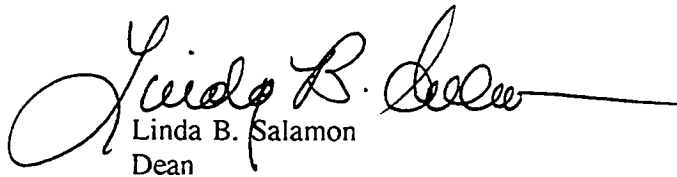
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I hereby certify that Margaret Ann Brown has passed the Final Examination for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy on January 28, 1993 and that this is the final and approved form of the dissertation.



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Not Your Usual Boardinghouse Types

Upton Sinclair's

Helicon Home Colony,

1906-1907

By

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M.Phil. May 1988, George Washington University

A Dissertation submitted to

The Faculty of

Columbian College and Graduate School of Arts and Sciences
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of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Dissertation directed by

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In what way then did it differ from a boarding house, you ask. And I answer, in almost every way. . . . When you came home at night instead of sitting down to a grumpy boardinghouse table surrounded by the usual boardinghouse types, you ate your dinner seated between a Socialist and a Single Tax man, the one perhaps a college professor, the other a carpenter, or perhaps at the elbow of an aspiring young writer, or beside an artist who was getting ready to startle the world.

Edith Summers Kelley

"Helicon Hall: An Experiment In Living"

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Returning to school after several years is never easy but is made much less complicated when a student encounters stimulating and thought-provoking faculty members.

Professor Robert Walker introduced me to both American Studies and the field of social reform. Marcus Cunliffe's academic challenges broadened my understanding of American culture and prosopography. Dr. Jean Preer taught me to look at research in new ways and to understand the importance of detail and accuracy. Robert Kenny and Dewey Wallace offered insights on British social history and nineteenth century American religion, respectively.

I would like to thank the American Studies Program at George Washington University for providing financial support through a Library of Congress Fellowship and my employment on American Studies International, where Bernard Mergen kindly acquainted me with academic editing. My dissertation research was funded by the New Jersey Historical Commission, and I am grateful to Mary R. Murrin for her counsel on this project.

The destruction of Helicon Home Colony and its records by fire necessitated a search for information that stretched the boundaries of scholarly research. More than a dozen archives, libraries, and historical societies were contacted in a search for personal papers and documents that might shed some light on Helicon Hall. Scholars and local historians made suggestions and discovered important papers lurking in their files.

I would like to thank Heather Munro and Saundra Taylor at the Lilly Library for helping me find my way through the eight tons of the Upton Sinclair Collection and Papers. I am grateful to Lilly Library and Jean Sinclair for allowing me to quote from these materials. Gratitude also is extended to the following people for their assistance and the permission to quote from their collections: Karen D. Drickmer, Edith Summers Kelley Papers, Southern Illinois University; Carolyn A. Davis, Oneida Community Records, Syracuse University; Richard Shrader, Edwin A. Bjorkman Papers, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill; Raymond Boryczka, John and Phyllis Collier Collection, Wayne State University; and Rosalind W. Libbey, New Jersey Historical Society. I also am grateful to the staffs of other libraries identified in the footnotes to this dissertation.

I was delighted to talk and correspond with the surviving Helicon children and other relatives and friends of the colonists. Their reminiscences and memories of their

parents' clarity of vision convinced me of the importance of Helicon in communal history. A pleasant afternoon with Amy Potter Cook in a "summer shack" at Arden focused on her parents' socialist convictions, and her easy camaraderie with my then three-year-old daughter proved she had her mother's touch with children. Special thanks to Ernestine Eberlein Benninger, Sister Margaret Williams, Margaret Boulton Feher, and Schroeder Boulton, for patiently answering my probing questions, and to Margaret Noyes Andrews and I. W. Burnham II for providing useful insights.

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Final thanks and recognition are owed to my husband Steve and daughter Rachel. Steve's unwavering support and enthusiasm for this project saw me through the research and rewrites. While Rachel's arrival made the colonists' search for quality child care very real, her jokes and drawings, confidences and discoveries, continually revived me.

ABSTRACT OF DISSERTATION
NOT YOUR USUAL BOARDINGHOUSE TYPES
UPTON SINCLAIR'S HELICON HOME COLONY
1906-1907

In October 1906 Upton Sinclair and twenty-three adults and children established Helicon Home Colony in Englewood, New Jersey as an experiment in "cooperative distribution." The purpose of this study is to reconstruct the history of the colony and to appraise its impact on the lives of the individuals involved as well as to provide a missing piece in the history of American communes.

Pledged to solving "problems in domestic economy," the colony based its organization on Charlotte Perkins Gilman's critique of the isolated home. Colonists lived together in a former boys school and hired servants to handle cooking, laundry, and cleaning, striving to treat their employees as professionals and equals. With the exception of the mothers who jointly cared for the children, most members did not work for the colony. Their ultimate goal was to build

individual kitchenless cottages on the Englewood property.

For five months more than seventy-five men, women, and children made Helicon their home for varying lengths of time. Their efforts received wide press coverage and attracted the attention of William James and John Dewey in addition to numerous curiosity-seekers. On March 16, 1907 a fire destroyed the main building, and the colony disbanded.

Because colony records were lost in the fire, this history of Helicon Home Colony was produced from newspaper and magazine reports, government records, and reminiscences and personal papers of colonists and visitors. In addition to a narrative history there is an appendix containing information on the lives of more than fifty adult colony residents.

The major conclusions of this study are that Helicon Home Colony is typical of colonies founded between 1860 and 1914 in its role as both mission and retreat; may be unique in its attempts to structure a year-round colony based on the writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman; and most closely resembles single tax colonies in its emphasis on individual rights and responsibilities in the collective environment and nurture of equality between husbands and wives. Additionally, Sinclair's interest in reordering the family home--and particularly in communal child care--is shown to remain consistent from early adulthood through his California gubernatorial campaign in 1934.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS	ii
ABSTRACT	v
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS	viii
PREFACE	ix
CHAPTER 1. COLONY ROOTS: RECONCILING ART AND RESPONSIBILITY	1
CHAPTER 2. COLONY PROPOSAL AND INITIAL ORGANIZATION .	41
CHAPTER 3. LIFE AT HELICON HOME COLONY, OCTOBER 1906-MARCH 16, 1907	85
CHAPTER 4. HELICON HOME COLONY DESTRUCTION AND ITS AFTERMATH	153
CHAPTER 5. HELICON HOME COLONY'S PLACE IN COMMUNITARIAN HISTORY	182
APPENDIX HELICON HOME COLONY RESIDENTS	233
SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY	341

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Figure	Page
1. Upton and David Sinclair	40
2. Exterior, Helicon Hall	82
3. Helicon Hall Fireplace	83
4. Helicon Hall Courtyard	84

PREFACE

The 1990s career woman's cry of "I need a wife!" may bring a rueful smile to the faces of many overworked parents, but it reflects a dilemma that has been plaguing women since they stepped outside the family home: who takes care of the children and the household responsibilities when both father and mother have interests beyond the domestic circle? The answer becomes especially crucial as more mothers--especially those with preschool children--enter the work force from necessity rather than choice.

As middle-class husbands and wives pursued new patterns of living at the beginning of the twentieth century, they often found themselves setting up house in cities unsympathetic to their changing needs. Both uncomfortable with hiring servants and discovering the pool of well-qualified people shrinking, some young couples were open to new ways of living that eased their domestic burdens while maintaining the well-run home they still desired for themselves and their children.

Author Upton Sinclair faced such a dilemma as he tried

to manage a home, research and write, and care for an unhappy wife and ill child. His solution was to gather like-minded young professionals together to demonstrate the practicality of what he called cooperative distribution. By living cooperatively, he reasoned, one hundred families could drastically reduce the expense of running separate residences, thus ensuring that enough money was available to hire scientifically-trained cooks and kindergarten teachers who could be treated as equals. He described his dream of home in a June 14, 1906 article in The Independent and struck a responsive chord among other young men and women. In fall 1906, flush with thirty thousand dollars from sales of The Jungle--his expose of the Chicago meatpacking industry--Sinclair helped purchase Helicon Hall, a former boys school in Englewood, New Jersey, for their "home colony."

From October 1906 to March 16, 1907, more than seventy-five people participated in a modified version of Sinclair's initial vision. The experiment ended abruptly when an early morning fire completely destroyed Helicon Home Colony, killing one employee and leaving the colonists without clothes or belongings.

Despite its brief existence, Helicon Home Colony provides an excellent opportunity to examine the ways in which a group of educated professionals dealt with the stresses facing middle-class America at the turn of the

century. Often overshadowed by Sinclair's newfound celebrity, these writers, poets, and college professors, many of whom went on to achieve their own success, struggled with their own careers and families. For some, the experience proved a brief exercise in nontraditional living; for others, it marked a continuing search for community.

This dissertation presents a detailed history of Helicon Home Colony, examining its policies, organization, daily life, and membership and comparing it with other American communitarian groups. Themes important to Helicon are education and child care, domestic and sexual relations, and the servant/master dichotomy. As colony impresario, Upton Sinclair becomes a primary focus of this study, his activities demonstrating the difficulties of reconciling personal and theoretical concerns.

Sinclair had a broad communitarian tradition from which to draw as he searched for a solution to his domestic problems. Familiar with nineteenth-century colonies, he however had no intention of establishing a separate, self-sufficient colony. Nor did he view his efforts as contributing to the development of the cooperative commonwealth, although he believed society was heading in that direction and admired the living arrangements projected for the twenty-first century by Edward Bellamy in Looking Backward, 2000-1887 (1888). Rather, his immediate inspiration came from feminist-economist Charlotte Perkins

Gilman--herself an ardent supporter of Bellamy--who argued against the tyranny of the isolated home.

Nevertheless, Helicon Home Colony can be seen as part of the continuum of American communal experiments. In choosing to live communally, the Helicon colonists were not unique among late nineteenth and early twentieth century Americans. Across the country more communal ventures than have previously been recognized were launched. Some, such as Fairhope, Alabama, and Arden, Delaware, had roots in definite political or religious philosophies--Henry George's single tax, in these two examples. Others, including Helicon Home Colony, were without an overriding viewpoint other than the value of living cooperatively.

By the late 1800s, a few middle-class families had experimented with cooperative dining and housecleaning services that took advantage of growing household technology while addressing the servant question and budgetary concerns. Thus, while Helicon Home Colony members established a separate physical entity outside the city, their efforts were not completely removed from the solutions attempted by others.

Helicon Home Colony described itself as a "home club, or a hotel which is owned by its guests and run by them for their own benefit."¹ What separated the colony from the

¹Helicon Home Colony, illustrated brochure, January 1907, Upton Sinclair Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.

standard boardinghouse, however, was the atmosphere and sense of purpose that permeated its activities. As noted by Laurence Vesey,

the step of creating an intentional community . . . implies an effort to construct an alternative social order from the ground up. Every aspect of life and thought tends to become self-consciously re-examined in such a venture. Community building is no less than an act of internal secession. All forms of this act take on a peculiar interest in a society which has so often captured the loyalties of its members merely by offering them a vision of individual economic reward.²

Moving away from the financial independence and isolation that characterized many nineteenth century communes, Helicon Home Colony provided an economic, social, and intellectual haven without cutting off members' ties to the outside world. As such it closely resembles urban communes established since the 1960s. Like their Helicon counterparts, these new communalists value the financial advantages of living together as much as "the opportunity for forming deep and meaningful human relationships."³

Important to communal history, Helicon Home Colony also is significant in and of itself. Initiated by an author/reformer who recently had earned recognition throughout the country, it served as a lightning rod for those interested in issues ranging from vegetarianism and

²Laurence Vesey, The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Communities in Twentieth-Century America (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 76-77.

³Patricia Baum, Another Way of Life: The Story of Communal Living (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 14.

single tax to spiritualism and dress reform. Despite the almost carnival-like atmosphere that permeated the early planning meetings, the group that ultimately formed the colony was surprisingly single-minded in its optimism and commitment to Sinclair's vision. Together they set in motion an experiment that not only answered members' financial concerns but enriched their emotional and social lives. Their activities "confronted the Victorian world at its center [and] . . . represented the Progressive challenge in miniature."⁴ Robert Fogarty's documentation of late nineteenth and early twentieth century communal experiments provides the framework for placing Helicon Home Colony within communitarian history. His work also provides a further rationale for the focus of this study. He writes that communitarian leaders are "all too often . . . seen only as fragments, as figures who emerged because there was a communal society and then receded when the colony failed." He asks:

how are we to assess these communities as embodiments of new ideas, even though their life span may have been short? Or, more important, what impact did such colonies have on the lives of their members, even if their stay was brief?⁵

Such questions must be asked of individual colony

⁴Lawrence Kaplan, "A Utopia During the Progressive Era: The Helicon Home Colony, 1906-1907," American Studies 25 (Fall 1984): 60.

⁵Robert S. Fogarty, Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 244.

members, especially in ventures such as Helicon Home Colony in which a number of strong personalities contributed to its milieu.

First and foremost among the colonists was of course Upton Sinclair. Initially known only for a literary hoax he had perpetrated to sell The Journal of Arthur Stirling, the twenty-eight-year-old author had "aimed for the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach" with The Jungle.⁶ The novel brought not only financial success but notoriety to Sinclair, whose activities were scrutinized by curiosity seekers and those ready to challenge his sincerity in calling for reform. A prolific writer, he felt stymied by his home situation.

Eagerly at first, then with some reluctance as the colony monopolized his attention, Sinclair served as the unofficial leader and sage of Helicon Home Colony. Life (and death) at the colony taxed his energies and health. Although he continued to search for the perfect living arrangement during the next few years--staying for short periods at Carmel, Fairhope, and Arden--a new wife and his son's maturity ended his personal involvement in communal living. Sinclair retained "a strong utopian element" in his

⁶Upton Sinclair, The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 126. See chapter 1 of this dissertation for a discussion of The Journal of Arthur Stirling.

activities.⁷ He spoke fondly of Helicon, championing its child care arrangements. He explored utopian and cooperative themes in The Millennium (1907?) and Co-Op (1936) and promoted cooperative farm colonies in his 1934 EPIC campaign.

This study also examines how the colony experience affected other residents.⁸ For example, Ernest Eberlein moved on to Free Acres, continuing a quest that had begun several years earlier at Straight Edge in New York City. John-Armistead Collier worked at April Farm, a free love colony established by Charles Garland in the 1920s. Professor William Montague abandoned his cooperative lifestyle, settling for academic respectability over communal scandal.

Because most of Helicon Home Colony's records were destroyed in the fire, its history must be reconstructed through government records, newspaper and journal articles, and the memoirs and correspondence of members and visitors. Mortgage records, hospital reports, and police logs each added small bits of information that contributed to a fuller picture of the colony. After sifting through the published reports of colony life and administration, I had collected

⁷Robert S. Fogarty, All Things New: American Communes and Utopian Movements, 1860-1914 (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1990), 214.

⁸See the Appendix for biographical information on all known Helicon residents.

more than one hundred names of people who were connected with the colony as members, benefactors, critics, or visitors (or some combination thereof). This increased the number of associates mentioned by Sinclair in his autobiography by nearly tenfold and provided a launching pad for this research project. Over and over again I played detective, first checking standard biographical and archival sources and later uncovering personal stories and remembrances. Some individuals came into closer focus only after reading correspondence of fellow colonists; others remained in the shadows--active in colony life but lost to history. Each step of this process increased my knowledge of Helicon Home Colony and the interconnections between members. It has convinced me that no study of a specific communitarian group can be considered complete until some attempt has been made to examine colony life and its impact from the standpoint of as many colonists as possible.

CHAPTER ONE

THE COLONY ROOTS: RECONCILING ART AND RESPONSIBILITY

Huddled together under coats, blankets, and spare clothing, Jurgis and his family struggle vainly to escape the killing winter cold that easily invades their wooden house at the edge of Chicago's stockyards. These characters from Upton Sinclair's 1906 The Jungle soon realize that their new home is not a peaceful retreat from dangerous exhausting jobs in the meatpacking industry. Rather, it is part of a system that cheats and enslaves its victims both at work and at home, with no regard for those demoralized or killed.

While the gut-churning descriptions of factory procedures were the result of Sinclair's meticulous on-site research, the bone-chilling home scenes also impress the reader with their authenticity.¹ Sinclair knew both well.

¹Louise Wade Carroll cautions against using The Jungle as social history, pointing out its failings when compared with reformers' reports and government and scholarly research. "The Problem with Classroom Use of Upton Sinclair," American Studies (Fall 1991): 79-101.

In his Autobiography, he wrote:

For three months I worked incessantly. I wrote with tears and anguish, pouring into the pages all the pain that life had meant to me. Externally the story had to do with a family of stockyard workers but internally it was the story of my own family. Did I wish to know how the poor suffered in wintertime in Chicago? I had only to recall the previous winter in the cabin when we had had only cotton blankets, and had put rugs on top of us, and cowered shivering in our separate beds. It was the same with hunger, with illness, with fear. Ona was Corydon [Sinclair's literary name for his first wife Meta], speaking Lithuanian but otherwise unchanged. Our little boy was down with pneumonia that winter, and nearly died, and the grief of that went into the book.²

Sinclair wrote The Jungle while living on a sixty-acre farm outside Princeton.³ The experience proved not to be the country idyll he had desired but a nightmare of poverty and isolation. Life, he confided to Owen Wister in an October 1904 letter, "almost drives me mad."⁴ In a May 17, 1906 Independent article, he answered charges regarding The Jungle's validity, noting that the two years spent producing

²Upton Sinclair, The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 112. Upton used Corydon and Thrysis, his nickname for himself, in his Autobiography, which did not reveal Meta's real name. They also are the main characters in the autobiographical Love's Pilgrimage (1911) and Love's Progress (unpublished) by Upton and Corydon and Thrysis (unpublished) by Meta.

³An ad in the September 1907 issue of Wilshire's lists "The Maples" for sale for five thousand dollars. Identified as the place where The Jungle was written, the property included two houses and eight hundred fruit trees.

⁴Upton Sinclair to Owen Wister, 10 October 1904, quoted in Leon Harris, Upton Sinclair: American Rebel (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1975), 71.

the book left him "more dead than alive."⁵ A month later, Sinclair proposed his home colony in the June 14 Independent. The Jungle's sales had brought the author his first taste of financial success, and he was eager to apply his earnings to solving the domestic dilemma he was certain all young professionals shared. Four months later Helicon Home Colony opened in Englewood, New Jersey, eventually attracting nearly eighty people before it was destroyed by fire on March 16, 1907.

None of the desperation of Jurgis and Ona (or Upton and Meta) is apparent in the colony prospectus. Rather, it presents the reasoned arguments of a middle-class professional in search of others interested in a pleasant, economical solution to the nagging problems of child care and housework. With thirty thousand dollars in royalties Sinclair could begin to cast off the demons that had left Meta suicidal, their son David sickly, and his own soul weakened.

Helicon Home Colony's roots, however, reach back further than The Jungle's incubation and subsequent financial success. Sinclair's childhood and early career helped form his vision of utopia, while his readings molded a character convinced of its own genius and personal mission. As a young adult he experimented with different

⁵Upton Sinclair, "Is The Jungle True?" Independent 60 (17 May 1906): 1133.

living arrangements, trying to find the best system for keeping both his personal muse and his family alive and well. These experiences provide insights into why Sinclair initially chose a communal solution to his troubled home and ultimately rejected it as a continuing way of life.

While little is known about the early life of other Helicon Home Colony members, it is apparent that their own experiences led them to view Sinclair's proposal favorably. Familiar with the same economic frustrations and prevailing solutions, they flocked to the colony with an eager intensity. Their correspondence and autobiographies reveal the same pain Sinclair faced when the creative impulse meets the reality of day-to-day exigencies and family responsibilities. By looking closely at Sinclair's philosophical heroes and financial problems, it is possible to consider contemporary forces instrumental in other colonists' lives.

Upton Beall Sinclair was born September 28, 1878 in a Baltimore boardinghouse. His mother, Priscilla Harden Sinclair, was the daughter of John S. Harden, secretary-treasurer of the Western Maryland Railroad. His father, Upton Beall Sinclair, Sr., was the youngest son of a Virginia plantation owner and Confederate Navy captain impoverished in the Civil War. Earning his living as a salesman of whiskey, straw hats, and men's clothing, Upton Senior was also an alcoholic at a time when all Southern

gentlemen drank, recalled his son. Upton Junior's earliest memories included searching for his inebriated father in neighborhood saloons and dragging him home to bedbug-infested boarding rooms.⁶ This experience left him with a lifelong animosity toward alcoholics and even social drinkers.

Sinclair wrote that his family paid their bills, although not always on time, necessitating frequent searches for boardinghouses where they were not known. He recalled,

Life was one endless and sordid struggle to make last year's clothing look like new and to find some boardinghouse that was cheaper and yet respectable. There was endless wrangling and strife and worry over money, and every year the task was harder, the standards lower, the case more hopeless.⁷

This search for home became a leitmotif for Sinclair, who did not find a stable, predictable home environment until he married Mary Craig Kimbrough in 1913 and gladly turned over the task of running the house and managing their finances to her steady, albeit parsimonious, control.

When money was especially tight, Sinclair's parents turned to his maternal aunt for assistance. Maria Harden had married John Randolph Bland, founder of the U.S. Fidelity and Guaranty Company and destined to be one of the richest men in Baltimore. In the Bland home Upton and his

⁶Biographical information is from Sinclair, Autobiography, and Harris, Upton Sinclair.

⁷Upton Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage (New York: Mitchell, Kennerley, 1911), 8-9.

mother found the plentiful food and material possessions they lacked, including--much to young Sinclair's amazement--beautifully bound volumes of Shakespeare and Milton that had never been opened. Here he was forced to confront alone the dichotomy of poverty and wealth that his proud mother refused to or could not explain. This childhood conundrum, Sinclair later recalled, accounted for his lifelong quest for "social justice," a term he equated with equal opportunity for everyone to develop his or her full capacities.⁸

Books both comforted and challenged Sinclair. He had taught himself to read at age five and became a dreamer, lost in a fantasy world of books. Their tales matched his own "Cinderella transformation" from winters in an ever-changing series of boardinghouses to holidays and summers at various Bland residences: "One night I would be sleeping on a vermin-ridden sofa in a lodging house and the next under silken coverlets in a fashionable home."⁹

By his early teens, Sinclair had begun to immerse himself in the literature that would shape his personal philosophy. He credited Jesus, Shelley, and Hamlet with

⁸Upton Sinclair, interview by Josef Kirigin, 15 Aug. 1962, Upton Sinclair Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Papers). Lilly Library houses the Sinclair Papers, which include his personal papers, and the Sinclair Collection, which includes printed works.

⁹Sinclair, Autobiography, 9.

molding his character and contributing to his fundamentally revolutionary outlook.¹⁰ The Cry for Justice, Sinclair's 1915 "anthology of the literature of social protest," demonstrates his fusion of childhood heroes and modern proletarian thought. It excerpts Isaiah, Shakespeare, and Shelley, as well as Karl Marx, Edward Bellamy, and Jack London.

The teachings of Jesus were an especially potent force in Sinclair's life, although his love-hate relationship with the church drove him away from organized religion. As a child, Sinclair had been taken by his Methodist mother to Episcopal services at whatever was the most fashionable church in their current neighborhood. In his teenaged years he became a devotee of Rev. William Wilmerding Moir, a wealthy young minister who advised his young charges to remain chaste and submit monthly reports of their sexual temptations. Sinclair called Moir the most influential man in his life--not only did Moir instill the rigorous self-discipline that epitomized Sinclair's character, he also introduced the young man to the Episcopalian apologetics, whose refutation of anti-Christian views led to his agnosticism rather than strengthening his regard for the church. At the same time Sinclair considered himself deeply religious--as he commented at age 85--not because he

¹⁰Upton Sinclair, "What Life Means to Me," Cosmopolitan 41 (October 1906): 592.

followed any particular dogma but because of his belief in the "ethical teachings of Jesus, the preaching of brotherhood, mercy, kindness, love, gentleness, honor, loyalty."¹¹

The poetic vision of Shelley also was influential in forming Sinclair's belief in nonviolent rebellion. The Cry for Justice includes Shelley's call for action, "The Mask of Anarchy," and the highly critical "England in 1819."

Sinclair echoed Shelley's condemnation of contemporary society and shared his belief in an attainable ideal.¹²

Biographer Leon Harris emphasizes Shelley's lifelong impact on the reformer:

Even after Sinclair finally discovered Socialism and read widely in it, he never lost his essentially Shelleyan vision that the ideal society was a kind of enlightened, middle-class utopia with poets, or at least intelligent, right thinking gifted people, like himself, leading mankind down a rational, healthy, and

¹¹Upton Sinclair, interview by Ronald Gottesman, January 1963, transcript, Columbia University Oral History Project, New York, N.Y. Religion is seldom a dominant theme in Sinclair's books, although several demonstrate his identification with Jesus' social message but rejection of formal religion. For example, Our Lady (1938), his favorite novel, follows Jesus' mother into the future, where she finds no connection between her son and the religion of a young priest she encounters at a Notre Dame football game. Sinclair's strongest indictment of the church is The Profits of Religion (1918), the first book in his six-volume Dead Hand series analyzing capitalism's impact on American institutions. Methodically attacking the various denominations he chides the churches for forgetting the proletarian message of Jesus.

¹²George Santayana, Winds of Doctrine and Platonism and the Spiritual Life (1913; reprint, Gloucester, Penn.: Peter Smith, 1971), 158-61.

loving path of social virtue.¹³

The teenaged Sinclair was still many years away from the comfort he would find in socialism's explanation of the economic inequities which distressed him. At age fourteen, while pursuing a combined high school/baccalaureate program at the College of the City of New York, he was duly impressed when a classmate sold a short story to a children's magazine. Not to be outdone, he began selling jokes, sketches, and short stories to various publications. He was soon contributing to his family's income and had earned enough money at age seventeen to afford his own apartment.

Rejecting an opportunity to enter the Naval Academy at Annapolis, Sinclair decided to pursue a law career, which he believed would combine an "honorable living with devotion to books."¹⁴ In fall 1897 he became a special student at Columbia University, a status which allowed him to choose an eclectic group of courses. At the same time Sinclair continued his freelance writing.

While in graduate school Sinclair began experiencing feelings he would later identify as genius. Spending one Christmas holiday at Uncle Bland's home he devoured the untouched volumes of Shakespeare and Milton. Walking in his

¹³Harris, Upton Sinclair, 22.

¹⁴Upton Sinclair, unidentified writing, quoted in Harris, Upton Sinclair, 24.

uncle's garden one night, he was overcome with an "ecstasy" he characterized as almost mystical. Repeated episodes of these great surges of happiness, which he associated with music, poetry, and natural beauty, convinced him he was meant to be a poet.

Such feelings soon made Sinclair's successful freelancing an anathema. He began to resent having to support his mother through hackwork when he really wanted to write something more important.¹⁵ Here was the start of the dilemma that soon would spur his attempts to balance work and home life, including the establishment of Helicon Home Colony. Quite simply, how do you reconcile making a living with following your creative muse, or, as he would later express it, was there some way to save "original and uncompromising talent" from "the brutalizing slavery of 'What the Public Wants'"?¹⁶

As a young bachelor Sinclair thought he had the easy answer. Nothing would take precedence over his art, including the simple creature comforts. In early 1900 he left New York for a log cabin on Lake Massawippi in Quebec and began writing Springtime and Harvest, overcome with a desire to share his feelings with the rest of the world. Living alone, Sinclair felt happy and contented. "My one

¹⁵Floyd Dell, Upton Sinclair. A Study in Social Protest (1927; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1979), 49, 55.

¹⁶Upton Sinclair, "My Cause," Independent 55 (14 May 1903): 1124-25.

desire," he later recalled, "was to be . . . far away, somewhere in a forest, where the winds of ecstasy might sweep through my spirit." He was convinced that his story of a young woman "redeemed by high and noble love" would be the great American novel.¹⁷

Spending her summer at a nearby resort, Sinclair's mother worried about his health. She shared her concern with the Fuller family, whom the Sinclairs had known for ten years. The Fullers' nineteen-year-old daughter Meta volunteered to take food to Upton's cabin. While Sinclair initially resented the intrusion, he also enjoyed reading his novel to the attractive and attentive young woman, and she became a frequent visitor. He had thought her stupid and easily dominated as a child, recalling that he had forced her to carry the squirrels he had killed with a slingshot.¹⁸ This same acquiescence presented a new challenge; while he did not admire her submission, he saw her as someone he could easily mold.¹⁹

Meta proved an eager student. When she complained that she had been unable to attend college because she did not know how to prepare for entrance examinations, Sinclair

¹⁷Sinclair, Autobiography, 71.

¹⁸Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 12.

¹⁹Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 12; Harris, Upton Sinclair, 38-40; Dell, Upton Sinclair, 65-68.

assigned books and language study.²⁰ As their feelings for each other developed during the summer, he told her:

Perhaps I am mad to say this, I do not love you, but I love the woman you are to be--the woman I will make you. I wonder if I am dreaming when I feel consumed with the wonder of this ideal of a woman's love, this utter and complete surrender of herself to her lover. . . I give my life to you and I shall make you a perfect woman--or else kill you.²¹

Meta and Upton's growing relationship was sexually charged, although thinly disguised by Sinclair's claim of a more noble and poetical passion.²² Despite this attraction, Upton continually warned Meta that he must live like a hermit in order to retain his vision: "I can't have any country or home, I can't have wife or children--I can hardly even have friends."²³

When Sinclair completed his novel and returned to New York City in the fall, both sets of parents disapproved of Upton and Meta's continuing closeness: what had been acceptable in an informal camp setting was objectionable in city society. Sinclair never understood this double standard. He would later defend Helicon Home Colony's communal arrangements by citing the common dining room and

²⁰Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 57.

²¹Meta Sinclair, Corydon and Thrysis, typescript-draft, p. 25, Meta Fuller Stone Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Stone Papers).

²²Harris, Upton Sinclair, 41.

²³Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 70.

recreational facilities characteristic of many summer resorts, not recognizing that the rules were different.²⁴

On October 18, 1900, Upton and Meta tired of their parents' repeated criticism and eloped. The seeming casualness of their decision is portrayed in the autobiographical Love's Pilgrimage (1911); their marriage is simply another errand to be completed while Thrysis has his violin repaired.²⁵ Upton, and ostensibly Meta, married only to escape their parents' constant nagging; their relationship had already confirmed their love. They believed that marriage was unnecessary as they planned to live as brother and sister and not have children. Further, they pledged to end the commitment if either ceased to love the other.²⁶

Still, the decision to marry was not easy for Sinclair, convinced of the potential of marriage to strangle his poetic vision. Love's Pilgrimage reveals his growing sense of entrapment. Although the book was dedicated to those fighting for women's emancipation, its chapter titles catalog the beleaguered groom's fate: the victim, the snare, the bait is seized, the capture is completed, the captive in leash, the torture-house, the treadmill. Sinclair later

²⁴Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism (Pasadena, Calif.: By the Author, 1919; reprint, New York: Arno and The New York Times, 1970), 62.

²⁵Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 145-48.

²⁶*Ibid.*, 74.

characterized the novel as the story of "what happens when marriage is entered into in utter ignorance of all its practical problems."²⁷ It contains verbatim letters from the couple's courtship and marriage, as well as passages rewritten by Meta when the "manuscript failed to give a sufficiently vivid account of the hardheadedness and unreasonableness of Thrysis."²⁸

Living frugally, Upton and Meta devoted themselves to his work. He expected her to readily make the same sacrifices he felt necessary for his genius to be recognized and criticized her "childish" displays of affection. "God made me for an artist, not a lover," he reminded her.²⁹ They were shocked when his first novel, Springtime and Harvest, was rejected by the five publishers to whom Upton had submitted the manuscript and scraped together enough money from relatives to publish one thousand copies privately.

Sinclair was embittered by what he perceived as the publishing world's rejection of his genius. Trapped by his feelings of responsibility toward Meta, he tried to return to the hackwork that earlier had supported his mother:

He must go down to the editors, and fawn and cringe, and try to get books to review; he must study the

²⁷Sinclair, Autobiography, 75.

²⁸Harris, Upton Sinclair, 120-21; Sinclair, Autobiography, 75.

²⁹Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 96, 126.

imbecilities of the magazines and watch out for topics for articles; he must rack his brains for jokes and jingles--he, the master of life, the bearer of a new religion, the proud, the high-soaring eagle, whose foot had never known a chain!³⁰

Despite Meta's conviction that he could learn how to seek his vision even while married, Upton felt his creativity draining away.³¹

Suffering from the stomach pains that would plague him all his adult life, Upton visited a doctor and revealed that he and Meta had a platonic relationship. Shocked, the doctor warned that Upton was endangering Meta's physical and emotional health.³² The couple consummated their marriage, practicing the coitus interruptus the doctor had recommended for birth control. By March 1901 Meta was pregnant, and they felt "the grim hand of Fate closing down!"³³

Both Upton and Meta sensed that a child would ruin their relationship.³⁴ They stopped trying to abort the pregnancy only after Funk and Wagnalls decided to reissue Springtime and Harvest as King Midas. Sinclair hoped Meta's preoccupation with the baby would give him the solitude

³⁰Ibid., 179.

³¹Ibid., 174, 342.

³²Ibid., 184. With no reference to his source, Harris called the Sinclairs' wedding night a rape. Upton Sinclair, 42.

³³Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 204.

³⁴Ibid., 210.

which was "the very breath of life" for an artist.³⁵

Convinced that King Midas would be a bestseller, Upton and Meta moved to Thousand Islands in northern New York and set up housekeeping in a platform tent.³⁶ Upton felt elated by the novel's sale but continued to view Meta's pregnancy as a further encroachment on his freedom. He described life as "a cage, the bars being made not of steel but of human beings; everybody he knew was a bar, and he hurled himself against one after another, and found them harder than steel."³⁷

On December 1, 1901 Meta, with Upton at her side, gave birth to a son after a difficult fourteen-hour labor. David's birth added an even more urgent reason to reconcile the independent writer's life with supporting a family. That he struggled with this dilemma at all demonstrated his new maturity and "humanness," writes friend and biographer Floyd Dell. He was learning that he could not subject his wife and child to the same deprivations he had accepted for art's sake.³⁸ With the poverty of his own childhood fresh in his memory, Sinclair continued to ponder the still unsolved equation of balancing artistic expression with

³⁵Dell, Upton Sinclair, 76-77; Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 226, 241.

³⁶King Midas was not a bestseller. Harris, Upton Sinclair, 47.

³⁷Sinclair, Autobiography, 80.

³⁸Dell, Upton Sinclair, 80-85.

market realities, a comfortable home life with the uncertainties of creative endeavor.

Meta's father would not wait for Upton to resolve these conflicts, marking the beginnings of the author's vituperative battles with his in-laws. He argued that a man who refused to get a job did not deserve to be with his wife and child. He stopped sending the twenty-five dollars a month that had often been the Sinclairs' sole means of support, forcing Meta and David to move in with him and her mother. They were allowed to stay only if she agreed not to see Upton.

Living alone again, Sinclair tried to write and submitted his second novel, Prince Hagen, to various publishers. Twenty-two publishers and seventeen magazines rejected the novel, uninterested in an author whose earlier effort had not sold well. The experience proved disheartening as Sinclair's hopes were continually raised, then dashed, by publishers who feigned interest but had not yet read the novel. In late spring 1902, Sinclair assuaged his pain by writing The Journal of Arthur Stirling, the diary of a young poet whose magnum opus, "The Captive," had undergone the same fate as Prince Hagen.

The Journal chronicles Arthur Stirling's elation as he pours his heart into his blank verse poem, noting that his sole purpose is to create beauty, which sets him above and apart from others. It also details his careful financing of

the project, as he determines to the exact penny how long he can afford not to take a job. Completing "The Captive" with four dollars to spare, Stirling becomes increasingly desperate as publishers reject or ignore his submission. He decides to commit suicide and send his journal to a publisher so that the world will learn how young geniuses suffer. The novel was Sinclair's first public admission of the private anguish of the impoverished artist. It also marked his realization that a similar fate faced other would-be artists, revealing the roots of Helicon Home Colony's group solution in its awareness of shared suffering.³⁹

In June 1902 Sinclair's former stenographer submitted a notice of Arthur Stirling's suicide to the New York papers. Aware of the hoax, D. Appleton and Company issued the book in February 1903, with an editor's note explaining the publisher had received the journal and poem on the day of Stirling's suicide. Readers were moved by the depiction of artistic despair, and reviewers labeled Arthur Stirling oversensitive but a genius.⁴⁰ The hoax was short-lived when a critic recognized Sinclair's style from King Midas.

The Journal sold less than two thousand copies and earned no royalties for Sinclair. According to Leon Harris,

³⁹See Dell's discussion of The Journal of Arthur Stirling in Upton Sinclair, 86-96.

⁴⁰Dell, Upton Sinclair, 86.

the novel nevertheless proved vitally important for its author's career:

And so Upton Sinclair killed his self, because for most of his life he had had no goal other than to be exactly the kind of poet Arthur Stirling was. Only by killing his Doppelganger was he able to save his own life, that is, completely to change it.⁴¹

In the May 14, 1903 issue of The Independent, Sinclair admitted that he was the journal's author but attested to its basic authenticity: "'The Journal of Arthur Stirling' is a record of my own sufferings and despairs; it is the frenzied scream which the world wrung from my crushed and maddened spirit."⁴² The hoax and subsequent sensation, he wrote, were necessary to launch his personal cause--the salvation of young artists from bowing to the mundane tastes of the reading public in order to survive. Sinclair proposed an American University of Literature to support gifted young writers and announced his plan to establish the Sinclair Press, which would publish new authors and charge only living and production costs.

Rejecting the life of the starving poet, Sinclair actively sought financial aid for his next project: a trilogy on the Civil War. In fall 1902 he met socialist Leonard D. Abbott at the office of the Literary Digest. Abbott soon peppered him with socialist publications and introduced him to other socialists. Sinclair welcomed their

⁴¹Harris, Upton Sinclair, 49.

⁴²Sinclair, "My Cause," 1121.

message with open arms:

It was like the falling down of prison walls about my mind; the amazing discovery, after all those years that I did not have to carry the whole burden of humanity's future upon my two frail shoulders! There were actually others who understood.⁴³

Well-versed in the Bible, Shakespeare, Shelley, and Milton, Sinclair integrated socialism into his personal belief system, rather than rejecting long-held values. Christine Scriabine maintains that Sinclair's desire to see his heroes' visionary spirit pervade American society uniquely molded his understanding of socialism. He was committed less to socialist ideologies than to "the preservation and extension of the American ideal." Thus he functioned as a "stern moralist constantly reminding Americans of their failure to live up to their professed beliefs in the American ideal and Christian creed."⁴⁴

This fusion of religious beliefs with socialist doctrine placed Sinclair among those Christians attempting to forge a new role for the church in the industrialized age. While mainstream Protestant denominations promoted a social gospel of outreach to the poor and disaffected, the more radical Christian Socialists insisted that Jesus' teachings led directly to socialism.

Among the latter was George D. Herron, a Congregational

⁴³Sinclair, Autobiography, 101.

⁴⁴Christine Scriabine, "Upton Sinclair: Witness to History" (Ph.D. diss., Brown University, 1973), 31, 2, 11.

minister and Grinnell College professor, whom Sinclair admired. Herron had created a national scandal by divorcing his wife and marrying the daughter of a wealthy woman he had converted to socialism. Sinclair appealed to Herron for funds and received two hundred dollars, with the promise of thirty dollars a month for two years. He hoped Herron's patronage would be the solution to his monetary concerns.

In May 1903 Upton collected Meta and David from her parents and moved to a leaky tent in the woods near Princeton in order to be close to the college's reference collection on the Civil War. Again they lived as brother and sister, Upton rejecting even the most innocent caress, fearful of another unwanted pregnancy.

Despite socialism's theoretical comfort and George Herron's financial support, Sinclair felt stifled once again by his familial responsibilities:

Dearly as he loved the child the artist in him cried out against these ties. Where now was the care free outlook, that restlessness, that joy in a life as a spectacle, which made up so much of the artist's attitude? When one had a wife and child one no longer enjoyed tragedies--one lived them; and one got from them, not Katharsis, but exhaustion.⁴⁵

Meta also felt trapped by David, not caring that other women loved their children.⁴⁶ Neither parent knew much about childraising and worried about David, who at two-and-a-half years had still not learned to walk. After a

⁴⁵Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 372.

⁴⁶Ibid., 463.

specialist diagnosed rickets and "under-nourishment," Meta followed an expensive and elaborate diet necessitating six daily meals cooked on their camp stove.⁴⁷

The eventual sale of Prince Hagen, which had precipitated The Journal of Arthur Stirling, brought enough money to build a sixteen feet by eighteen feet cabin. Sinclair described their new home in the June 1904 issue of Country Life in America. The article's tone is similar to that of the later colony proposal; both represent Sinclair's sincere effort to suggest a new way of living. Calling himself an "unpopular novelist," he outlines how other "poets, painters, musicians, and other would-be dwellers in the land of the spirit" could build a cabin and live in the country for much less than it costs in the city to rent a boardinghouse room and buy meals in restaurants. For one hundred and eighty one dollars, Sinclair helped three carpenters build a three-room white pine cabin and separate studio, furnished with homemade pine furniture.⁴⁸

The article failed to report how the cabin had proved ill-suited for the worst winter the area had seen in many years. The wood-stove did not sufficiently heat the cabin all night. When temperatures fell below zero, a nearby well

⁴⁷Ibid., 446.

⁴⁸Upton Sinclair, "A Country House Built and Furnished for Only \$156," Country Life in America 6 (June 1904): 178-79. The \$156 listed in the title refers only to the costs of building the cabin.

froze and bodies, dishes, and diapers went unwashed.⁴⁹

While Sinclair read and wrote in his studio, Meta cared for David and tried to make the cabin livable. The effort made her depressed and brought on debilitating headaches. Soon she was taking the opium-laden Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound a doctor had prescribed for unspecified "womb troubles." One night Upton awoke to find Meta with a pistol to her head, despondent that she lacked the courage to pull the trigger.⁵⁰

Meta's depressions forced Upton to take responsibility for David's care and the housework. He also tried to help her deal with the terrifying thoughts that plagued her.⁵¹ Despite his own exhaustion, Sinclair refused a job offer from his Uncle Bland. "Not caring for this," he wrote in October 1906, "I had no alternative but to go away into the woods, and live in tents and shanties and wash the dishes and tend the baby, and nurse an invalid wife, and write

⁴⁹Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 469-70.

⁵⁰Sinclair, Autobiography, 96. The patent medicine industry portrayed menstruation as a serious illness necessitating treatment. Lydia Pinkham's Vegetable Compound claimed to cure the "worst forms of Female Complaints. . . . faintness, Excitability, Nervous Prostration, Exhaustion . . . Headache, General Debility, Indigestion." Given its high opium content, women probably did not feel any pain after using it. Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 25 and illustration following page 147.

⁵¹Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 468, 490.

literature."⁵²

Immersing themselves in their newfound socialism, both Upton and Meta read widely among the popular and theoretical socialist authors. They were particularly impressed by Edward Bellamy, Edward Carpenter, Peter Kropotkin, and Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Each seemed to touch a responsive chord in their personal lives.⁵³

Of special interest to both Sinclairs were the socialists' delineation of women's past and present position in society and promise of a more fulfilling future. Upton finally had historical precedent for what he claimed had been his "utopian dream" of women's equality.⁵⁴ He and Meta eagerly read how capitalism had eliminated women's past economic role. Denied a physical relationship with her husband, Meta responded to socialist Edward Carpenter's dictum in Love's Coming-of-Age (1896). Covering such topics as "Woman and her Place in a Free Society," Carpenter viewed sexual activity as the highest expression of love rather

⁵²Sinclair, "What Life Means to Me," 592.

⁵³In Love's Pilgrimage Thrysis and Corydon read Robert Blatchford's Merrie England (1894), Edmond Kelly's Government or Human Evolution (1900), Jack London's The People of the Abyss (1903), and Peter Kropotkin's An Appeal to the Young, among other works. Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 536-37, 556.

⁵⁴Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 561-62.

than solely a means for procreation.⁵⁵

Sinclair felt a special affinity for the nationalized society depicted in Edward Bellamy's utopian novel Looking Backward, 2000-1887 (1888). Described by the protagonist as a "paradise for womankind," Nationalism--Bellamy's name for his social system--made all men and women full participants in the "industrialized army" that managed every aspect of the country's business in the year 2000. Throughout his career Sinclair frequently referred to the novelist, whom he credited with helping him consider the possibilities of a society free from economic divisions.⁵⁶

Like Bellamy, who wrote the introduction to the American edition of the Fabian Essays, Sinclair believed in the inevitable evolution toward socialism championed by George Bernard Shaw and other British socialists.⁵⁷ He was not alone in his admiration for Bellamy. Looking Backward

⁵⁵See Tony Brown, ed., Edward Carpenter and Late Victorian Radicalism (Portland, Oreg.: Frank Cass, 1990), 102. When the Sinclairs' marriage ended in scandal in 1912, Meta claimed that Upton had forced her to read Carpenter, then accused her of adultery when she followed through on the author's suggestions.

⁵⁶Upton Sinclair, interview by Ronald Gottesman, January 1963, 174. Although Sinclair discounted Bellamy's literary style, he praised the novelist's message. Upton Sinclair, Mammonart (Pasadena, Calif.: By the Author, 1925), 352. Lanny Budd--hero of eleven Sinclair novels--calls Equality "the best thing that had come out of America" and is saddened that no one reads the "great social prophet" who depicts such a wonderful world. Upton Sinclair, Between Two Worlds (New York: Viking Press, 1941), 292.

⁵⁷Upton Sinclair, "A Utopian Bookshelf," Saturday Review of Literature 39 (7 December 1946): 20.

"became all but universally known" as readers established more than 150 clubs to promote its ideals.⁵⁸ Sinclair's associates also were attracted to Bellamy. H. Gaylord Wilshire, friend and chair of Helicon Home Colony's planning meetings, was a Nationalist organizer who ran unsuccessfully as the Nationalist candidate for California's Sixth Congressional District in 1890.⁵⁹ Forty-four years later Richard S. Otto, president of a newly-revived Bellamy Club, became manager of Sinclair's unsuccessful End Poverty in California (EPIC) campaign for governor.⁶⁰

Another Bellamy admirer who had a significant impact on the Sinclairs was Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman, whose theories motivated Upton to propose his home colony. Converted to socialism by Looking Backward, Gilman wrote and lectured on Nationalism and Fabianism after her failed marriage to her first husband Charles Stetson. During her years with Stetson she had undergone Philadelphia doctor S.

⁵⁸Robert E. Spiller and others, eds., Literary History of the United States, 4th ed, rev. (New York: Macmillan, 1974), 991.

⁵⁹Everett W. Macnair, Bellamy and the Nationalist Movement, 1889 to 1894; A Research Study of Edward Bellamy's Work as a Social Reformer (Milwaukee: Fitzgerald Co., 1957), 237-39.

⁶⁰Sinclair, Autobiography 269-70. During the campaign Sinclair corresponded with Bellamy's widow Emma. She called herself a "Sinclair admirer," to which Sinclair responded, "I can't think of anyone whose approval I would prefer to have" (Emma Bellamy to Upton Sinclair, 21 November 1933, and Upton Sinclair to Emma Bellamy, 28 November 1933, Sinclair Papers).

Weir Mitchell's bed cure for neurasthenia--a malady that was afflicting other middle- and upper-class women who craved a life outside the home.⁶¹ Gilman chronicled her desperation in the short story "The Yellow Wallpaper" (1892), demonstrating that Mitchell's recommended confinement caused rather than cured insanity.

In 1898 Gilman wrote Women and Economics, gaining international renown for her treatise on the ways in which women's economic dependence weakened their thought processes and parental influence and how the home might be rearranged to correct this problem. She advocated kitchenless apartments for professional women and their families, with cooking, child care, and housekeeping conducted economically and collectively by experts.⁶² In Love's Pilgrimage, Corydon reads Women and Economics in one sitting and excitedly shares the book with Thrysis, whose enthusiasm matches hers.⁶³ Gilman's writings offered the Sinclairs an appreciative understanding of their situation--including

⁶¹Ann J. Lane, To Herland and Beyond: The Life and Work of Charlotte Perkins Gilman (New York: Pantheon Books, 1990); 162, 66, 111.

⁶²Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Women and Economics: A Study of the Economic Relation Between Men and Women as a Factor in Social Evolution (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1898; reprint, New York: Source Book Press, 1970), 241-42.

⁶³Sinclair, Love's Pilgrimage, 561.

Meta's anxieties--and a reasoned solution to their problems."⁶⁴

During summer 1904, Meta's depression eased as she was courted by several young men from Princeton. Upton begrudgingly accepted these infatuations, viewing her adventures as material for future novels. He also realized that these young men gave his wife the affection and attention she craved, freeing him to concentrate on his writing.

In August 1904 Macmillan published Manassas, the first volume of Sinclair's planned Civil War trilogy. Although the novel sold only two thousand copies, it attracted the attention of Fred D. Warren, editor of the socialist weekly Appeal to Reason. In September he published a manifesto Sinclair addressed to striking Chicago stockyard workers. Offering a five hundred dollar advance for serial rights, Warren suggested Sinclair write a novel focusing on wage slavery, much as Manassas had attacked chattel slavery. Sinclair spent seven weeks in Chicago, researching every facet of the meatpacking industry and its workers' lives. His shabby appearance and contacts within the socialist

⁶⁴In The Cry for Justice Sinclair called Gilman "America's most brilliant woman poet and critic" and reprinted five of her poems and an excerpt from Women and Economics. He referred to her as a close friend, although it is unclear when they met. She was among the 1905 Intercollegiate Socialist Society sponsors, and Sinclair referred to Women and Economics in The Jungle. Sinclair, Cry for Justice, 200; idem, The Jungle (1906; New York: Airmont Publishing Company, 1965), 313.

community allowed him to slip undetected into the stockyards and factories.

Returning home, Sinclair realized that the family could not spend another winter in the freezing cabin. He borrowed one thousand dollars from the minister who had married him and Meta and bought a sixty-acre farm with an eight-room house. On December 25, 1904, Sinclair began writing The Jungle.

The novel was destined to become a muckraking classic. It focuses on Lithuanian immigrants Jurgis and Ona Rudkus and their extended family as they attempt to make a new life for themselves in Chicago's stockyards. Tragedy follows tragedy as the family is swindled by a real estate agent and injured and made ill by their various jobs. Their dreams of a better future are destroyed as the children leave school and home to sell newspapers and Ona and her aunt are forced into prostitution. Ona dies in childbirth and Jurgis leaves Chicago, finding work as a farm worker; returning to the city he becomes a thief and later a strikebreaker at a packing plant. Only when he hears a socialist speech does he begin to feel optimistic again about his life.

Michael Folsom emphasizes that the psychic and physical anguish to which Upton subjected Meta and David for the sake of his art cannot be underestimated.⁶⁵ To Leon

⁶⁵Michael B. Folsom, "Upton Sinclair's Escape from the Jungle: The Narrative Strategy and Suppressed Conclusion of America's First Proletarian Novel," Prospects 4 (1979): 240.

Harris, Sinclair "was better at transmitting his family's sufferings into fiction and at describing his own anguish in writing than he was at making Meta feel his concern for her and David."⁶⁶ It was Sinclair's personal economic and literary desperation, Folsom maintains, that account for the last third of the novel--especially the long socialist speeches--which some readers criticized as too didactic and unrealistic. Tracing Sinclair's ongoing description of the novel in The Appeal, Folsom finds that the author intended The Jungle to be a heartbreaking tragedy that would make its point through the characters' story and not through socialist propaganda. He points to its complexity, which forces readers to hold opposing views at the same time: to perceive both the horror and power of industrialization and to accept but be revolted by working class conditions.⁶⁷

As Sinclair conceded:

The last chapters were not up to standard, because both my health and my money were gone, and a second trip to Chicago, which I had hoped to make, was out of the question. I did the best I could--and those critics who didn't like the ending ought to have seen it as it was in manuscript!⁶⁸

Sinclair agonized over the novel's ending. Like his creator, Jurgis--the novel's protagonist--soon realized that life in the country was not the solution to his problems.

⁶⁶Harris, Upton Sinclair, 74.

⁶⁷Folsom, "Upton Sinclair's Escape," 240, 245, 249.

⁶⁸Sinclair, Autobiography, 114.

Sinclair's search for a denouement was further complicated when George P. Brett of the Macmillan Company, which had given him a five hundred dollar advance for the novel, demanded he remove "the blood and guts." An indication of Sinclair's desperate financial state is evident in his consideration of Brett's ultimatum. Sinclair proposed making The Jungle into two separate novels: one concluding with Ona's death, the other focusing on Jurgis's criminal activities.

Disappointed in Macmillan's refusal to publish two separate novels or an unexpurgated The Jungle, Sinclair offered his own sustainer's edition through The Appeal. Jack London prepared a manifesto that called The Jungle "the 'Uncle Tom's Cabin' of wage slavery" and promised that it would be even greater than Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward, substituting real life for theory.⁶⁹ The Jungle began running serially in The Appeal on February 25, 1905, while Sinclair continued to work on the ending.

Taking a break from writing during summer 1905, Sinclair turned his energies to establishing the Intercollegiate Socialist Society (ISS). Dumbfounded by his own past ignorance of modern socialism, he was determined that other students would not be at the mercy of

⁶⁹"Appeal by Jack London," leaflet, n.d., Upton Sinclair Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Collection). See also Jack London notice, The Appeal, 18 November 1905, quoted in Harris, Upton Sinclair, 81.

conservative professors who avoided the subject. Instead, they would form study clubs to teach each other about socialism, which "they may reject . . . in theory and combat . . . in practice."⁷⁰ Sinclair and George Strobell, a young jewelry manufacturer, issued a call for the society's formation to intellectuals throughout the United States, collecting the signatures of Jack London, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, millionaire socialist J. G. Phelps Stokes, and Arena editor B. O. Flower, among others. On September 12, 1905, fifty men and women met at Peck's Restaurant in New York City to launch formally the new group. They elected Jack London as president and Sinclair as first vice president.⁷¹ Sinclair's ISS work convinced him that socialism's "educative and redemptive powers" would someday help workers such as Jurgis and gave him the ending for his novel.⁷²

London's manifesto helped sell more than three thousand sustainer's editions of The Jungle at one dollar and twenty cents each, bringing in four thousand dollars in two

⁷⁰Mina Weisenberg, The L.I.D.: Fifty Years of Democratic Education (New York: League for Industrial Democracy, 1955), 11.

⁷¹Weisenberg, The L.I.D., 50; Max Horn, The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921: Origins of the Modern American Student Movement (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), 9-10; Bernard K. Johnpoll and Mark K. Yerburgh, comp., The League for Industrial Democracy: A Documentary History (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), 5. In 1921 the ISS became the League for Industrial Democracy; its procommunist faction evolved into the Students for a Democratic Society in the early 1960s.

⁷²Harris, Upton Sinclair, 76.

months--more than four times what Sinclair had earned in the last six years combined. Sinclair published his edition in February 1906 at the same time Doubleday, Page and Company issued the book. He had approached five other publishers before Doubleday agreed to publish The Jungle as is. Doubleday's plan to reject The Jungle changed only after it learned its investigation of the novel's validity had been conducted by a meatpacker's publicist, not the Chicago Tribune reporter it had hired.

The Jungle became a best seller in the United States and was quickly translated into seventeen languages. A New York Evening World reviewer wrote, "Not since Byron awoke one morning to find himself famous has there been such an example of world-wide celebrity won in a day by a book as has come to Upton Sinclair."⁷³ Sinclair's graphic descriptions, combined with the public's growing awareness of impure drugs, led to the heightened reaction against the meatpacking industry. Since 1883, Harvey Wiley, chief chemist for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, had battled against useless and often dangerous patent medicines. Muckraking journalists--most prominently Mark Sullivan in Ladies Home Journal--had begun publicizing his findings. Others were reviving the embalmed meat scandal that had swept the country during the Spanish American War nine years

⁷³New York Evening World review, quoted in Sinclair, Autobiography, 122.

earlier.⁷⁴ Sinclair ruefully admitted that he had "aimed at the public's heart, and by accident I hit it in the stomach."⁷⁵ Readers were more concerned about what was coming out of their own kitchens than about what was happening in the workers' lives.

While reviewers saw Emile Zola's influence on The Jungle, Sinclair gave conflicting reports on whether or not he had read Zola, who coined the term naturalism, before writing the novel. Sinclair's literary appetite and reportorial style suggest he was familiar with the French naturalist, called "the master of documentation."⁷⁶ His raw presentation of slaughterhouse life moved beyond the realism of William Dean Howells, deemed fit for "reading aloud within the family circle."⁷⁷ The Jungle encompassed Zola's critical view of a corrupt and morally ambiguous society and the underclasses' fight for survival in this oppressive environment. That he lacked Zola's utter despair was evident in his difficulty in finishing The Jungle and decision to offer a better future to Jurgis through

⁷⁴See "The Poison Trust" and "The Jungle" in Louis Filler, The Muckrakers, rev. ed. (University Park: Pennsylvania State University, 1976), 142-70.

⁷⁵Sinclair, Autobiography, 126.

⁷⁶Van Wyck Brooks, The Confident Years, 1885-1915 (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., 1955), 213.

⁷⁷Marcus Cunliffe, The Literature of the United States, 4th ed. (New York: Penguin Books, 1986), 228.

socialism.⁷⁸

With the publication of The Jungle, life for the Sinclairs had taken a decided upturn. While pressing for legislation to protect the public's health, Sinclair assessed his own family's situation. Underlying Love's Pilgrimage's trials and tribulations is the consistent message that there has to be a better way to arrange familial relations. Sinclair had tried to interest philanthropists in supporting young geniuses and had himself won the lifesaving aid of George Herron. Such endowments, he had learned, were better suited to the young single artist, content to live in his austere garrett. The family man has larger responsibilities and must look out for the lonely wife who craves comforts and companionship and the growing child who needs proper care and supervision. Likewise, life in the country had not proven satisfactory.

Sinclair now had the personal resources and reputation to attempt something entirely new. His growing kinship with fellow socialists and the struggling authors who had identified with Arthur Stirling, emboldened him to seek a communal solution. In the June 14, 1906 Independent, Sinclair proposed his home colony.

The immediate inspiration for the home colony's arrangements was Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose insights and theories had captured the imaginations of both Upton and

⁷⁸Harris, Upton Sinclair, 75.

Meta. Between Women and Economics in 1898 and Sinclair's colony prospectus, Gilman (now married to her first cousin, lawyer George Houghton Gilman) expanded and elaborated her original argument in books and articles. In The Home (1903), she restated her thesis in less theoretical terms, emphasizing that the home could become a true haven of familial affection and relaxation only when it was no longer a mother's sole environment. She advised looking beyond domestic duties to satisfy women's craving for life, not just love.⁷⁹ In a series of Independent articles, Gilman described city blocks rearranged around central courtyards with one scientifically-designed kitchen and laundry serving every hundred families. Rooftops could be converted into safe, clean playgrounds and nurseries for children. Such arrangements, she pledged, would be both economical and hygienic.⁸⁰ Sinclair enthusiastically embraced Gilman's kitchenless homes as the rational solution to the struggling young artist's search for comfort and economy.⁸¹

⁷⁹Charlotte Perkins Stetson Gilman, "All the World to Her," Independent 55 (9 July 1903): 1613-16.

⁸⁰Charlotte Perkins Gilman, "Domestic Economy," Independent 56 (16 June 1904): 1359-63; idem, "The Beauty of a Block," Independent 57 (14 July 1904): 67-72; idem, "Housing for Children," Independent 57 (25 August 1904): 434-38; idem, "Kitchen Dirt and Civic Health," Independent 57 (8 December 1904): 1296-99.

⁸¹Gilman was familiar with his efforts as her husband handled legal matters related to Helicon Home Colony's dissolution. As discussed in chapter four, she later disavowed any connection between her theories and the colony's orientation.

Given both Sinclair and Gilman's admiration for Edward Bellamy, it is not surprising to find significant aspects of Looking Backward's grand scheme in the more modest colony proposal. Similarities include the individual kitchenless homes, common dining facilities with private accommodations, elimination of the servant class, and employment of college students in service positions.

Several critics have noted similarities between Bellamy's industrialized army--changed to industrialized service in Looking Backward's sequel Equality (1898)--and Sinclair's social proposals. William Bloodworth finds a Bellamy-inspired society in Herr Doctor Schlieman's description of the coming socialist utopia in The Jungle.⁸² Likewise, George F. Ashton and David Mark Chalmers see similarities to Bellamy's future world in The Industrial Republic (1907).⁸³ In both books Sinclair portends federal ownership of all services and manufacturing, much like the arrangements under Bellamy's Nationalism. In The Industrial Republic Sinclair goes so far as to predict that the Democratic candidate for president in 1912--most likely William Randolph Hearst--would win, thus initiating the

⁸²William A. Bloodworth, Jr., Upton Sinclair (Boston: Twayne Publishers, 1977), 56.

⁸³George F. Ashton, "Bellamy, Judd and the Industrial Republic: Some Sources of the EPIC Plan," Upton Sinclair Quarterly 9 (Summer 1985): 6; David Mark Chalmers, The Social and Political Ideas of the Muckrakers (1964; Freeport, N.Y.: Books for Libraries, 1970), 92.

peaceful revolution toward Americanism, and carefully avoiding the stigma attached to the term socialism.⁸⁴

Sinclair, however, steered clear of the exacting detail of Bellamy's novels, which outline the career patterns of individual citizens and picture such amazing inventions as sidewalks covered with automatic umbrellas. He identified Bellamy with the utopian socialists of the past "who could tell you the very colour of postage-stamps [in the ideal future]," claiming that the scientific socialists of his day could not foretell such details, as no one knew the exact outcome of "the interaction of innumerable forces."⁸⁵

Sinclair nevertheless was comfortable claiming that Helicon Home Colony epitomized the cooperative lifestyle everyone would "have to" share in the future.⁸⁶

In his search for satisfactory domestic arrangements, Sinclair had rejected endowments and the simple country life. He eagerly championed the communal home (or cooperative distribution, as he called the arrangement) as the answer to financial worries and, hence, the solution to balancing familial responsibilities with the uncertain rewards of artistic labor. Sinclair's proposed home colony combined the luxuries of Uncle Bland's home with the close

⁸⁴Upton Sinclair, The Industrial Republic: A Study of the America of Ten Years Hence (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1907), 209.

⁸⁵Ibid., 215.

⁸⁶Ibid., 280.

quarters of his childhood boardinghouses. Curiously, he ignored the painful memories associated with both, as well as his own need to work alone and uninterrupted.

Sinclair was convinced that his own problems lay not with his personality or strained relations with Meta but with their outmoded living arrangements. Many years later he recognized "that not every home might be as unhappy as his own [was at the time]; if anyone had suggested the idea to him, he would have said that no one should be happy in a backward way of life, and he would have tried to make them unhappy by his arguments."⁸⁷ But in the summer of 1906 Sinclair's readings and past experiences brought him to champion Charlotte Perkins Gilman's social proposals and try once again to establish a satisfying home life for his own family. That others shared this longing and its theoretical premise was evident by their response to his colony proposal.

⁸⁷Sinclair, Autobiography, 127-28.



Fig. 1. Upton and David Sinclair, 1905. Upton Sinclair Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

CHAPTER TWO

COLONY PROPOSAL AND INITIAL ORGANIZATION

Sales of The Jungle were brisk, and gave Upton Sinclair the funds to experiment again with living arrangements.¹ Unfamiliar with investments, he was determined to use the money to solve his personal problems and at the same time "uplift . . . mankind" by his example.²

Increasingly adept at generating publicity, Sinclair outlined his colony idea in an eight-page article in the June 14, 1906 issue of The Independent. A "great and often brilliant periodical," the weekly journal had begun as a Congregational newspaper in 1848 but had become nonsectarian by 1900.³ It chronicled the social political milieu for a

¹In six months one hundred thousand copies were sold, with an estimated American readership of one million. Christine Scriabine, "Upton Sinclair and the Writing of The Jungle," Chicago History 10 (Spring 1981): 31.

²Upton Sinclair, The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 127.

³Frank Luther Mott, A History of American Magazines, vol. 4, 1885-1905 (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University, 1957), 292.

"relatively small but influential audience."⁴ Sinclair's article opened with a two-page editor's note and an excerpt from "My Cause," The Independent article in which he had admitted authorship of The Journal of Arthur Stirling--his 1903 novel that had chronicled the growing desperation and subsequent suicide of a gifted, but poor, poet and called for support of young geniuses such as himself. Editor William Hayes Ward congratulated the journal for having recognized the novelist's brilliance early on--listing the seven Sinclair articles it had previously published--now confirmed by the influential and successful The Jungle. He called the colony proposal another facet of Sinclair's cause.

Although the proposal represented Sinclair's latest attempt to improve his home situation, it echoed earlier pieces in its analysis of the problem and conviction that this was the best and most appropriate solution. Further, it is classic Sinclair: at once personal--"I have a problem to solve"--but at the same time objectively researched, quoting facts and figures. The tendency to both personalize and document is a Sinclair trait. He apologized in his Autobiography that it was primarily the story of books, as his life was shaped by his publications.⁵ At the same

⁴Edwin Emery, The Press and America: An Interpretive History of the Mass Media, 3d ed. (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), 290, 403.

⁵Sinclair, Autobiography, 284.

time, he could have said his books were the story of his life. Personal experiences permeate both his fictional and nonfictional works. Arthur Stirling and Jurgis share Thrysis's penchant for calculating their dwindling resources down to the last penny. The Brass Check, Sinclair's condemnation of American journalism, includes two chapters on Helicon Home Colony's treatment by the press. The colony proposal reflects this style.

To Sinclair, the detailing of his own home problems was justified because others shared his dilemma. Such "private affairs," he wrote, ". . . constitute the most important public affair now existing."⁶ He identified the "servant problem" as the cause of the troubles and recounted personal calamities with this apparently deceitful breed: one girl left a hollowed-out fruitcake for Christmas dinner, another stole the Thanksgiving turkey, a third hid eggs so she would not have to cook them. By beginning his article with these tales, Sinclair immediately established a dichotomy between us--the beleaguered middle class--and them--the foreign females who made our lives miserable. It was clear that his colony proposal was not directed at the Jurgises and Onas of the world.

The servant problem had been a continual focus of discussion for several decades. Americans yearned for a

⁶Upton Sinclair, "A Home Colony," The Independent 60 (14 June 1906): 1402.

fading "golden age of service" when loyal and qualified servants were plentiful. Actually, such a time had never existed in this country, writes Daniel Sutherland in his study of nineteenth and early twentieth century domestic service. Since the early 1800s, Americans had complained about the quality and quantity of domestic employees available, a fact Sutherland attributes to the golden age myth, the anachronistic master/servant relationship perpetuated in domestic service, and the stigma attached to the work and exacerbated by American prejudices against the blacks and immigrants who held such positions. Sutherland discovered that there never was a shortage of available workers but rather a shortage of what employers considered qualified, respectable people whom they were willing to have in their homes.⁷

This situation was complicated at the turn of the century when middle-class women, who had supervised their domestic servants, pursued education, careers, and activities outside the home. Further, new employment opportunities in offices and department stores opened for young women who previously might have considered domestic service their only option.

To Sinclair and thousands of other middle-class

⁷Daniel E. Sutherland, Americans and Their Servants: Domestic Service in the United States from 1800 to 1920 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 2, 25.

families the servant problem was real and immediate. He recited his son David's misadventures as further proof of the need to set up an efficiently-run home, complete with someone to handle cooking, housekeeping, and child care. Country life had not proven the ideal environment for raising a child. Not only had the unsupervised four-year-old copied the stutter of the sole available playmate, he had stuffed himself with pears in the orchard, dunked his shoes in the washtub, and mixed "a pudding of pepper cruets, candlesticks and milk."⁸ Sinclair recalled that a city home was no better: in two weeks his active son had nearly driven four adults insane. Such reminiscences confirm Charlotte Perkins Gilman's definition of mischief as "the natural interaction of a child and a home."⁹ Sinclair's lighthearted account of David's activities is belied by a reference he made to this period fifteen years later, when he recalled deliberately burning his son's finger with a match to teach him to stay away from the open fireplace.¹⁰

⁸Sinclair, "A Home Colony," 1403.

⁹Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Home: Its Work and Influence (1903; reprint, Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1972), 247.

¹⁰Sinclair's recollection appears in a child care book that advises parents to refrain from physically punishing children. Asked to comment on the manuscript, he had insisted that it was necessary sometimes to punish children for dangerous behavior in order to train them to avoid potential injury. B. Liber, The Child and the Home: Essays on the Rational Upbringing of Children (New York: Vanguard Press, 1927), 198-200.

Sinclair's reminiscences establish a common ground between him and his readers. Although he continuously attested to his own socialism, he placed his current predicament outside its purview:

I am a member of the Socialist party, and all the hopes of my life are there . . . what I am making here is a simple business profession [~~sic~~--proposition?] for an association of people who may possess a moderate income, to secure the benefits of the application of the machine process in their domestic affairs.¹¹

Most socialists viewed separate colonies as impediments toward the cooperative commonwealth. They did not actively pursue cooperative living arrangements or organize socialist communities within the capitalist society.

However, it was his socialism, Sinclair maintained, that made him uncomfortable with the servant/master relationship. He belittled the accepted view that marriage necessitated servants, thus without servants one cannot marry:

And if authors, artists, scientists, and philosophers are to reproduce their kind, what is to be done? Shall they have to marry their housekeepers? I have made many sacrifices for my art, but I confess that one would have staggered me.¹²

Sinclair contended that David was not the only Sinclair who needed proper care, i.e., hired help. He claimed that his and Meta's health would no longer allow them to actively assume the roles of cook and housekeeper. Further, his

¹¹Sinclair, "A Home Colony," 1404.

¹²Ibid., 1403.

investigation of the meatpacking industry had made them wary of store-bought bread, milk, and canned fruits and vegetables, in addition to meat. They also were no longer willing to forgo such pleasures as travel and the theater just because his income was modest.

Sinclair admitted that his initial idea had been to pay whatever was necessary to hire good servants to run his home and then set up a separate house nearby where the family could escape their unwanted interference. The idea of establishing such separate spaces was not new for Sinclair. He had frequently lived and worked in a tent or cabin apart from Meta and David whenever his creative energy required complete solitude. In The Independent article he rejected this notion, as well as the more traditional single family home, labeling the latter an example of irrational and unscientific "isolated housekeeping." Rather than hiring "a hundred cooks to prepare a hundred meals badly," he counseled, "[hire] twenty cooks . . . [to] prepare one meal for a hundred families, and do it perfectly" through modern, hygienic appliances affordable in large-scale application.¹³ Such a principle could be extended to child care, laundry, and housekeeping, he maintained.

Sinclair referred readers to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's The Home for further discussion of the rationale for sharing such services; he was ready "to move to action those already

¹³Ibid., 1404.

persuaded."¹⁴ His example of one hundred cooks preparing one hundred meals clearly drew from Gilman's chapter on home cooking. In turn, in an 1889 Good Housekeeping article, Edward Bellamy had described how one hundred women could hire workers to cooperatively handle cooking, laundry, and housekeeping.¹⁵

Having summarized the solution, Sinclair next offered a detailed picture of his "home colony." It would be administered by a democratically-elected board of directors, which would oversee the salaried experts who managed the various departments. Some members would be stockholders in the community and receive dividends on their investments. He envisioned the residents to be much like himself:

authors, artists, musicians, editors and teachers and professional men, who abhor boarding houses and apartment hotels and yet shrink from managing servants, who have lonely and peevish children like my own and are no fonder of eating poisons or of wasting their time and strength than I am.¹⁶

This list is nearly identical to the group who was supposed to have benefitted from the country life he described two years earlier in "A Country House Built and Furnished for

¹⁴Ibid., 1405.

¹⁵Edward Bellamy, "A Vital Domestic Problem. Household Service Reform," Good Housekeeping 10 (21 December 1889): 74-77.

¹⁶Sinclair, "A Home Colony," 1405.

Only \$156."¹⁷

Sinclair estimated that a colony of one hundred families would have one million dollars to invest in buildings and two hundred thousand dollars for annual living expenses, based on the average professional's current outlay. In "a co-operative home" the families could live like millionaires on half this amount.

By using the term "co-operative," Sinclair immediately suggested a specific living arrangement to many of his readers. As defined by W. D. P. Bliss in 1910, cooperation is "the voluntary union of persons, in joint production, distribution, purchase, or consumption, apart from government, on equitable principles and for their mutual benefit."¹⁸ In the same volume, Sinclair wrote that Helicon Home Colony had been a successful experiment in "cooperative distribution," proving "that, by means of cooperation, the introduction of system and labor-saving machinery, household labor could be lifted to the rank of a profession and that people could be found to do such labor and, at the same time, be admitted to the colony as

¹⁷Upton Sinclair, "A Country House Built and Furnished for Only \$156," Country Life in America 6 (June 1904): 178-79.

¹⁸William Dwight Porter Bliss and Randolph M. Binder, eds., The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1910; reprint, New York: Arno Press, 1970), 294.

members."¹⁹ However, according to Bliss, cooperative distribution dealt with the purchase and distribution of goods by a group interested in lowering prices for its members, such as the early Rochdale stores.

Bliss conceded that in the United States the word cooperation had been applied "even by responsible writers" to so many different activities that it had become "almost meaningless."²⁰ The standard communitarian histories of the period defined cooperation in much the same way as Bliss. In The History of American Socialisms (1870), John Humphrey Noyes cautioned that cooperation was not socialism, which implied combined domestic arrangements, but was instead combined purchase and distribution of goods--a view also implied in Charles Nordhoff's The Communistic Societies of the United States (1875). Neither saw cooperation succeeding although Noyes admitted that cooperation could lead to socialism.

A little more than thirty years later, in American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies (1908), William Hinds identified a number of cooperative groups that he believed were beginning to illustrate the concept's potential success. Although Hinds did not define cooperation, he viewed colonists' continued autonomy as its prime advantage over communism: they could leave a cooperative colony

¹⁹Ibid., 569-70.

²⁰Ibid., 303.

"without great loss" because they had maintained their outside interests.²¹ The term cooperative also referred to specific real estate arrangements. For example, an article in the February 19, 1881 issue of American Architect and Building News used "cooperative" to describe apartment houses in which residents owned the building in common and leased their individual full-service apartments.²² A May 21, 1908 Independent article employed the term in a similar manner, describing apartment buildings owned by stockholder/residents who received a percentage of the rent from noncooperating residents.²³

Charlotte Perkins Gilman specifically stated in Women and Economics that her kitchenless homes did not involve cooperation, which she defined as "the union of families for the better performance of their supposed functions" and viewed as theoretically unsound. Cooking and cleaning, she maintained, were not family functions, but social functions best performed by trained professionals. Families who

²¹John Humphrey Noyes, History of American Socialisms (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott & Co., 1870; reprint, New York: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), 564; Charles Nordhoff, The Communistic Societies of the United States (1875; reprint, New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 17; William Alfred Hinds, American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies (Chicago: C. H. Kerr, 1908; reprint, Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), 597-98.

²²"Co-operative Apartment-Houses," American Architect and Building News 9 (19 February 1881): 88-89.

²³Florence Finch Kelly, "Co-Operative Apartment Houses in New York," The Independent 22 (21 May 1908): 1139-42.

utilized the same cook were not cooperating any more than those who patronized the same tailor or baker.²⁴

It is clear from The Independent article that Sinclair did not intend for all members to work solely for the colony. For the most part, he wanted to ensure that those who did hold colony jobs were the social equals of the other residents, although he sometimes implied a distinction between employees and members. For example, he assured readers that day laborers need not receive community privileges but assumed his audience would share his respect for honest labor. He added to the confusion by calling for "men and women who are willing to contribute their labor" (emphasis added). He also depicted such tasks as hoeing the garden and picking fruit as welcome substitutes for the weightlifting many businessmen used for exercise and hoped participation in gardening and harvesting would become customary. As detailed in chapter 4, the colony's demise did not end Sinclair's need to clarify what exactly he meant by cooperative distribution.

Sinclair hoped to establish the colony within commuting distance of New York City. Its three to four hundred acres would be near water and include a power plant, garden, and farm. Modern amenities would include telephones, electric lights, and hot water or electric heat. Separate buildings would accommodate the children's dormitory, social

²⁴Gilman, Women and Economics, 240.

activities, gymnasium, dining hall, kitchen, and laundry. Families would build their own kitchenless homes according to their own specifications, and single people would live in dormitories or apartments.

Sinclair planned to build a four- or five-room rustic cottage for his family. Colony life, he declared, would not force him to abandon his hermit ways. Likewise, others would have no difficulty associating only with those they chose. Familial and social relations would be maintained in the individual homes, with contact in the dining and recreational halls no different than seeing acquaintances in restaurants or theaters. At the same time, he was convinced that the colony would attract only congenial people with whom one would want to associate. They might not be socialists, but they would believe in brotherhood and democracy and "plain living and high thinking."²⁵

By focusing on the privacy afforded by single-family dwellings and separate tables in the common dining room, Sinclair successfully circumvented concern over the sanctity of home. He appears to be assuring his readers that this was not primarily a communal experiment but rather an exercise in practical economics. While Sinclair listed social amenities--reading rooms, lectures, dances--he did not mention the potential for new friendships or companionship. Members might be congenial but they

²⁵Sinclair, "A Home Colony," 1407.

apparently would maintain their distance.

This tact emphasizes Upton's primary concerns--privacy, expenses, David's care--but patently ignores Meta's. After barely surviving the isolated country life outside Princeton, she could hardly be looking forward to another small rustic cabin. Upton appears to have assumed that Meta's personal problems would somehow take care of themselves once his concerns were resolved.

The children's facilities and care received the most attention in Sinclair's proposal, reflecting how problematic David's care had been and the sensitive nature of this area. It called for:

floors for babies to crawl where there is no dirt for them to eat, with playgrounds for children where there are no stoves and no boiling water, no staircases and wells, no cats and dogs, no workbaskets, lamps, pianos, sewing machines, jam closets, inkstands, and authors' writing tables.²⁶

Sinclair recommended separate facilities for "infants, who like to sleep" and "children, who like to run and shout," as well as for ill children. Buildings would be hygienic, well-ventilated, and protected by fire extinguishers, automatic sprinkling systems, and a night watchman. Large indoor and outdoor play areas would make the colony "a children's heaven" whatever the weather conditions. Mothers would be allowed to visit their children and take them home as often as they liked.

²⁶Ibid., 1406.

Sinclair proposed that servants have nothing to do with the children's care. Rather, it would be handled by professionals, such as nurses and kindergarten teachers. Sinclair thus distinguished the colony's services from those of the day nurseries that had gained popularity in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s and were run by well-to-do matrons, rather than trained educators, for the children of working mothers. Kindergartens provided educational activities for young children, following the teachings of Friedrich Froebel, who had put his theories into practice in Germany in the 1840s, while day nurseries, modeled after French creches, looked after the children's physical well-being.²⁷ Clearly Sinclair was concerned with David's safety, but he wanted more than just supervision, complaining that he could not afford to place his son in a kindergarten.

Kindergarten teachers viewed themselves as educated professionals with more than mere experience and sentimental interest in child care; typically training schools required one year of study in Froebelian principles and two years of

²⁷While nurseries might offer some kindergarten activities, their basic services were a safe environment, adequate health care, and good nutrition. Concerned middle-class women established the charity nurseries so that poor mothers could earn enough money to support their families rather than being forced to place children in orphanages. Margaret O'Brien Steinfels, Who's Minding the Children: The History and Politics of Day Care in America (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973), 37, 57, 40.

practice teaching.²⁸ Similarly nurses considered themselves more professional than the nursemaids who usually cared for children. Nurses had at least a high school education or its equivalent plus two to three years specialized course work, while nursemaids needed no training for their jobs.²⁹

Supervised by a women's board of directors, the nurses and kindergarten teachers at Sinclair's proposed colony would be welcome as members and friends. Sinclair failed to recognize that mothers might also be trained experts in the field, noting that they might earn their living taking care of the children as long as they followed the colony's child care principles.

Sinclair identified food preparation as the other primary colony industry. His discussion of "the co-operative preparation of food" noted the simple, high-quality fare that would be served but did not indicate exactly who would do the cooking. He did observe "if I am not willing to shake a man's hand or sit next to him in a

²⁸Elizabeth Dale Ross, The Kindergarten Crusade: The Establishment of PreSchool Education in the United States (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1976), 52, 60.

²⁹A 1910 New York Times article outlined further differences between the two positions: "The nurse is not a servant, nor does she eat with the servants. . . . Moreover, the nurse wears an apron that does not reach above the waist, the nursemaid's apron extends up to and includes the shoulders. And finally, every nurse is addressed as 'Miss'-- or 'Mrs.---' while the nursemaid is addressed simply as 'Mary' or 'Jennie'" ("Hospital Getting on Without Any Titles," New York Times, 12 January 1910, p. 4).

reading room, I do not see why I should be willing to eat what he has cooked."³⁰ He suggested hiring college students as waiters to ensure the appropriate dining room ambiance.

Sinclair invited interested persons to write him. He wanted to hear from potential stockholders and members and those interested in working as waiters, cooks, nurses, and teachers. When he had heard from at least twenty families, he would contact architects, contractors, and other experts to work out the details and draw up a definite operational plan.

Within a month Sinclair received 125 inquiries about his colony proposal. On July 14, 1906, he wrote to the New York City newspapers, announcing he had rented the Berkeley Lyceum for the evening of July 17 to discuss his home colony plan. The majority of people who had responded to his Independent article were concerned about their children's upbringing, reported Sinclair, who emphasized the benefits of cooperative child care in his letter.³¹

Three hundred people, equally divided between men and women, attended the July 17, 1906 meeting. According to a New York Times reporter, Sinclair was obviously pleased with the turnout, "smiling almost ecstatically" as he walked on

³⁰Sinclair, "A Home Colony," 1407.

³¹"Mr. Sinclair's Colony," New York Daily Tribune, 16 July 1906, p. 7.

stage.³² Later he would realize that a dozen people could have worked out the colony details without the squabbles and delays endemic to such a large group.³³ Not knowing many people, he claimed it had been necessary for him to advertise: of the three hundred people who attended the initial meeting, he had previously met three and knew only one well. Further, he was busy dramatizing The Jungle and thought the colony could operate without his close attention.³⁴

Sinclair characterized some attendees as serious, some as cranks, and some as both--including a few who walked out of the meeting when they decided he was a crank.³⁵ The New York Times reported that many appeared to be socialists, with a large proportion foreign born.³⁶ While this latter observation may have been correct, it is obvious Sinclair and most others were not interested in opening the colony to everyone.

Sinclair's enthusiasm ran high at the meeting. With

³²"Sinclair Explains His Home Colony," New York Times, 18 July 1906, p. 7.

³³Upton Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," The Independent 62 (7 February 1907): 306.

³⁴Upton Sinclair, "The Cooperative Home," Times Magazine 1 (December 1906): 97; idem, Autobiography, 128; idem, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 306.

³⁵Sinclair, Autobiography, 128.

³⁶"Sinclair Explains His Home Colony," New York Times, 18 July 1906, p. 7.

more than fifty thousand dollars in pledges, he predicted that the colony would be a showplace of New York City, ranking fourth in tourist attractions behind Ellis Island, the Statue of Liberty, and the Brooklyn Bridge.³⁷ Its most important feature would be the nursery where children would be scientifically raised.

At the meeting Sinclair reviewed the 125 letters generated by his Independent article. He had sent out questionnaires to one hundred people and had forty-four responses one week later. Questions dealt with child care, location, meals, servants, and costs. A question on child care was typical in its detail: "Would it be your wish that your children should be taken care of cooperatively, provided that you had access to the establishment at all times, and that its policy and the personnel of its management, determined by vote of all the parents, proved in practice to be satisfactory to you?" Twenty-four of twenty-five parents answered yes.³⁸

The majority of respondents wanted the colony to be within one mile of New York City, and most were amenable to initially purchasing a summer hotel rather than waiting to build their own homes. There was less agreement over meals. Half voted for simple home cooking, others desired a la

³⁷"Anxious to Colonize," New York Daily Tribune, 18 July 1906, p. 14.

³⁸"Sinclair Explains His Home Colony," New York Times, 18 July 1906, p. 7.

carte meals, vegetarian diets, hotel fare, or French food. They were almost evenly divided over the acceptability of light meals--"fruit, cereals, eggs, salads, cold meats, etc."--for breakfast and lunch.³⁹

Additional disagreements arose over servants. Sinclair reported differing responses to the question of which positions should be considered equal to colony members: some respondents disapproved of kitchen workers, others farmers. The New York Times observed "trouble over the race question." Applause and hisses erupted when Sinclair revealed that five respondents objected to racial restrictions.

At the conclusion of the two-hour meeting the attendees elected H. Gaylord Wilshire, who had chaired the gathering, temporary treasurer of the proposed colony after he was nominated by Sinclair. The self-proclaimed "millionaire socialist" was most likely the one close friend Sinclair had reported in attendance. They had met soon after Sinclair's conversion to socialism when he became a faithful reader of Wilshire's Magazine.⁴⁰

Sinclair established committees to deal with labor,

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰Wilshire was not a millionaire, although he had earned several hundred thousand dollars in Los Angeles real estate development--Wilshire Boulevard is named for him--and by monopolizing the Los Angeles billboard industry. Howard Quint, "Upton Sinclair's Quest for Artistic Independence," American Literature 29 (May 1957): 194-202.

planning, organization, site, and children. Newspapers identified interested persons, including several who became colonists and, in many cases, stockholders: Ellis O. Jones, socialist journalist; Charles Castle, doctor; Edwin S. Potter, editor, Universal News Bureau; and William Noyes, professor, Teachers College. Other committee members' occupations illustrate the attraction the colony held for a variety of professionals: banker, real estate broker, importer, insurance company manager, illustrator.

Throughout the summer the committees met to thrash out colony policies and procedures. At times they retreated to Sinclair's Princeton farm or took moonlit sailboat rides on Barnegat Bay off the New Jersey coast, forging the close friendships conducive to sustaining their initial enthusiasm.⁴¹ Sinclair admired the thirty men and women who formed the colony committees, delighted both by their individual perceptions of colony life and their ability to good-naturedly resolve differences. They felt like pioneers, showing future generations how to survive when servants became a thing of the past.⁴²

In mid-August the Colony Executive Committee announced a series of public meetings to be held at the West 57th Street YMCA to discuss committee recommendations in

⁴¹Upton Sinclair, "A Co-Operative Home Colony," World's Work 9 (March 1907): 383; idem, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 306.

⁴²Sinclair, "The Cooperative Home," 98.

preparation for writing the colony constitution. Attendees paid ten dollars each to demonstrate their interest in the colony. William Noyes served as chairman of the meetings.

The Committee on Organization emphasized the colony's purpose of simplifying the "domestic problem" through efficiency and economy. Further, colonists desired to be left alone to pursue their individual intellectual and social lives. Proposing that the Board of Directors be given "the power to prohibit nuisances," the committee initiated the first serious protest. According to newspaper accounts, the listeners focused on the term "nuisance." Sinclair suggested bare feet in the dining room as an example of unacceptable behavior; others debated whether the recommendation's intent was on moral or legal nuisances. In a tongue-in-cheek article the New York Sun claimed the meeting deteriorated into a comical forum on which idiosyncracies would be allowed, with questions raised about frying onions or playing "Waiting at the Church" on a gramophone at midnight.⁴³

Other newspapers recounted more serious discussion. Several attendees criticized the recommendation to limit colony control to stockholders, who would receive one vote for each thousand-dollar share they purchased. Sinclair explained the policy was necessary to attract investors.

⁴³"Liberty in the Home Colony," New York Sun, 13 August 1906, p. 6.

The gathering decided residents could have a voice at meetings but could not vote.

The Committee on Planning and Scope presented a detailed assessment of expenses. Basing their calculations on one hundred families, most with two adults and one child, the members determined the colony would need one hundred acres with sixty cottages, sixty rooms for members, and sixty rooms for workers. They estimated a capital outlay of \$275,000 for acquiring and improving a hotel and property, constructing a children's building, and setting up a laundry and dairy, although they estimated that with \$82,000 in cash the colony could begin operations with one main building. Relying on the Harvard Dining Association's annual report, the committee calculated that annual board would run \$200 per member.⁴⁴

The "children's heaven" depicted by Sinclair would be separate from the adult environment, according to the Committee on Children. They decided to deal only with issues concerning children over age three as no consensus could be reached on infant care. Response to their recommendations was based on whether or not prospective members had children, according to a New York Times article. Childless couples wanted the children's diet to be

⁴⁴"Sinclair Colony Plan: Cost of Institution Project Estimated to Be \$275,000," New York Tribune, 14 August 1906, p. 4; "Sinclair Colonists Discuss Future Cares," New York Times, 14 August 1906, p. 12.

determined by the colony doctor, while parents believed that too much authority was being given to the professional caregivers. A recommendation on returning unruly children to their parents was changed to firing the unfit teacher who had allowed the insurrection. The issue of candy and pickles was reserved for a future meeting.⁴⁵

"Equality of all mankind" was the goal of the Committee on Labor. It recommended that all domestic work be done by persons who could be accepted as colony members since "the presence of servants in the household implies irresponsibility and indifference." Further, all members should earn some money through household labor in order to eliminate the stigma associated with domestic service.⁴⁶

Apparently, the Committee on Site Selection did not meet in mid-August as they had not yet located an appropriate property. Earlier articles reported that the future colonists were studying the real estate market and visiting sites. Reporters assumed New Jersey would be the most likely location as it met Sinclair's requirements of being near water and within commuting distance of New York.⁴⁷

⁴⁵"Sinclair Colonists Discuss Future Cares," New York Times, 14 August 1906, p. 12.

⁴⁶"Tentative Plans Ready for Sinclair Colony," New York Times, 10 August 1906, p. 5.

⁴⁷"Upton Sinclair's Cooperative Colony to Locate in New Jersey," Newark Advertiser, 19 July 1906, p. 2.

Sinclair admitted there was little modification of his original prospectus.⁴⁸ An examination of an article he wrote between the June 14, 1906 Independent article and the colony's inauguration four months later indicate that his association with prospective colonists subtly altered his perceptions of colony life and reinforced his middle-class prejudices. "The Cooperative Home" appeared in the December 1906 issue of Times Magazine, although Sinclair states in the article that it was written in September.

Here at last was some attention, albeit indirectly, to Meta's (and other wives') concerns. Sinclair acknowledged the plight of the young woman trapped by domestic responsibilities in the single-family home. She was forced to become "a household drudge and a nursery steward" when all she had ever really wanted was "to think, and to go on with her music, and to share in her husband's professional life."⁴⁹ While Sinclair's condescending remarks ignored the career woman juggling home and work responsibilities, they at least brought some female perspective into the home colony equation. Newspaper reports indicate that both men and women took an active interest in the colony.

Sinclair also clarified how the master/servant dichotomy would be eliminated in colony relations. A cook, for example, would be the members' equal not because they

⁴⁸Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 306.

⁴⁹Sinclair, "The Cooperative Home," 95-96.

would perceive her as such but because she really was one of them--she would not be a lowly servant "not clever enough to be a factory girl, nor attractive enough to be a prostitute" but "a graduate of a school of domestic science"! In exchange for several hours of menial labor each day she would have the freedom to pursue her intellectual interests without economic worry. Sinclair further intoned that it would only be good manners for everyone to do some "honest drudgery" for pay in order to reduce "the purely artificial sentiment of humiliation which attaches to it in the cruel world."⁵⁰ Should any of the educated and refined persons hired prove objectionable as colleagues, they would be fired.

Sinclair gave less attention to colony child care in the Times article but made revealing changes in its administration. He made no mention of child care experts but insisted that "it should hardly be necessary to say that as much as possible . . . [child care] will be done by the mothers."⁵¹ He did not anticipate any disagreements over policies as they would be based on twenty years of child care science. Further, their work would be supervised by parents--a change from just mothers--elected by other parents. Gone also was the litany of David's misbehavior, replaced with the claim that Upton and Meta would spend all

⁵⁰Ibid., 95, 99.

⁵¹Ibid., 100.

their spare time helping out with the children.

While the decision to employ mothers as caregivers was necessitated by the realization of how much it would cost to hire professionals, it also reflected the growing "mother's movement" spurred by the declining availability of well-qualified servants. This trend allowed women to combine maternal responsibility with college education, producing mothers who could apply child psychology's new developmental theories to their children's nurturance.⁵² It also signaled society's rejection of Charlotte Perkins Gilman's demand for professional child care. Agreeing with her assessment that women were not natural mothers, i.e., able care givers, such groups as psychologist G. Stanley Hall's Child Study Institute and the AMA's American Association for the Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality, championed training women to be mothers rather than employing child care professionals.⁵³ Gilman was one of the few feminists in the early twentieth century who realized that such practices doomed women to holding two, ultimately

⁵²See Sheila Rothman, Woman's Proper Place: A History of Changing Ideals and Practices, 1870 to the Present (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1978), 106-12; Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: Free Press, 1988), 119, 121, 124.

⁵³William D. Jenkins, "Housewifery and Motherhood: the Question of Role Change in the Progressive Era," in Woman's Being, Woman's Place: Female Identity and Vocation in American History, ed. Mary Kelley (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1979), 142-43.

unsatisfactory, jobs: by forgoing hired help, women could never "have careers equivalent to men's without giving up the joys and satisfactions of marriage and family."⁵⁴

Editorial response to the colony remained consistent throughout the summer. For the most part newspapers looked on the experiment with interest and wished the colonists well. They often described the effort as more impractical than radical, indicating Sinclair's ideas were not new but did not have much support. The New York Daily Tribune reminded readers that the colony roots could be found in Brook Farm and the Fourier experiments. It suggested that despite The Jungle's notoriety, Sinclair had a "likelier bid for lasting fame as the founder of a 'co-operative home colony.'" The paper labeled summer resort hotels, centralized housekeeping in apartment houses, and the Waldorf-Astoria's kindergarten as cooperative in everything but name and stated purpose.⁵⁵

While the proposals were accurately reported in the press, a bemused tone permeated many of the comments. The Literary Digest was one of the first to respond to Sinclair's Independent article, writing in its June 23, 1906 issue that Sinclair had turned his attention from

⁵⁴Carl Degler, At Odds: Women and the Family in America from the Revolution to the Present (New York: Oxford University Press, 1980), 345.

⁵⁵"Mr. Sinclair's Colony. Plan for Co-Operative Settlement Has Had Many Predecessors," New York Daily Tribune, 12 August 1906, p. 8.

millionaires to the "merely well to do": "those beef-packing millionaires and their destinies are, after all, of small importance compared with the economic problem and the servant question in the households of most of us." The New York Times hoped the colony would be successful "for it might be a good thing, both for them and for the community, that people possessing Mr. Sinclair's qualifications should flock by themselves." A Brooklyn Daily Eagle reporter found it both amusing and admirable that Sinclair--a man--would confront the servant problem. The New York Times later doubted that the colony could find appropriate property for under three thousand dollars an acre.⁵⁶

The issue of women's suffrage and leadership at the colony generated additional levity for journalists. The New York Times predicted that watching the directors and mothers' board in operation would "be more fun . . . for outsiders . . . than in the traditional barrel of monkeys."⁵⁷ Two days later the paper could not resist further comment; it did not believe colony affairs could run smoothly with one hundred women voting but allowed it would be overrun with eager applicants should they somehow

⁵⁶"Upton Sinclair's Dream of Home," The Literary Digest 32 (23 June 1906): 931; "The Sinclair Colony," New York Times, 24 June 1906, p. 8; "Co-Operative Colony, Mr. Sinclair's Utopia," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 22 July 1906, p. 1.

⁵⁷"A Co-Operative Home," New York Times, 17 July 1906, p. 6.

succeed.⁵⁸ Such merrymaking at women's expense was nothing new; anti-suffragists had long employed humor to goad their opponents.⁵⁹ By 1906 only four states had given women the vote, and the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment was thirteen years away.

In response to Sinclair's criticism of press coverage, the New York Times reminded the future colonists that they must expect some comment on their activities since their meetings were public; they were not trying to discourage the colony, as its "aim is one that corresponds to a real need." A month later the New York Times again recognized the appeal of a cooperative plan but doubted the prospective colonists' ability to run such an operation.⁶⁰

The radical press gave scant attention to Sinclair's proposal. The July 1906 issue of the International Socialist Review discussed the twenty-three-page brochure that reprinted Sinclair's June 14 Independent article. It conceded that while the colony could not solve the servant problem in a capitalist society, it could "make living a little more endurable for those who are lucky enough to be

⁵⁸"Planning the Home," New York Times, 19 July 1906, p. 6.

⁵⁹Robert H. Walker, The Poet and the Gilded Age: Social Themes in Late 19th Century American Verse (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1963), 157-58.

⁶⁰"Planning the Home," New York Times, 19 July 1906, p. 6; "Topics of the Times. Novelties that are Familiar," New York Times, 11 August 1906, p. 4.

able to co-operate as suggested."⁶¹ A notice in Wilshire's also indicated that the colony was directed at the "immediate personal problem," not the "future social problem." It identified the colony's potential residents as "New Yorkers of limited incomes."⁶² Apparently Wilshire did not see himself among this target group; after the initial colony meeting there is no record of his direct involvement with the colony.

While most socialist periodicals ignored the colony, one comrade vehemently disavowed any affiliation between the socialist movement and Sinclair's domestic proposal. In a letter to the editor in the July 22, 1906 New York Times, John Spargo attacked Sinclair's "vulgar" self-promotion and misguided and murderous plans for communal childraising. Spargo had known Sinclair since his conversion to socialism and considered him a good friend. His research for Bitter Cry of the Children (1906), a study of how poverty affects children, had convinced him of the dangers of separating children from their mothers. His letter listed the mortality rates for communal child care facilities in New York City, Massachusetts, Australia, and Italy and concluded that children were better off in a tenement house than a

⁶¹Review of A Home Colony (brochure) by Upton Sinclair, in International Socialist Review 7 (July 1906): 60.

⁶²"Sinclair's Colony," Wilshire's Magazine 10 (July 1906): 9.

scientifically-run cooperative nursery.⁶³

Gaylord Wilshire quickly responded to Spargo's charges in a letter in the July 26, 1906 New York Times. He insisted Spargo's infant mortality statistics had nothing to do with the care of the older children for whom the colony's plans were designed. Further, the colony would not eliminate maternal care but "augment it." Wilshire also wondered if Spargo's letter was motivated by professional jealousy over The Jungle's success.⁶⁴ Sinclair did not directly defend himself or the colony against Spargo's charges but made a pointed reference to criticism over their supposed "imitation infant asylum" in his Times article.⁶⁵

As the press looked on the colony preparations with-- for the most part--good humor, additional families and individuals committed themselves to the experiment. Twenty-four people, including seven children, helped launch the

⁶³"Facts for Mr. Sinclair. Fatal Results of Efforts to Raise Babies on the Co-Operative Plan," John Spargo to the editor, 20 July 1906 in New York Times, 22 July 1906, p. 6. Spargo apparently disliked any form of cooperative domestic arrangements. He later wrote that there was no need for communal dwellings because labor-saving devices were making housework "a light, agreeable, and recreative occupation for a normal, healthy woman" (Spargo, Applied Socialism: A Study of the Application of Socialistic Principles to the State [New York: B. W. Huebsch, 1912], 268).

⁶⁴"Mr. Sinclair's Colony. Children Not Infants to be Co-Operatively Raised--Literary Rivalry." Gaylord Wilshire to the editor, 26 July 1906 in New York Times, 28 July 1906, p. 6.

⁶⁵Sinclair, "The Cooperative Home," 100.

colony when it opened its doors in October 1906. By the time of its demise on March 16, 1907, sixty-one adults and eighteen children had lived at the colony. Newspapers identified sixty-seven survivors of the colony fire, indicating residence was not static. Some biographical information has been located on sixty-six of the members and forms the basis for the following observations on who was attracted to the colony. For specific biographical details and a comparison of the colonists with the general United States population, see the Appendix.

Colony residents included eight families with one or two children each, two married couples without children, and four single women with children (the average family size in 1910 was 4.54).⁶⁶ Two married men with children--physician Charles Castle and businessman Stephen Randall--lived at the colony while their families stayed at home, in Ohio and Rhode Island, respectively.

Seventeen single men and sixteen single women also resided at the colony at some point. Of these individuals, three men and five women clearly appear to be servants hired specifically to handle colony duties rather than committed colonists who joined the colony and assumed particular responsibilities (although employees did participate in the

⁶⁶U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 (White Plains, New York: Kraus International Publications, 1989), 41.

colony social life). For example, the colony hired Englewood resident Michael Marvin to tend the furnace after the departure of Yale students Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff. Similarly, Cornell graduate Lillian Davis was replaced by Leonie Fichtenberg as colony cook. The destruction of colony records makes it impossible to distinguish between colony members, residents, and servants.

The oldest known colony residents were 58-year-old engineer James McNiff and 56-year-old poet B. H. Nadal.⁶⁷ The majority of adult male residents were between 28 and 44 years old; the average male age was 36. Women residents ranged in age from 19 (waitress Margaret Hogue) to 48 (writer Alice MacGowan). The majority of women were between 26 and 35, with the average female age being just over 31 years old. Children ranged in age from 11-year-old Helen Cooke to 1-year-old Lisbeth Eberlein.

The majority of known adult residents were not native Easterners but had been born in the northcentral states.⁶⁸ Nine known colony residents were born outside the United States; of these, four appear to be hired servants. Colony trustee William Noyes was born in India, where his father served as a missionary. Other residents had immigrated from Canada, England, France, Germany, Scotland, Ireland, and

⁶⁷The exact age of 49 residents is known.

⁶⁸The birthplace of 37 residents is known, including two for whom the specific United States location is not known.

Sweden. Anecdotal information suggests that at least one other servant also was an immigrant.

The majority of known adult colonists were born into Protestant families, although it is difficult to determine the extent to which religion continued to be an integral part of their lives.⁶⁹ Denominations included Congregational, Disciples of Christ, Episcopal, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Unitarian; at least three colonists became Unitarians later in life. Engineer James McNiff was Catholic, as was writer Michael Williams, who had abandoned his faith by the time of the colony but had a spiritual awakening several years later and founded the Commonweal, a Catholic journal of opinion. Before becoming a teacher of manual arts at Teachers College, William Noyes had served as a Congregational minister and missionary in Japan. Writer John Collier and physician James Gwathmey also had studied briefly for the ministry.

Helicon Hall residents were clearly part of mainstream American religion, unlike those attracted to some of the nineteenth century religious colonies. Religion, in fact, played no part in Helicon Home Colony activities and was purely a matter of personal preference. Undena Eberlein, for example, was a devout member of the Disciples of Christ, while her husband Ernest was an atheist who scoffed at

⁶⁹The religion of 22 residents is known.

organized religion.⁷⁰

In contrast, child care was a colony priority. Colonists were knowledgeable about the latest theories on raising children and valued discussions with colony visitor John Dewey. The residents themselves were well-educated. Twenty-three of the twenty-six residents for whom educational achievement is known completed high school. This includes four men and five women who attended college, two men and three women who received undergraduate degrees, and five men who earned graduate or professional degrees. These figures reflect educational status at the time of the colony; Anna Noyes later completed a master's degree in education, and Helen Montague became a psychiatrist.

The colonists' occupations reflected their educational background. The forty-three known occupations fall into two groups: professional/editorial and domestic/skilled labor. The latter group can be divided among those who were regularly employed as laborers and those who pursued these occupations as part of their colony commitments. Thus, stockholder Anna Noyes's time as colony housekeeper most likely involved different emphases than did that of German immigrant Helen Knoll. Similarly, Cora Potter, Emma Williams, and Frances Maule were not servants hired to look after the children but rather committed colonists with a keen interest in child care. The domestic/skilled laborers

⁷⁰Ernestine Benninger to author, 21 December 1991.

included cooks, nightwatchmen, furnace keepers, handymen, chambermaids, and waitresses, as well as carpenters and engineers involved in the upkeep and improvement of the physical plant.

Many of the professionally-employed colonists pursued independent livelihoods as writers and journalists, including Upton Sinclair, Michael Williams, Grace MacGowan Cooke, Frances Maule, and Ellis Jones. Twelve colonists worked directly in the editorial field as either writers, reporters, or editors. In addition, Edith Summers and Grace Seymour provided secretarial assistance to Sinclair and Cooke, respectively; Henrietta Kimball worked as an illustrator; and Ernest Eberlein was an artist/lithographer. Including student writers Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff, eighteen people were connected to the communications field. Other represented occupations were physician, metalsmith/jeweler, actress, store owner, and college professor.

It was possible to identify the occupations of twenty-one colonists' fathers. The fathers of eight colonists were lawyers; John Collier's father also was publisher of the Memphis Appeal and Alice MacGowan and Grace Cooke's father also edited the Chattanooga Times. Freeman Tilden's father edited the Malden [Massachusetts] Times and gave his son his first writing job. Ernest Eberlein and Peggy Williams's fathers farmed, although the former was forced to go to work

with his son in a safe factory when he fell on hard times. Michael Williams's father had the romantic job of sea captain but died when his son was fourteen. More mundane positions as salesman, postal clerk, and carpenter were held by the fathers of Upton Sinclair, Janet Bowles, and Cora Potter, respectively.

There was no typical Helicon Hall colonist, although certain characteristics were shared by a majority of residents. The Sinclairs fit the profile of the average Helicon family. Like the majority of colonists, they were white Protestants between 20 and 33 years of age (Upton was 28, and Meta, 26). Both had graduated from high school, and the husband had pursued further education. Upton worked as a writer while Meta helped take care of the children. Unlike most Helicon families, they only had one child, and David was one year older than the majority of known children.

The known Helicon Home Colony residents shared many of the traits of the older 230 nationally-recognized social reformers identified by W. D. P. Bliss in 1908 and analyzed by Henry J. Silverman. While none of the colonists achieved national status as reformers (with the exception of Sinclair, who was identified in Bliss's book), their interests mirrored those of the leading advocates of early twentieth century reform causes and reflected the same

middle-class, native-born, Anglo-Saxon backgrounds.⁷¹

It is also interesting to compare the Helicon Hall colonists with the members of Brook Farm, the North American Phalanx, and the Wisconsin Phalanx, nineteenth century Fourierists with whom they were often likened.⁷² As with the Bliss reformers, the Fourierists primarily were white, native-born Americans from the Northeastern region of the United States. Twenty-five to forty percent of the phalanx members had held professional and semi-professional occupations, compared to nearly three-fourths of the Helicon residents. In contrast, craftsmen and artisans made up a sizable portion (approximately forty-five to sixty-seven percent of the Fourierists), a phenomenon attributable to both economic conditions and recruitment of persons who could directly contribute to community life.⁷³

Throughout the summer the prospective colonists examined various properties, searching for the right combination of price and location. Willing to begin with a summer resort or other large single building, the group heard from

⁷¹Silverman's study drew from W. D. P. Bliss' 1908 Encyclopedia of Social Reform. Henry J. Silverman, "American Social Reformers in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Century" (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Pennsylvania, 1963).

⁷²See chapter 5 for a discussion of the accuracies of these comparisons.

⁷³See Carl Guarneri, "Who Were the Utopian Socialists? Patterns of Membership in American Fourierist Communities," Communal Societies 5 (Fall 1985): 65-81.

countless real-estate agents anxious to unload broken-down hotels in nearby towns.

Edith Summers remembered that Sinclair himself finally located an appropriate site in Englewood, New Jersey in early September 1906. In his Autobiography, Sinclair credited committee members with finding Helicon Hall, a former boys school in the northeastern town.⁷⁴ Colony lawyer Leon Malkiel also may have been instrumental in discovering the property. He specialized in real estate law and offered his services in locating property near New York in an advertisement on the back of Woman and Freedom, a socialist pamphlet by his wife Theresa Serber Malkiel.⁷⁵

Real estate advertisements in the Newark Advertiser barely scratched the surface of Helicon Hall's many charms. The August 27, 1906 classified advertisement did not even tell interested buyers how to contact the seller:

Englewood, N.J.--Helicon Hall, for a number of years used as a private school for boys, is now offered for sale or rent; it is well adapted for an inn or private sanitariuf [sic]. Englewood, N.J.⁷⁶

Nine days later the real estate agent added some enticements to the listing:

Englewood--For sale, the property known as Helicon

⁷⁴Sinclair, Autobiography, 129.

⁷⁵Advertisement, quoted in Francoise Basch, introduction to Diary of a Shirtwaist Striker by Theresa Serber Malkiel (1910; Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press, 1990).

⁷⁶Real Estate for Sale, Newark Advertiser, 27 August 1906, p. 4.

Hall; large building, beautifully situated in highest part of Englewood; would make splendid hotel or sanitarium; large, valuable acreage. H. Witherby [sic] & Co., 271 Broadway, New York.⁷⁷

In Helicon Hall, the prospective colonists had found both a site for their experiment in domestic economy and a name for themselves. In mid-October 1906 Helicon Home Colony began operations.

⁷⁷Real Estate for Sale, Newark Advertiser, 5 September 1906, p. 4. Based on other advertisements, the agent was probably H. Weatherby, misspelled in the Helicon Hall ad as Witherby.

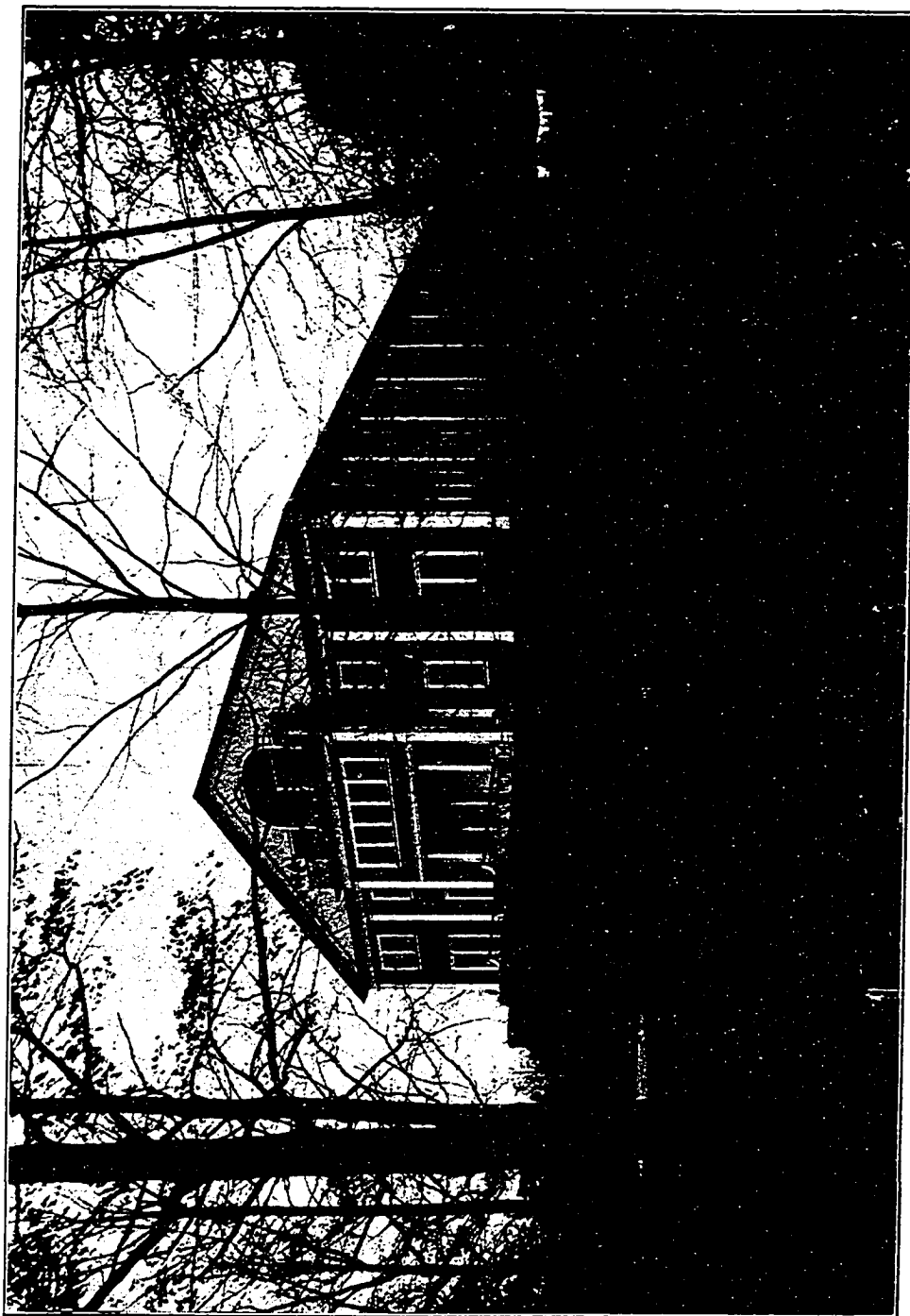


Fig. 2. Exterior, Helicon Hall. Reprinted from L. R. E. Paulin, "Simplified Housekeeping," Indoors and Out 3 (March 1907): 288.

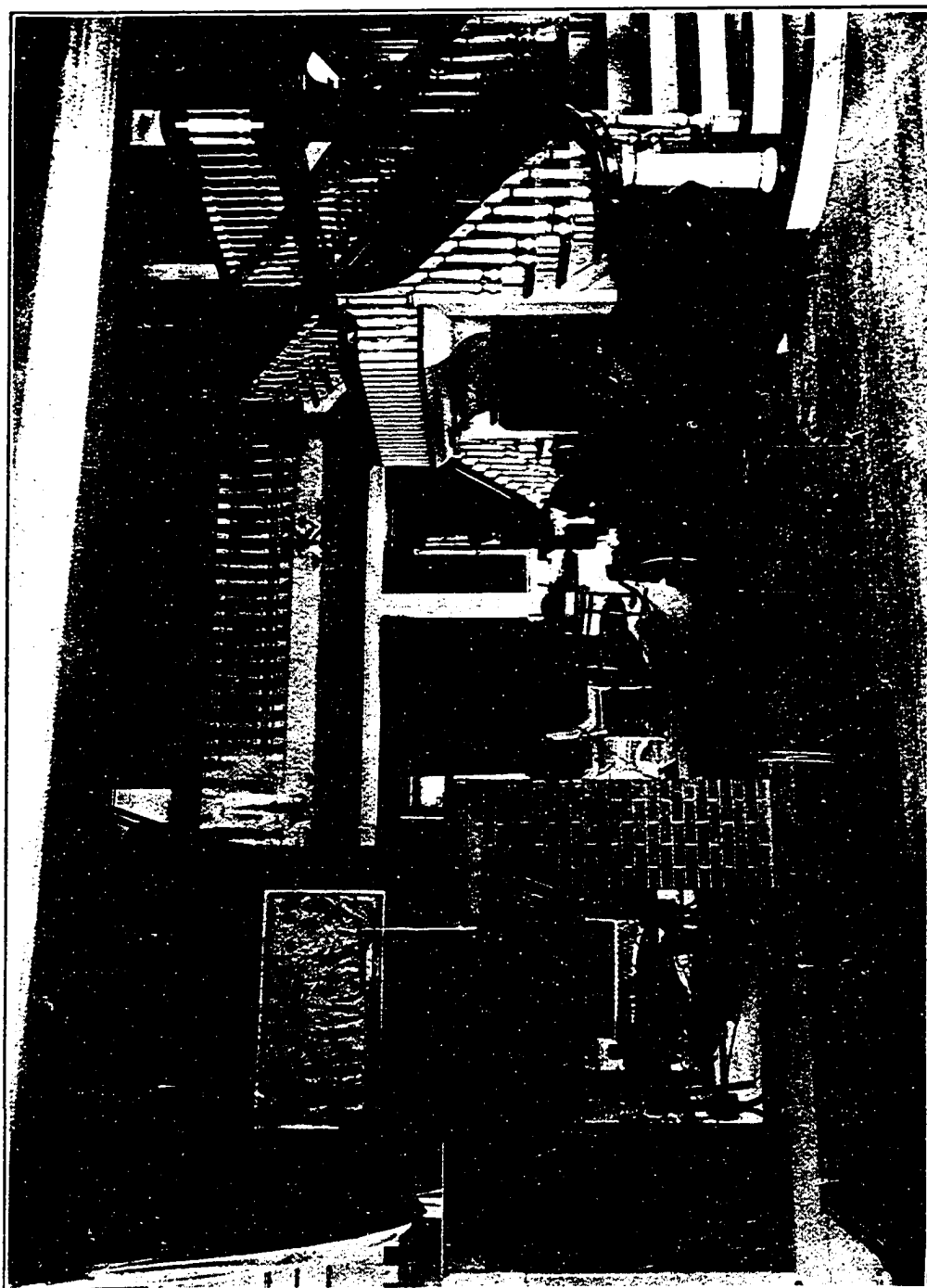


Fig. 3. Helicon Hall Fireplace. Reprinted from L. R. E. Paulin, "Simplified Housekeeping," Indoors and Out 3 (March 1907): 291.



Fig. 4. Helicon Hall Courtyard. Reprinted from L. R. E. Paulin, "Simplified Housekeeping," Indoors and Out 3 (March 1907): 289.

CHAPTER THREE

LIFE AT HELICON HOME COLONY OCTOBER 1906-MARCH 16, 1907

Colonist Edith Summers remembered with vivid clarity her first impression of Helicon Home Colony, even twenty-seven years after its demise. Escaping the cool October air, Upton Sinclair's secretary had stepped inside her new home and walked through a short hallway to discover the building's most spectacular feature: a three-story glass-covered courtyard filled with flowers, tropical ferns, palms, and rubber trees, with a large fireplace at the far end. Gazing in wonderment, she had thought, "This vision of exotic beauty, this Persian garden out of some Arabian nights, this [is] to be my home!"¹

Twenty-three colonists, including seven children, joined Summers in the early weeks of her new adventure at the former boys school in Englewood, New Jersey. Others

¹Edith Summers Kelley, "Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living," 1934, Edith Summers Kelley Papers, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.; ed., Mary Byrd Davis, The Kentucky Review 1 (Spring 1980): 32.

would soon follow. Like Sinclair, most were writers, or aspired to be, actively pursuing their chosen calling with determination. In Helicon Home Colony they found an economical solution to high rents and child care--problems exacerbated by the uncertain financial rewards of their careers.

Summers identified the following colony pioneers: Upton and Meta Sinclair and five-year-old David; writer Michael Williams, his wife Peggy, four-year-old Margaret, and two-year-old Philip; veteran newspaper journalists Edwin and Frances Bjorkman; novelist Grace MacGowan Cooke, eleven-year-old Helen, and eight-year-old Katherine; Grace's sister Alice MacGowan, also a writer; newspaper reporter Freeman Tilden; Columbia University professor William Pepperell Montague, his wife Helen, a medical student, and seven-year-old William, Jr. and three-year-old Robin; Teachers College instructor William Noyes and his wife Anna; socialist activist Stella Cominsky; and Yale juniors Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff.²

The eager colonists' new home was a far cry from the rustic cottage Sinclair had imagined for himself, although its indoor swimming pool, bowling alley, theater, and pipe organ matched the promised community amenities. His vision of four hundred wooded acres had quickly given way to the

²See the Appendix for biographical information on the Helicon Home Colony residents.

realities of the real estate market. While Sinclair insisted that such property could be found for ten to one hundred dollars an acre within an hour's commute of New York City, the site committee soon learned otherwise. After looking for two months they found Helicon Hall, which satisfied initial requirements of size, acreage, and location. Colonists had agreed that an already existing building would allow them to quickly establish the colony and plan for later expansion. Families anticipated building their own small kitchenless homes on the surrounding property in the spring. The colonists paid thirty-six thousand dollars for Helicon Hall, including three thousand dollars for nine-and-a-half acres.³ A half mile from the Hudson River, the site adjoined fifteen miles of forest and was situated in the Northern Valley section of the thirty-mile ridge of basalt in northeastern New Jersey called the Palisades of the Hudson.⁴ In addition to the main house, the property included a barn and a small building that may have been used as a playhouse.⁵

³Upton Sinclair, The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 123.

⁴Arthur C. Mack, The Palisades of the Hudson (Edgewater, N.J.: The Palisades Press, 1909), 1.

⁵The current owner of Helicon Hall (a new building was constructed on the site in 1909 and has continued to be called Helicon Hall), Mrs. Theodore Baum, believes the tiny house, which is still standing and is one of the original buildings, was used by the school as a recitation hall; however, it is not the recitation building pictured in the 1905 school catalog. Its diminutive size and scaled-down

Commenting on the building's opulence, a New York Times editorialist wrote:

The unappreciative world may have a notion that when the social reformer cuts loose from the ordinary modes of living and takes of the True Life he goes into bare barracks, pitches his tent in a desert, sleeps in a cave, or otherwise deports himself like an all-around ascetic. The world, however, as frequently happens in such matters, is quite wrong in this supposition.⁶

The three-story stucco structure had eight thousand square feet on the ground floor alone, including the 50 feet by 20 feet courtyard. Devoted to "social purposes," the ground floor included a billiard room, dining room, parlor, and reading room.⁷ Thirty-five bedrooms were accessible from the second and third floor balconies that surrounded the courtyard. While Sinclair worried about the expense of maintaining such a large building--he estimated coal for heating alone would cost one thousand dollars a year--he was convinced that its size would better demonstrate the advantages of household cooperation.⁸ The colony also boasted a dairy, which furnished its own milk and cheese,

cabinetry appear to indicate it was intended as a play area rather than as a classroom.

⁶"Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

⁷Upton Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," The Independent 62 (7 February 1907): 310; L. R. E. Paulin, "Simplified Housekeeping," Indoors and Out 3 (March 1907): 288.

⁸Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 306.

and a poultry yard.⁹

To colonist and visitor alike, the plant-filled courtyard was the most prominent and memorable feature of the building. To Meta Sinclair, it "gave an impression of space and freedom, which was in keeping with the character of the residents."¹⁰ Curving paths led over rustic bridges and around a dancing fountain and a six-feet by three-feet, eight-inch deep fish pond filled with water lilies and goldfish.¹¹ Quickly labeled "the jungle" by colonists, the courtyard's grass and ferns were supposedly off-limits.¹² At least two children, however, found the greenery to be an ideal play spot. Writing to Sinclair years later, Mary Tayloe Gwathmey confessed, "You never guessed what imminent danger you were in from all the oranges and beasts my brother

⁹Paulin, "Simplified Housekeeping," 292.

¹⁰Meta Sinclair, "One of the Characters at H.H.," handwritten description of Helicon Hall, Corydon and Thyrsis box, Meta Fuller Stone Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Stone Papers). Corydon and Thyrsis is Meta's unpublished autobiographical novel; some sections are written in fictional form while others are summaries of the action she intended to write.

¹¹Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 32; Rose Woodallen Chapman, "Upton Sinclair's Experiment," Good Health (April 1907): 170; Upton Sinclair, The Cup of Fury (Great Neck, N.Y.: Channel Press, 1956), 70.

¹²Colony Customs, broadside, December 1906, Upton Sinclair Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Collection). Lilly Library houses the Sinclair Papers, which include his personal papers, and the Sinclair Collection, which includes printed works.

and I filled it with."¹³ A large four-sided fireplace, around which fifty to sixty people could gather, further enhanced the courtyard.¹⁴

Helicon Hall's "tropical paradise" and other amenities were the legacy of John W. Craig, an Episcopal minister who had founded and built the school in 1894. Obsessed with "the education of boys in aristocracy," Craig had "some rather vague, neo-Nietzschean notions of gentility and individualism," which explained the building's grand appointments, according to colonist Michael Williams.¹⁵ Edith Summers believed it was modeled after a building the schoolmaster had seen in Egypt.¹⁶ A 1905 school catalog shows the lush greenery of both the main buildings and grounds. "The exterior of the building is of unique design and impresses one as being in perfect harmony with its surroundings," according to the catalog. "The interior is unusually attractive. It was planned as an environment that would stimulate to noble purposes in the daily life of the

¹³Mary Tayloe Gwathmey to Upton Sinclair, 28 October 1932, Upton Sinclair Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Papers).

¹⁴Michael Williams, The Book of the High Romance; A Spiritual Autobiography (New York: Macmillan Co., 1918), 143.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, 141.

¹⁶Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 33.

student."¹⁷ The thirty residential and day students followed individualized tutorial programs designed to prepare them for college, technical, or professional schools. Apparently not enough people shared the schoolmaster's vision to keep the school in business, although no reports of its closing could be located.

While the building was not what Sinclair had pictured, the location was well-suited to his purposes. He diplomatically called Englewood the "most beautiful suburban town near New York."¹⁸ New York City was accessible by railroad and ferry. Colonist and manager Anna Noyes, interviewed by the Englewood Press, also praised the community, noting the suitability of the house, as well as its "healthful location" and "good neighborhood."¹⁹

¹⁷Helicon Hall, School Catalog, 1905, New Jersey Historical Society, Newark, N.J. Researchers interested in Helicon Home Colony should familiarize themselves with the photographs contained in the 1905 catalog, available at the New Jersey Historical Society and Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. These same photographs appear in a number of later articles about the colony. While they provide excellent views of the building, at least one contradicts written descriptions of the colony. The school catalog pictures a dining room arranged with rows of small tables set for two people each. According to Edith Summers (Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 33), the colony dining room featured a U-shaped arrangement of tables--an important facet of mealtime camaraderie and efficiency. A photograph matching this description appears in Chapman, "Upton Sinclair's Experiment," 171. Additional views of Helicon Hall may be found in "Helicon Hall, Englewood, N.J.," Architectural Record 5 (January/March 1896): 303-06.

¹⁸Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 306.

¹⁹"Upton Sinclair's Colony As It Really Is," Englewood Press, 3 November 1906, p. 3.

Englewood was initially willing to return the colonists' compliments and wish them well:

The colony is to be congratulated upon the wise selection of such a desirable place for the initial launching of their plan. Both from its location and its ideal setting, in the heart of the most prosperous, healthful and substantial residential suburb of New York; it forms a strong element towards assuring that success which the effort warrants.²⁰

Englewood also may have been trying to make the best of what was considered a distasteful situation. Under the heading, "An Outside Opinion," the Englewood Press published the playful comments of a neighboring town's paper:

The residents of a number of small communities in the metropolitan radius have been standing ready to say 'ouch!' or words to that effect, in case Upton Sinclair's co-op colony should decide to light in their midst, but their apprehensions may now subside. Upton has lit. . . . When the news percolated down the hillside at Englewood the people wondered what they had done to catch this new thing, and they decided that they had in an evil day entertained the lost idea and had acquired an Evening Posty habit of complaining of the isness of the is and mentally reorganizing the universe.²¹

Given the vituperative comments later aimed at the colony by Englewood residents, Michael Williams's assessment of the situation may come closer to reality: "Safe, sane, conservative; average, normal, suave, smooth, conventional; all the words and phrases of this ilk belong to Englewood. On the other hand, Helicon Hall, stranded in the midst of

²⁰Editorial, Englewood Press, 3 November 1906, p. 2.

²¹"Happy Englewood! It Has Caught the Co-Op," Jersey City Journal, reprinted in Englewood Press, 6 October 1906, p. 2.

all this, like a gypsy van stopping in a Methodist camp-meeting, and throbbing with a perpetual brain-storm of radicalitis!"²²

In mid-October 1906, the first eager colonists moved in, after less than a week to prepare for their arrival, with the result that there was no furniture, heat, food, or cook.²³ The initial assignment for Yale University runaways Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff was to move boxes and beds piled in the courtyard to the upstairs bedrooms.²⁴ Colonists kept them busy rearranging the furniture as rooms were calcimined and neighbors with congenial hours were located.²⁵

Helicon Hall was connected to the Englewood sewer, water, and gas mains, and had a heating system that produced enough power to furnish the building's electricity. A fan drew in fresh air, which was then heated through a

²²Williams, Book of the High Romance, 140.

²³Upton Sinclair, "A New Colony. (Personal and Confidential)," [1909?], John and Phyllis Collier Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich. (hereafter cited as Collier Collection). Collier, a Helicon Home Colony resident, included the text of this pamphlet in his unpublished autobiography, The Search, in Volume III, "Experimental Living," 292-306. Lilly Library has a similar but shorter version of this pamphlet: Upton Sinclair, "A Plan for a Co-Operative Group (Personal and Confidential)," September 1908, Sinclair Collection.

²⁴Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff, "Two Yale Men in Utopia," New York Sun, 16 December 1906, p. 4.

²⁵Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 35-36; Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 306.

3,000-feet coil of steampipe.²⁶ Colonists soon discovered the furnace was not working and huddled around the fireplace for warmth. According to one published report, among the few initial changes in the building was the addition of sanitary plumbing.²⁷

Despite the lack of heat and a diet of crackers and milk, the colonists "had a jolly good time" in their first weeks, declared Anna Noyes.²⁸ Decisions on colony organization and administration, as well as its physical setup and day-to-day management, kept Sinclair and others busy. Three years later, in a "personal and confidential" statement to those who might be interested in a new colony, Sinclair cited the attempt at getting Helicon Hall immediately in full operation as one of his chief mistakes. Outlining the steps he would take to ensure a more orderly establishment in the future, he noted "it may be years before we have anything that the world will find it worthwhile to take note of."²⁹ At the same time, Sinclair and the others found their early days at Helicon Hall to be

²⁶The Helicon Home Colony, Englewood, N.J., one-page sheet, n.d., Oneida Community Records, Special Collections Department, Syracuse University, Syracuse, N.Y. (hereafter cited as Oneida Community Records).

²⁷Paulin, "Simplified Housekeeping," 288.

²⁸Sinclair, "The Home Colony," 306; "Upton Sinclair's Colony As It Really Is," Englewood Press, 3 November 1906, p. 3.

²⁹Sinclair, "A New Colony. (Personal and Confidential)," Collier Collection.

especially thrilling. In his unpublished autobiographical novel, Love's Progress, a sequel to the published Love's Pilgrimage, the production of a proletarian opera parallels the experiences of the colony. Describing early rehearsals, Sinclair writes,

So day by day the work grew. It was like a great piece of sculpture which they were helping to shape, and every hour they got a new vision of the power and beauty of it. A most inspiring thing it was to see a group of people thus swayed by a common purpose, so that for the time they forgot all about themselves and their egotisms.³⁰

In setting up the colony, the committees had settled on a two-tier structure. They established the Home Colony Company, a joint stock company, to raise the capital necessary to purchase the property. The company in turn rented the land and buildings to Helicon Home Colony, a membership organization. By establishing two separate entities the colonists could control membership; otherwise, all stockholders would have been able to live at the colony.³¹ Both entities were incorporated on October 22, 1906; the company under the provisions of the State Of New Jersey Act Concerning Corporations (Revision of 1896), the colony under the State of New Jersey Act of Incorporate Associations Not for Pecuniary Profit (Approved April 21,

³⁰Sinclair, Love's Progress, Carbon of Later Draft, p. 294, Sinclair Papers.

³¹Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism (Pasadena, Calif.: By the Author, 1919; reprint, New York: Arno and the New York Times, 1970), 69.

1898). In each case Sinclair is named as the "registered agent . . . upon whom process against the corporation may be served."³² The stock company was authorized to issue one hundred thousand dollars worth of stock, divided into one thousand shares at one hundred dollars each. At the time of its incorporation, 103 shares had been sold: one hundred to Sinclair and one each to colonists Edwin Bjorkman, Anna Noyes, and Percy Russell.³³ A promotional flier pledged that the company's board of directors--Edwin S. Potter, William Noyes, S. L. Randall, Sinclair, and Charles H. Castle--would "all be resident in the Colony this winter, and in close touch with its affairs." It further called the investment an exceptional real estate opportunity "in one of the finest suburban residence districts of New York, within one hour of either Chambers, Twenty-third or 130th Street." Investors would receive eight percent dividends on their stock, guaranteed by Helicon Home Colony.³⁴ A letter sent to persons placing bulk orders of the paperback edition of The Jungle suggested that "comrades" also might be

³²Certificate of Incorporation of The Helicon Hall Colony, Recorded 22 October 1906, Clerk of the County of Bergen, Hackensack, New Jersey; Certificate of Incorporation of The Home Colony Company, Recorded 22 October, 1906, Clerk of the County of Bergen, Hackensack, New Jersey. Although the colony was officially incorporated as Helicon Hall Colony, the constitution identifies it as Helicon Home Colony.

³³Ibid.

³⁴The Home Colony Company, one-page sheet, n.d., Oneida Community Records.

interested in an investment "secured by gilt-edged real estate," noting that the eight percent interest was "guaranteed by Comrade Sinclair personally."³⁵

Although the company's accounting books were burned in the fire that ended the colony, Sinclair quickly put together a list of names and stock purchases in order to reimburse the investors. On March 22, 1907 he recalled that 235 shares had been sold: himself, 160 shares; Edmond Kelly, 20 shares; Charles Castle, 12 shares; Frederick W. Sparks, 10 shares; Mrs. Alfred J. Boulton, 10 shares; Lee Bernheim, 10 shares; Anna Noyes, 5 shares; A. G. Craig, 5 shares; Percy Russell, 2 shares; and S. L. Randall, 1 share. Edwin Bjorkman, listed as a stockholder on the company's incorporation papers, is not mentioned.³⁶

Among the six largest stockholders, apparently only Sinclair and Castle lived at the colony, and it is unclear whether the others ever visited Helicon. Little is known about stockholder Frederick W. Sparks, who was most likely F. W. Sparks, a lawyer active in the summer planning meetings.³⁷ Edmond Kelly (1851-1909), who had a "great

³⁵Dear Comrade, n.d., Sinclair Collection.

³⁶Upton Sinclair to the Holders of the Stock of the Home Colony Company, 22 March 1907, Sinclair Papers.

³⁷A 1943 New York Times obituary identified a Frederick W. Sparks (1877-1943), a bachelor, who had graduated from New York University Law School and been a member of the New York bar since 1898. He had worked as a partner in two law firms until recently establishing a private practice. The obituary lists membership in several country clubs as well

interest" in Helicon Hall, was introduced to Sinclair by journalist Ray Stannard Baker. A successful lawyer who had practiced in Paris for many years, Kelly was the author of Government or Human Evolution (1900), which Sinclair considered the best refutation of Herbert Spencer he had read. Aristocratically born and bred, Kelly was looked upon with suspicion when he became a socialist late in life. Kelly recently had returned to the United States to found a Fabian Socialist Society, after having been told that he only had a few years to live.³⁸

Frances S. Boulton (1874-1954) purchased ten shares of stock but never lived at the colony, according to her children Schroeder Boulton and Margaret Feher. Boulton was the youngest child of Frederick A. Schroeder, who served as mayor of Brooklyn from 1875 to 1877 and made a fortune from Standard Oil stock. Feher characterized her mother as a romantic socialist greatly influenced by Jacob Riis's description of New York poverty, who often invested her substantial inheritance in idealistic causes. She was active in a number of reform organizations, including the Social Reform Club, where she met her husband, Alfred J.

as service in the New York National Guard. "Frederick W. Sparks," New York Times, 27 June 1943, p. 32.

³⁸Upton Sinclair, "Two Notable Books," Wilshire's Magazine, September 1910, p. 15. For more information on Kelly, see James Gilbert, Designing the Industrial State: the Intellectual Pursuit of Collectivism in America, 1880-1940 (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1972), 125-58.

Boulton (1858-1944), a Canadian-born typesetter and labor leader who promoted Henry George's theories. According to her children, Frances wanted to live at Helicon Home Colony, which she hoped would become a "light of the world," but her husband saw no need to move from their home and activities in Brooklyn. The Bouldtons later joked that the colony was one of the best investments Frances had ever made--at least she received two-thirds of her money back after it burned down. In the 1920s the Bouldtons fell on hard times when Alfred lost his eyesight. Frances continued to admire Sinclair, offering in the 1930s to sell EPIC brochures in Brooklyn.³⁹

Stockholder Leon Solomon Bernheim (1875-1923), called Lee, also came from a wealthy family. His father, Isaac W. Bernheim, had emigrated from Germany in 1867 and became a millionaire after founding the Bernheim Brothers Distilling Company in Kentucky. Father and son did not get along; apparently Lee's sensitivity and independence clashed with his father's autocratic nature. Lee Bernheim tried at various times to work with his father's company but often would leave to pursue drama, his first love. In 1905 he sold his interest in the company to his father and uncle,

³⁹Schroeder Boulton, telephone interview with author, 7 December 1990; Margaret Feher, telephone interview with author, 28 January 1991; "Mrs. A. J. Boulton Dies," New York Times, 28 January 1954, p. 27; "Alfred J. Boulton, A Labor Leader, 86," New York Times, 2 March 1944, p. 17; Frances S. Boulton to Upton Sinclair, 19 December 1935, Sinclair Papers.

receiving a "comfortable fortune." In 1918 Lee was still in touch with Sinclair, sending him twenty-five dollars to help distribute Upton Sinclair's. According to his nephew, Lee Bernheim did not live at the colony because he was vice president of B. T. Babbitt Company in Albany, N.Y. at the time.⁴⁰

Helicon Home Colony, which had rented the property for three years from the Home Colony Company, also was responsible for paying mortgage interest, insurance, and taxes and for setting aside \$750 a year for repairs. According to the colony's certificate of incorporation, its purpose was "the study and practical solution of problems in domestic economy."⁴¹ This solution, as stated in a promotional piece, was "co-operation in household industry."⁴² A colony constitution confirmed the recommendations written by the planning committees during the summer. The colony was to be governed by five trustees elected annually, later changed to semi-annually, by secret

⁴⁰Isaac Wolfe Bernheim, The Story of the Bernheim Family (Louisville, Ky: J. P. Morton & Co., Inc., 1910), 67-68, 73; idem, The Closing Chapters of a Busy Life (Denver: Welch-Huffner Printing Co., 1929), 55; I. W. Burnham II to author, 29 May 1991; Lee S. Bernheim to Upton Sinclair, 23 March 1918, Sinclair Papers; Dan G. Stone, April Fools: An Insider's Account of the Rise and Collapse of Drexel Burnham (New York: D. I. Fine, 1990), 11. The family later changed their name to Burnham, and Lee's nephew--I. W. Burnham II--founded the company that became Drexel Burnham Lambert.

⁴¹Certificate of Incorporation of the Helicon Hall Colony.

⁴²The Helicon Home Colony, Oneida Community Records.

ballot of the entire membership.⁴³ The certificate of incorporation listed Sinclair, Ellis O. Jones, Edwin Potter, Charles Castle, and William Noyes as the first trustees. Membership itself required one month's residence at the colony, approval by four-fifths of the current membership, and a twenty-five dollar initiation fee, payable by an initial payment of five dollars, with subsequent weekly installments of fifty cents each.

The Committee on Organization had recommended in August that "any white person of good moral character who is free from communicable disease" could apply for membership. However they also recognized that there were "exceptionable individuals whose habits and ideas would render them uncongenial" and called for a membership committee to screen applicants.⁴⁴ Few whites in the early 1900s, including radicals outraged by lynching and disenfranchisement, were free of racist beliefs.⁴⁵ Although the colony constitution

⁴³The Helicon Home Colony Constitution, n.d., Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.; Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 311.

⁴⁴"Tentative Plans Ready for Sinclair Colony," New York Times, 10 August 1906, p. 5.

⁴⁵Socialists had debated the condition of blacks at the founding of the U.S. Socialist Party in 1901. Deferring to the Southern contingent, the delegates passed a resolution recognizing the former slaves' unique position in society but eliminated a clause condemning violence against African Americans. Delegates to the 1904 convention did not reaffirm the resolution, which was not even discussed. Gaylord Wilshire was one of the Socialist Party's white supremacists, and Appeal to Reason editor J. A. Wayland envisioned separate communities for whites and blacks under

eliminated the committee's reference to "white person of good moral character," no African Americans lived or worked at the colony.

One applicant charged that Jews were not allowed to join--an allegation that Sinclair denied, stating that both Gentiles and Jews had been excluded. In a letter to the New York Times, D. C. Serber, who was not allowed to join, was especially disgruntled as he claimed to have been involved in four organizational committees and helping scout possible sites at his own expense. (An October 6, 1906 article in the Englewood Press listed him among the prospective members.⁴⁶) Serber wrote that Anna Noyes had informed him that residents and members must be "congenial" and "selected."⁴⁷ Leon Malkiel, Sinclair's Jewish lawyer, who had drawn up the colony papers, told reporters he and his wife, Theresa Serber Malkiel, planned to move into the colony in the spring.⁴⁸

socialism. The Jungle's racist portrayal of black strike breakers contributed to white fears of black sexuality and brutality. See Herbert Shapiro, "The Muckrakers and Negroes," Phylon 31 (1970): 80; Philip S. Foner, American Socialism and Black Americans: From the Age of Jackson to World War II (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1977), 103, 106, 142-43.

⁴⁶"Helicon Hall Colony Club," Englewood Press, 6 October 1906, p. 5.

⁴⁷"Hebrews at Helicon Hall," D. C. Serber to the Editor, New York Times, 12 November 1906, p. 6.

⁴⁸"Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

By March 1907 George H. Gilman, Charlotte Perkins Gilman's husband, had replaced Malkiel as the colony lawyer. The change may have been provoked by the exclusion of Serber, who was most likely Theresa Serber Malkiel's brother. In 1932 Sinclair recalled it was not Serber--whom he found very agreeable--but Malkin (probably Malkiel), a relative of Serber's, who had been refused admission because some "fastidious" colonists considered him "noisy" and "invasive."⁴⁹ Such a description could easily fit the Russian Malkiel, who was portrayed in a New York Times article about the colony as eccentric and nervous, confiding, "I can tell you some great things about the Japanese war, something secret--but not now."⁵⁰ Sinclair claimed personally to have no objections to Malkin [sic], whose rejection by the colony executive committee was out of his hands. Although Sinclair recalled that there were two to three Jewish colonists, none has been identified by name, although non-resident stockholder Lee Bernheim came from a Jewish family.

Women could join the colony and share in both its administrative and directorial duties. The ever-capable Anna Noyes wielded much authority over daily operations in her role as manager. She may have relinquished some of this

⁴⁹Upton Sinclair to Eugene B. Williams, 20 May 1932, Sinclair Papers.

⁵⁰"Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

power when she became head of the children's department, and Frances Maule Bjorkman took her place. Bertha Wilkins and Meta Sinclair served on the Home Colony Company's Board of Directors.

During its existence, the population at Helicon Home Colony ranged from approximately twenty-four to sixty-seven men and women, including at times seven to eighteen children and eight to fifteen servants. Newspaper and journal articles identify at least seventy-five individuals as colonists or residents, indicating that membership was not static.

Although membership was not required for residence, only colony members could vote on the many decisions that had to be made as the colony defined itself. To Sinclair, this faith in "democratic institutions" was one of the colony's strengths. (Among its rules were also provisions for initiative, referendum, and recall.) Recalling long, anxious committee meetings, Edith Summers wrote that the most serious colonists were those with children, who felt they had to "prov[e] something to themselves and to the world [and] felt . . . responsibility for the success of their venture."⁵¹ While votes were initially taken on all decisions, later issues were resolved through discussion alone.⁵²

⁵¹Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 39.

⁵²Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 308.

Reporting on the colony's progress in a February 1907 Independent article, Sinclair carefully outlined its revenues and expenses. The colony based its budget on a full occupancy of sixty-two individuals (forty-seven residents and fifteen workers), providing \$6,240 in rent and \$12,220 in board, with an additional \$1,500 profit generated by the colony's private laundry, for a total annual income of \$19,960. Sinclair listed fixed expenses as \$1,800 for mortgage interest; \$1,600 for company stock; \$750 for depreciation of equipment; \$500 for building repairs; \$600 for taxes; \$200 for insurance; \$1,000 for coal; and \$600 for water, gas, sewer, and telephone. Added to this were \$6,400 for food for sixty-two persons and \$5,260 in salaries, for a total of \$18,850 in annual expenses. This left a margin of \$1,110.⁵³

Adults paid monthly costs of twenty-five dollars for board, twelve dollars to rent a twelve-feet by fourteen-feet room, and twenty-five dollars for board and care of each child.⁵⁴ Although not mentioned in promotional literature, colonists were able to rent more than one room or even a

⁵³Ibid., 311-12.

⁵⁴The Helicon Home Colony, Oneida Community Records. According to a September 1906 New York Sun article, five-room apartments in the West Side rented for forty to seventy-five dollars a month, or approximately eight to twelve dollars per room. The article noted that rents had not risen recently and that upgrades required by new laws had improved the rental scene. "Apartments To Suit All Men," New York Sun, 2 September 1906, p. 9.

"suite" of rooms. Writing to his wife in late September 1906, John Dewey diagrammed and described six rooms he had tentatively arranged for the family to move into when they followed him from Chicago to his new job teaching at Columbia University. The "corner suite," as he called it, featured a fourteen-feet by fourteen-feet corner room connected with twelve-feet by seven-feet dressing rooms on either side; the latter could be used by two of their children. A twelve-feet by seven-feet and three twelve-feet by ten-feet rooms were located next to one dressing room, along one side of the courtyard balcony. Next to the other room was a public parlor, which could serve as Mrs. Dewey's receiving room. Dewey suggested that two of the rooms could be for themselves, the third could be her study, and the fourth reserved for guests, such as their daughter Evelyn, who was studying in New York City. Dewey wrote that the six rooms were available for eighty-two dollars, thus requiring them to economize on their city apartment, although they would not have to pay storage costs as there was ample room in the building. He noted that his Columbia University colleague William Pepperell Montague and his wife were renting only two rooms as their two boys would be sleeping in the children's dormitory.⁵⁵ The family later decided not to move to the colony, although Dewey continued to

⁵⁵John Dewey to Alice Dewey, 27 September 1906, John Dewey Papers, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill. Microfilm (hereafter cited as Dewey Papers).

visit.⁵⁶

A salaried manager handled day-to-day operations at the colony, although a frustrated Sinclair soon found that he could not ignore the daily crises that are the fate of any innkeeper, especially one whose name, reputation, and fortune were so closely aligned with the effort. One month into the experiment, he told a reporter, "I'm not doing any literary work now, I'm running a colony."⁵⁷ He would continually remark on this situation, admitting in 1909, "I personally failed to realize that a thing such as Helicon Hall, which all the world needed, would insist upon growing, and required at its head a practical businessman, who would give his entire time to it, without stopping to worry about the books and plays he was not getting a chance to write."⁵⁸ A workaholic, Sinclair did not limit his activities to Helicon Home Colony's operations. In October

⁵⁶After seeing the colony, Dewey's wife declined to join. Although there is no record of Alice Dewey's exact comments, her son's reaction indicates her displeasure: "I am awfully sorry to hear that Helicon Hall is such a mess. Hurray for socialism and enthusiasm I would say, unless it is going to fall upon Mama. Have you gone too far to back out--Mama's description is quite ludicrous, or at least amusing, but I am afraid it may seem like the Icon left off before you got there" (Frederick Dewey to John and Alice Dewey, 8 October 1906, Dewey Papers). The November 3, 1906 issue of Charities and the Commons lists Dewey as a colony director. "The Household Experiment on the Palisades," 185.

⁵⁷"A Deserter From Utopia," New York Sun, 20 November 1906, p. 6.

⁵⁸Sinclair, "A New Colony. (Personal and Confidential)," Collier Collection.

1906 he became a socialist candidate for Congress from New Jersey's Fourth District. Although he freely admitted that he would not actively campaign for office, having accepted the nomination only out of a sense of responsibility as a socialist, he did attend various political meetings at the time; he lost by nearly seventeen thousand votes to the Republican candidate.⁵⁹ At Helicon Sinclair wrote The Industrial Republic as well as several articles about the colony. In addition, he continued his affiliation with the Intercollegiate Socialist Society, complaining to J. G. Phelps Stokes that much of the work and responsibility for the organization had fallen on his shoulders.⁶⁰ Sinclair confided to Jack London that his wife Meta also was weighed down with colony responsibilities.⁶¹

Calling Sinclair the nominal "Czar of Helicon Hall," Grace Seymour, colonist Grace Cooke's secretary, claimed the practical head was William Grinnell, the carpenter in charge of the building remodeling. Rather than unseating Sinclair, he worked behind the scenes through colonist-trustee William Noyes. If not for Noyes, Grinnell, and Charles Hilliker,

⁵⁹"Sinclair Socialists' Choice for Congress," Daily True American, 28 July 1906, p. 1; "N.J. Storm Centered on Upton Sinclair," Newark Sunday News, 5 July 1964, p. 22.

⁶⁰Upton Sinclair to J. G. Phelps Stokes, 17 August 1906, Sinclair Papers.

⁶¹Upton Sinclair to Jack London, 6 March 1907, Jack London Papers, Henry E. Huntington Library, San Marino, Calif.

the colony engineer, Helicon Hall would have been a financial disaster, according to Seymour. "No one among the low-brows (I mean the practical people in the colony) blamed the visionaries, because they knew that people of a philosophic cult are far removed from the vulgar contemplation of ways and means," she told a reporter after the fire.⁶² Unfortunately, no colony records exist to verify her claim of Grinnell's maneuverings.

A primary concern in the colony's operations was the question of who would perform the necessary tasks of cooking, cleaning, and child care. The colony distributed two application blanks: one for residents, and one for "families who wish to support themselves entirely by labor in the Colony." The latter inquired about the applicants' health, occupation, and current salary.⁶³ As noted by Sinclair in his June 14, 1906 Independent article, the "servant problem" was a continuing concern to persons such as himself and one that the colony would address. For Sinclair, the issue was not centered on the master-servant relationship but more simply on freeing himself from the mundane tasks that left little time for writing. He judged this to be the equal concern of his fellows:

They were literary people, who could not afford hotel

⁶²"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

⁶³Application Blank for Residents and Application Blank for Workers, n.d., Oneida Community Records.

life and were too sensitive for boarding house life. The novelty of Helicon Hall and its social opportunities attracted them; but more than anything else, they wanted their three meals cooked and the dishes washed, without their having to bother.⁶⁴

Having grown up moving back and forth, if not smoothly at least regularly, from his family's rented boarding rooms to his successful uncle's opulent homes, Sinclair had experience living with and without household employees. He and his wife Meta had employed a housekeeper and secretary, even when his income was barely above subsistence level. He appeared to treat them as family members, writing and supporting them long after their employ.⁶⁵

Colonists were forthright about the young professionals' discomfort with hired help. Edith Summers recalled that these

were the sort of people who do not like the idea of a servant class, the sort of people who believe that a little physical labor, even the most menial sort, is not beneath the dignity of anybody, and who look forward to the time--perhaps not so very far away from now--when we will be no longer master and servants, but all just human beings, free to seek out our salvation, each in his own way.⁶⁶

A sympathetic reporter also viewed the colony arrangements

⁶⁴Upton Sinclair, "A New Helicon Hall," The Independent 67 (9 September 1909): 580.

⁶⁵Sinclair was especially fond of Edith Summers, his secretary at the time of Helicon Home Colony. He supported her when she began freelancing in New York City after the fire (Meta Sinclair to John Collier, 30 November 1907, Collier Collection) and promoted her novel Weeds in the 1920s.

⁶⁶Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 36.

with a liberal eye: "[as] experts in their own lines [the colony workers are] just as worthy of respect and social position as the expert musician or artist. The standard should be the excellence of the work performed, not the kind of work done."⁶⁷

It is clear, however, that Sinclair and the other colonists did see themselves as different and distinct from persons who were regularly employed in household labor. They had initially hoped to hire college students as servants, but soon discovered "the cooking was too hard a job for the college girl who had undertaken it, and . . . the college boys who agreed to scrape the pots and bottles did not scrape half as vigorously as they should have."⁶⁸ Summers reported that most workers did not come from employment agencies. She described the chambermaid, a Miss W., as a "philosophical anarchist" and strict vegetarian. This was most likely Bertha Wilkins, whom Grace Seymour reported had served as Sinclair's assistant during his investigation of the Chicago stockyards.⁶⁹ Colonist and trustee Edwin S. Potter was especially blunt:

We are not certain at this moment that we can find enough of these people who are our equals in culture and refinement to undertake all of what

⁶⁷Chapman, "Upton Sinclair's Experiment," 171.

⁶⁸Sinclair, "A New Helicon Hall," 580.

⁶⁹Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 37; "Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

you might vulgarly describe as the menial tasks involved in running Helicon Hall. . . . For instance, Michael, the hired coachman, is still on the place, and we may be compelled to keep him until one of our own members, whom we consider our social equal in every respect, qualifies for his position. Or possibly, Michael himself may become cultured and co-operative, solving the problem in that way.⁷⁰

In the final outcome, child care was the only occupation that was handled by what all could agree were the colonists' "social equals"--the mothers themselves. Sinclair reported that four of the five colony mothers (the fifth, Helen Montague, was pursuing a medical degree in New York City) cared for the children in place of the promised nurse and kindergarten teacher, who proved too expensive for the small number of children initially living at the colony.⁷¹ Thus the area that had received the most damning criticism in the colony's early stages--the separation of children from their mothers--was resolved in a practical manner that avoided the use of servants but still came under attack for being outside the norm.

Deciding that "educated and refined" (but hardworking) workers were not readily available, the colonists settled for those who might not have college diplomas but were

⁷⁰"Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

⁷¹Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 309-10. Between October 1906 and March 1907 at least ten mothers with children lived at the colony.

honest, clean, and courteous.⁷² In writing about the colony, Sinclair and others often made distinctions between adults, children, and servants when reporting the number of colony occupants. Many of the servants slept in a third-floor dormitory created by erecting ten-foot high partitions in a large studio. The colony planned to raise the roof and convert the studio into separate bedrooms as soon as they had enough money to hire extra carpenters. On the advice of an architect, they used the lumber for the planned project to construct the partitions, attaching curtains in the doorways. Sinclair later wrote that the colony did not treat servants as "a separate class of inferior animals whom we put off by themselves in the basement of the building."⁷³ While this is true, their third-floor dormitory was a far cry from the colonists' private suites.

Newspaper reports of the colony fire list persons identified as housekeepers, cooks, and engineers among the survivors. Colony rules included a proviso that workers were not to be given tips as this "would violate the spirit of the place which is no class divisions."⁷⁴ According to one early report, colonists and workers received the same

⁷²Ibid., 311.

⁷³"Helicon Hall's Morals Good," New York Sun, 23 March 1907, p. 3; Sinclair, The Brass Check, 69, 64-65.

⁷⁴Colony Customs, Sinclair Collection.

wages they would have earned elsewhere for similar work. In addition, all workers, including those who did not live at the colony (which at the time was two women hired to help out in the dining room), could participate in all colony social activities as equals.⁷⁵ Dewey reported to his wife in late September 1906 that the manager had "practically hired" the Montague family servant for the colony.⁷⁶

Although he continued to insist that cooperation and labor-saving devices raised the status of workers from hired hand to potential colony member, Sinclair's later statements display a condescending attitude toward Helicon Hall employees. For example, he claimed that staff participated in dances and parties as social equals but still chided former colonists Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff for reporting to the outside world that Columbia University professor William Montague had danced with Minnie Campbell, the Irish servant girl.⁷⁷ Describing Helicon Home Colony in 1928, Sinclair wrote, "I cannot recall having heard that any of our 'colony workers' ever abused the consideration we

⁷⁵Paulin, "Simplified Housekeeping," 291.

⁷⁶John Dewey to Alice Dewey, 27 September 1906, Dewey Papers.

⁷⁷Sinclair grouped Lewis and Updegraff with other reporters who were attempting to titillate the public. According to Sinclair, they failed to mention that Minnie had danced with everyone and that Montague's wife was present or to recognize the difficulties Montague might encounter from the dean at Barnard College, where he also taught. Sinclair, Autobiography, 131.

showed. They were always quiet and courteous, and possessed by the spirit of jolly and simple democracy that is a feature of my private Utopia."⁷⁸

With the basic administrative structure in place, life at Helicon Home Colony took on its own rhythm. For the most serious co-operator, there were weekly colony meetings at which decisions were made, disagreements settled, and future plans debated. Others simply adapted their former routines to colony living: working during the day and enjoying each other and the colony's recreational activities in their off-hours. Young people, such as Edith Summers and Sinclair Lewis, viewed the experience more as a lark--working only as much as they had to and reveling in each other's company and in the freedom from economic deprivation.

There was no one "type" at the colony but rather as many "types" as there were residents.⁷⁹ Although Sinclair claimed that the cooperative experience soon changed residents to socialists, visitors and colonists recalled "a mixed assemblage of socialists, 'intellectual anarchists,' single taxers, vegetarians, spiritualists, mental scientists, Free Lovers, suffragists, and other varieties of Ism-ites" vying for attention at meetings, dinner, and

⁷⁸Upton Sinclair, "My Private Utopia," The Nation 127 (11 July 1928): 39.

⁷⁹"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

around the courtyard fireplace.⁸⁰ Along with what many outsiders considered a radical clientele, there were also said to be Southern women whose "standards of ladyhood are rigid" and "business people . . . who have old-fashioned conservative ideas."⁸¹ The Appendix details colonists' backgrounds, affiliations, employment, and future activities.

To a critical reporter, the only common bond between the colonists was agreement on "the desirability of getting rid of family responsibilities."⁸² While Sinclair and the other colonists would not have stated their *raison d'être* in quite this manner, the opportunity to experiment with an economical alternative to traditional family life in the city--rather than any particular philosophical or political viewpoint--was an obvious attraction to many colonists.

Despite the charges that colony life was an affront to familial standards--especially as it concerned the children--some colonists considered themselves to be a family, with no apologies for any members who might be labeled cranks by the outside world. "One of the great

⁸⁰Upton Sinclair, The Industrial Republic: A Study of the America of Ten Years Hence (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1907), 281; Williams, Book of the High Romance, 142.

⁸¹Sinclair, Brass Check, 66; "Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

⁸²Alvan F. Sanborn, "At Upton Sinclair's." Boston Transcript, 30 January 1907, p. 16.

charms of the colony was the easy camaraderie, the pleasant casualness, void of strain or pretense that made up its social atmosphere," wrote Edith Summers. "It sounds banal to say that we were like one big family, but we actually were--without the endless petty friction that goes on in most families."⁸³ Even Grace Seymour, critical of much she had experienced, admitted, "Anyone with a sense of humor could have enjoyed life at Helicon Hall. . . . [H]umor began in the morning and lasted throughout the day. It extended late the night."⁸⁴

No where is this mixture of serious purpose, camaraderie, and familial crankiness better shown than in the thirty-one house rules or "Colony Customs." Prepared in December 1906, the list begins with a caveat: "As the conditions of life in Helicon Hall are necessarily different from those of other places where standards of conduct have been established, it has been deemed best to give, for the benefit of new arrivals, a statement of the customs which have been evolved from the practical experience of the Home Colony." Many of the rules are identical to those proposed by the various colony committees during the summer meetings. Some appear to reflect personal pet peeves, including those of Sinclair, while others are intended to keep peace among

⁸³Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 40.

⁸⁴"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

the hardworking colonists earning their living at home. Among the former were no smoking in the parlor, reading room, and dining room; no piano playing after 9:00 p.m., except on Saturdays; and "Comfortable [clothes] are in order at all times we dislike only unsightly objects, such as suspenders." (Although not specifically mentioned in the rules, most women usually wore bloomers--finding them especially suitable for dancing and walks in the woods--except when visiting Englewood proper.) Rule 25 warned that private items left in the bathroom or common areas would be impounded, redeemable only after a five-cent penalty was paid. Sinclair's troubling memory of his own precocity seems apparent in rule 21: "The children's department requests assistance in its efforts to treat children as playmates and equals, rather than as playthings and pets. We do not admire and discuss our children when they are present."⁸⁵

Practical rules included marking laundry with the owner's initials, turning down the gas when leaving a room, and helping keep the pool clean by showering before

⁸⁵Colony Customs, Sinclair Collection. In 1963 Sinclair recalled how he had overheard his mother bragging to others about how he had taught himself to read using alphabet blocks. "We talk about children, and we don't realize that they're listening and absorbing every word. I learned that I was smart, and that it was extraordinary that I should teach myself. . . . After that I didn't want to do anything but read. My mother had to put me outdoors and tell me to run and play for awhile, and then I'd come back and read" (Upton Sinclair, interview by Ronald Gottesman, January 1963, Columbia University Oral History Project).

swimming. Administrators requested that bills be paid promptly and any problems be brought directly to their attention rather than coming to them secondhand. No credit would be extended.

The final rule seems to reflect Sinclair's trust that the "right people will find us in the end."⁸⁶ Whether it was written by Sinclair alone or by some animated committee, it reveals a utopian side of the colony that owed more to William Morris's pastoral idyll than Edward Bellamy's technocracy:

And after all these things have been attended to there remains the Spirit of the Colony; a thing which has grown unsought and unthought of, but which has become very precious to every Colonist. Having put our economic life upon a basis of justice and equality, we are free from most of the occasions of bitterness and strife which exist elsewhere. We treat each other with courtesy and kindness; we are busy and out of mischief; and, having the best of motives ourselves, we attribute them to all who enter our doors. We help out in all emergencies, and when the spirit moves us, we turn and play together like children.⁸⁷

Out of economic necessity, play time for most colonists was reserved for meals and evenings. Rules recognized that many colonists were pursuing their livelihoods at home, or at least needed quiet to commune with their personal muses. Colony membership at one time or another included fourteen persons identified as artists, writers, or editors. Sinclair reported that no musicians lived at the colony

⁸⁶Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 312.

⁸⁷Colony Customs, Sinclair Collection.

because the writers did not want any noise.⁸⁸ Privacy was paramount among the residents, who were reminded that "in their intellectual and spiritual lives the Colonists desire to be let alone. They impose no social obligations and respect each other's right to privacy."⁸⁹ Sinclair himself retreated to a small tower study accessible only by ladder whenever he felt the urgent need for solitude.⁹⁰ Others had to be content with their own quarters or the colony's common rooms. Unfortunately, remembered Michael Williams, the building's thin walls could not keep out the sounds of the typewriters found in every other room, children yelling, the MacGowan sisters dictating their novels, Edwin Bjorkman philosophizing, and Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff swapping stories.⁹¹ Nevertheless, rules cautioned colonists against whistling and tramping in the halls.

As much as they valued their privacy, colonists also reveled in their time together. "Among the joys we realized was the opportunity of being alone when you wanted to be alone, and of having friends when you wanted friends,"

⁸⁸Upton Sinclair, interview by Josef Kirigin, Monrovia, Calif., 15 August 1962, Sinclair Collection.

⁸⁹Colony Customs, Sinclair Collection.

⁹⁰Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 39; "The Story of Upton Sinclair, as told to a Record reporter," Los Angeles Record, 11 September 1929.

⁹¹Williams, Book of the High Romance, 144.

recalled Sinclair.⁹² One place they could not avoid each other was the communal dining room, where three meals were served daily. Dinner especially became a time for both serious and lighthearted discussion of current events and personal philosophies, as members regrouped after busy days working in New York City or their private chambers.

Lillian Davis, a Cornell graduate who had visited schools of domestic science, served as the colony's first cook. Employing the latest efficiency methods, the colony barred tablecloths and linen napkins and relied on Aladdin ovens and fireless cookers.⁹³ In recognition of Sinclair's research for The Jungle, the colony forbade canned foods.⁹⁴ When the work proved too difficult for Davis to handle, other colonists tried their hand at cooking. "The thought of a brawny-armed cook from an employment agency just did not fit in with colony ideas," wrote Edith Summers.⁹⁵ Out

⁹²Sinclair, "My Private Utopia," 39.

⁹³"Upton Sinclair's Colony As It Really Is," Englewood Press, 3 November 1906, p. 3. The Aladdin Oven had been invented in the late 1880s by Edward Atkinson, a successful fire insurance entrepreneur. Made of wood or fiberboard lined with tin, its primary advantage was its ability to contain heat, unlike standard metal ovens. Middle-class reformers and gadget-lovers were more interested in the oven than the working class for whom it was designed. Harvey A. Levenstein, Revolution at the Table: The Transformation of the American Diet (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 47-48.

⁹⁴"Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

⁹⁵Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 36.

of desperation, the colony finally put aside its aversion to hired cooks, although Sinclair continued to assure potential colonists that meals were prepared by "members of our big family, whose cleanliness and honesty are matters of common knowledge to us."⁹⁶

Colonists and visitors alike recognized the importance of meal time at the colony, thus the food and accompanying conversation received considerable attention in their writings. For the most part, the colony diet apparently disturbed only those who had other reservations about Helicon Hall. Much of the criticism may have been public backlash to Sinclair's indictment of the meatpacking industry.⁹⁷ Additionally, the colonists' diet was an easy target for parody and may have reflected the reporters' recognition that it was one area they could safely assume would be of interest to readers without being offensive.

⁹⁶Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 310.

⁹⁷Lawrence Kaplan, "A Utopia During the Progressive Era: The Helicon Hall Colony, 1906-07," Lecture presented at the Englewood Public Library, Englewood, N.J., 12 April 1988. Videotape. No reporters made a direct comparison between the colony's diet and Sinclair's expose on the meatpacking industry. However, after the fire, some did see a connection between The Jungle's revelations and what they viewed as Sinclair's negligence at the colony. An editorial in American Magazine was typical: "I can't help believing that if Mr. Sinclair in his researches on the beef trust had found that it had ever crowded fifty-five of its employees together in a house at the Chicago stockyards and had been as negligent of their lives and property as Mr. Sinclair was of the lives and property of those whom he had drawn about him, he would have made another thrilling chapter of The Jungle" (American Magazine, June 1907, p. 220).

In a 1909 article touting his newfound devotion to fasting and vegetarianism, Sinclair recalled that both meat and vegetables were served at the colony, although it is not known how regularly each appeared on the menu.⁹⁸ He would later write that "the food habits of the average civilized man" were among the reasons he hesitated to resurrect the colony after the fire. Any future colony, he pledged, would be vegetarian, not from any sense of moral outrage but because of its convenience and economy. "Three-fourths of the energy of those who were running Helicon Hall was given to ordering food, and cooking and serving it, and cleaning up the wreckage three times a day. We used to have long and anxious debates as to whether people could exist without soft-boiled eggs on Sunday morning."⁹⁹

Grace Seymour, who felt she had been treated poorly by some colonists, reported that "the staple food products consist[ed] of samp (a sort of hominy), educators (a saltless cracker) and prunes. Of course we had other things to eat like sweet potatoes, codfish, and onions."

Commenting on a colony dinner, Boston Transcript reporter Alvan F. Sanborn wrote that "beans, potatoes, turnips, peanuts, prunes, 'educators,' and cocoa . . . hardly constitute what the average man returning from a hard day's

⁹⁸Sinclair, "New Helicon Hall," 580.

⁹⁹Sinclair, "A New Colony. (Personal and Confidential)," Collier Collection.

work in the city (unsustained by zeal for reform), would denominate a 'square meal'--however 'rational and scientific' a meal it may be." In fairness to his hosts, the satirist added, "The Colony had just got a new cook--alas, the familiar phrase!--and it is barely possible that an accident happened to the roast." Colony guest Mrs. L. H. Harris criticized Sinclair's pirating of Gilman's ideas but conceded that the food was healthy and plentiful; she believed, however, that everyone must have had "a bag of things injurious to eat in his closet [because] there is something mean and contradictory in every man's stomach which makes him crave an occasional indigestion." Even the usually optimistic Edith Summers recalled that before a regular cook was hired, the "diet was rather hard on stomachs and tempers," reflecting the personal tastes of whatever female colonist was in charge. Thus, the strict vegetarian served lentil loaf and unsalted vegetables, while the southerner stuffed them with fried chicken and candied sweet potatoes. Identified by Summers as Mrs. P., the former was most likely Cora Potter, while the latter, Mrs. G., was probably Margaret Gwathmey.¹⁰⁰

Even when the colonists' diet consisted of more usual fare, journalists found a way to give it a humorous twist.

¹⁰⁰"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3; Sanborn, "At Upton Sinclair's;" Mrs. L. H. Harris, "Upton Sinclair and Helicon Hall," The Independent 62 (28 March 1907): 12; Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 36.

A New York Sun writer reported that overindulgence on Thanksgiving turkey had made colonists lazy and neglectful. While most had wanted lentils, the children's vote had been the deciding factor in going with the more traditional fare. Sinclair's dog, "a vegetarian," had been so offended by the entree that he had run away.¹⁰¹ Clearly, heavy meals were not the order of the day. Sinclair blamed the Christmas celebration for the "colds and sore throats and disordered livers" that befell everyone the next day.¹⁰²

Ultimately, food was merely an accompaniment to the real importance of dinner: the shared camaraderie of fellows experimenting with an alternative lifestyle. Rectangular tables were arranged in a U-formation that facilitated serving and conversation (colonists had rejected a proposal for individual tables). Sinclair sat in the middle of the table opposite the open side.¹⁰³ One photograph of the dining room shows a small table with three chairs positioned in the opening between the other tables. This most likely

¹⁰¹"Sloth Rules Helicon Hall," New York Sun, 30 November 1906, p. 4. According to Sinclair, a New York Sun reporter's weekly assignment was to visit the colony every Sunday to find a story that would serve as a lighter piece among the usual Monday fare of reprinted Sunday sermons. The desperate but supposedly honest reporter asked for an anecdote that "won't do any harm," and Sinclair told him that his collie had run away three times. Brass Check, p. 63.

¹⁰²Sinclair, "A New Colony. (Personal and Confidential)," Collier Collection.

¹⁰³Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 33.

was the "literary table" which Edith Summers, Sinclair Lewis, and Allan Updegraff had received permission to establish. Sinclair later wrote, "I am not by nature personal, and it never occurred to me that something other than literature was being discussed at that table in Helicon Hall; that Edie and Hal [Lewis] were falling in love and getting engaged. . . . [Although] Edith soon afterwards married Updegraff."¹⁰⁴

The dinner hour was never dull, recalled Summers, whose memories were not limited to the "literary table." "When you came home at night, instead of sitting down to a grumpy boardinghouse table surrounded by the usual boardinghouse types, you ate your dinner seated between a Socialist and a Single Tax man, the one perhaps a college professor, the other a carpenter, or perhaps at the elbow of an aspiring young writer, or beside an artist who is getting ready to startle the world." Grace Seymour called dinner the "culmination" of the day's fun: "Here would start discussions on socialism, atheism, agnosticism, altruism, utopianism, theosophy, philosophy, and everything under the sun from pessimism and optimism to Upton Sinclairism." At the same time, she felt a sense of class distinction in the dining room. When Edwin Bjorkman discovered she was not conversant on Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, she claimed he had

¹⁰⁴Chapman, "Upton Sinclair's Experiment," 171; Upton Sinclair, My Lifetime in Letters (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1960), xi-xii.

her seat moved from the "high-brows" near Sinclair to the resident section where she was placed between the colony's Russian anarchist dressmaker and the chief engineer, who espoused individualism and a mild socialism.¹⁰⁵

After dinner activities ranged from billiards in the palatial billiard room--"for the best had been considered none too good for the young gentlemen of Helicon Hall"--and dancing in the big reception hall to talk and more talk around the courtyard fireplace. Adults enjoyed weekly masquerade parties, which scandalized at least one visitor. Anna Noyes, who had dressed as a cowboy in her husband's clothes, maintained that such activities were not improper and were certainly not considered shocking by the colonists. She admitted that "a Baptist minister for instance, wouldn't feel at home here, nor would a prim old lady" and would soon leave. Sinclair banished dances, sing-alongs, and musical recitals to the barn when a group of young people singing college songs in the second floor parlor disturbed other residents.¹⁰⁶ Sinclair insisted that liquor was never served or drunk at the colony, with the possible exception of its last night when carpenter Lester Briggs could not be

¹⁰⁵Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 38; "Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

¹⁰⁶Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 38; "Helicon Hall Has Taken to Bloomers," New York Times, 14 February 1907, p. 16; "Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

aroused from a deep sleep and died in the fire.¹⁰⁷

Seances were held regularly, with "nearly the whole population of the place . . . assembled to watch a table frantically galloping about, with Upton Sinclair clinging to its top, his justly famous legs waving in the air." William James attended one of these seances but, reports Michael Williams, was disappointed that "the spooks" chose not to compete with the noisy plumbers working in the basement. Sinclair recalls that he and James did witness a successful ouija board demonstration. When the board spelled out "Providence child has been carried to bed," colonist Stephen Randall called his wife in Providence where he owned a business and learned their child had pneumonia. In Love's Progress, Sinclair portrays Thrysis, his name for himself, as initially skeptical during a exhibition of table tipping until he discovered that when he touched the heavy table to ascertain what had made it move, its movement became more violent.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰⁷Sinclair, Cup of Fury, 70.

¹⁰⁸Williams, Book of the High Romance, 252-53; Sinclair, Autobiography, 133; Love's Progress, Early Draft, p. 333, Sinclair Papers. Sinclair's characters exhibited an increasing interest in spiritualism and psychic phenomenon over the years, as did the author himself (Harris, Upton Sinclair, 259-61). This interest became a personal crusade in the 1920s when his second wife, Mary Craig, sought answers to the telepathic incidences she had been experiencing since childhood. In Mental Radio (1930), Sinclair recounts 210 successful and partially success experiments in which he and others telepathically "sent" pictures to Craig, which she was then able to sketch.

Late into the night the fireplace drew colonists interested in quiet companionship or lively discussions. As with the dinner table, it was a focal point for the ongoing conversations that epitomized colony relations. According to Michael Williams, "Everybody [at the colony] was more or less of the 'advanced,' or 'radical' order of chemical make-up, or of soul development; and it is a scientific fact that this type is continually effervescing in monologue, sizzling in conversation, detonating in debate, fuming in argument, flashing in expression of opinion, and exploding in many theories." Colonists formed separate groups around the fireplace's four sides, nicknamed Philosophy, Philology, Philanthropy, and Philander. Recalled Edith Summers: "You could take your choice. Only if you happened to get on the Philander side at the wrong time you might not be so very welcome."¹⁰⁹

In their humorous report of colony life, Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff claimed that the fireplace was really dedicated to loafing and business as "the arts and sciences are in their rooms pinkling (Helicon term for typewriting)." The three members of the "Loafers' Club"--mostly likely themselves and Edith Summers--sat on one side "congratulating ourselves on knowing the science of contentedly doing nothing, lolling in our big wicker chairs

¹⁰⁹Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 310; Williams, Book of the High Romance, 142-43; Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 38.

and staring into the fire." They reported that on other sides the housekeeper talked over accounts and purchases while the remnants of a mothers meeting continued the debate on how often children should be allowed beverages.¹¹⁰

The fireplace radiated a special charm that ultimately transcended conversation. Michael Williams's description conveys the emotional impact that others similarly ascribe to its magic:

Sometimes by night, when a glowing fire of crimson coals was suspended in the iron basket in the fireplace, and the lights were turned out, and the moon streamed dimly through the glass roof, splashing like a noiseless silver violin, or something on the organ, and the talk mellowed and modulated from sociological arguments to a more meditative mood, then it seemed as if some influence sweet and pensive, friendly and melting, flowed like incense over and through us all; and for a while we could dream that our dreams could and would be realized--and the Socialist lived for the moment in his co-operative commonwealth, and the anarchist in Egoaland, and the spiritualists divined the presence of their departed friends in the swaying shadows by the fountain, and all the ideals and dreams and fantasies, and all the impossible illusions of that assemblage of modern dreams seemed to materialize, seemed to be real things, and the world of fact evaporated quite out of existence.¹¹¹

The colony's one Christmas celebration stood out in Edith Summers's memory "as the most truly Christmassy Christmas" she had ever known. Colonists decorated the house with fir boughs, played billiards, danced, and sang Christmas carols. The children stayed up late, and everyone received a present purchased through the dollar contribution

¹¹⁰Lewis and Updegraff, "Two Yale Men."

¹¹¹Williams, Book of the High Romance, 143.

of each adult. Acting as master of ceremonies, Edwin Bjorkman handed out jocular gifts to adults that were intended to "point a little friendly ridicule at each recipient's pet foible or folly" and read the verses composed for the occasion. For example, the woman who hated dogs received a toy animal with a note reading, "He prayeth best who loveth best / all dogs, both great and small; / For the dear Lord who loveth us / He loves them, fleas and all."¹¹²

Outside recreational activities included bobsledding and walks along the "leaf-strewn, spicy smelling roads through the woods, its rocky Palisades." As there were no tennis courts for his favorite sport, Sinclair rode a pony over to New York City for exercise. He would "ride down to the ferry . . . across on the ferry boat . . . down Riverside Drive and over into Central Park," boarding the horse while he attended to business in the city.¹¹³

On Sundays the colonists were "fairly swamped" with visitors, while more than forty letters arrived daily from

¹¹²Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 41-42; Sanborn, "At Upton Sinclair's." This may have been one of the few times Sinclair celebrated Christmas as an adult. He preferred to write and told reporters "I am one of those unusual Christians who think every day ought to be Christmas. That is to say, the spirit of love and service which we celebrate on that day ought to apply to all our lives" (Upton Sinclair, National Magazine, 19 November 1929, quoted in Harris, Upton Sinclair, 266).

¹¹³Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 40; Upton Sinclair, interview with Ronald Gottesman.

"people who are a little dusty in their upper story [and] seem to think that Helicon Hall keeps open house for them," claimed Sinclair.¹¹⁴ "Being freaks ourselves, we naturally attracted other freaks," wrote Edith Summers, who recalled "besmocked young women and men with long hair and flowing ties, the artists and actors and dilettanti of all sorts. . . . [S]erious minded educators and philanthropists and young Socialist workmen and elderly ladies who were interested in spiritualism or New Thought." Michael Williams counted "lecturers and writers on Sex, on Sociology, on Anarchism, on Dress Reform, Child Training, Vegetarianism, Fletcherism, Socialism, and all the other modes and manifestations of the restless mind of the age . . . defil[ing] through Helicon Hall."¹¹⁵ An Englewood Press society column made note of one Englewood resident's visit to the colony.¹¹⁶

Despite their satiric comments about the colony's open-door visiting policy, the colonists wanted to attract those seriously interested in living at Helicon Hall. They reserved one room for prospective residents, limiting occupancy to three days if someone else was interested in

¹¹⁴"Helicon Hall Cold to Visiting Trio," New York Times, 17 February 1907, pt. 5, p. 13.

¹¹⁵Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 41; "Helicon Hall Has Taken to Bloomers," New York Times, 14 February 1907, p. 16; Williams, Book of the High Romance, 146.

¹¹⁶"Personal and Social," Englewood Press, 15 December 1906.

trying colony life.¹¹⁷ Sinclair regularly invited friends and acquaintances to join. One invitee was Harry Kemp, a struggling young poet with whom Sinclair had corresponded. A University of Kansas student at the time, Kemp did not wish to work for the colony, preferring to "fight my way up out in the world." He had lived at Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Colony and Bernarr MacFadden's Physical Culture City and did not care for "the companionship of other young literary men. They are, as a rule, insincere . . . and mistaken as to their calling." Luckily for the colony's reputation, the fire destroyed Kemp's plans to join in October 1907. By 1911 Kemp had moved east and begun an affair with Meta Sinclair, which led directly to her scandal-ridden divorce from Upton.¹¹⁸

Sinclair also invited poet Edwin Markham; millionaire socialist J. G. Phelps Stokes; and childhood sweetheart Laura Stedman to join the colony. Sinclair told Markham, author of "The Man with the Hoe," that he had heard Markham had not joined because he did not receive a personal invitation. Sinclair was convinced that Markham would want to join as soon as he saw the colony and Englewood's blue skies; he had picked out a room for him that could easily

¹¹⁷Colony Customs, Sinclair Collection.

¹¹⁸Harry Kemp to Upton Sinclair, n.d., Sinclair Papers; William Brevda, Harry Kemp: The Last Bohemian (Lewisburg, Penn.: Bucknell University Press, 1986), 57.

hold five to six thousand books.¹¹⁹ Sinclair was convinced Stokes also would want to move in once he saw the colony. He wrote to Stokes after he saw a newspaper article in which Stokes complained about living expenses and the difficulty finding a quiet place to write.¹²⁰

Among the guests who stayed at the colony was Mrs. L. H. Harris, who wrote a slightly negative article for The Independent. Describing the building as "beautiful and clean," she believed colonists were "straining too [hard] for happiness" and wore the "obviously redeemed look, much too bright to last" that one saw at revivals. She chided her fellow journalists for reporting on aspects of colony life that had nothing to do with the experiment's significance.¹²¹

Among the better known visitors to Helicon Home Colony were anarchist Emma Goldman, whose niece Stella Cominsky was a member; journalist Lincoln Steffens; William James, who was in his last year of teaching at Harvard University; and John Coryell, an anarchist who became wealthy writing the

¹¹⁹Upton Sinclair to Edwin Markham, 22 January 1906, and Upton Sinclair to Edwin Markham, 31 January 1907, Wagner College Library, Staten Island, N.Y. Sinclair may have invited Markham because he wanted the publicity and prestige his membership would bring. Linda Simon, "Socialism at Home: The Case of Upton Sinclair," New Jersey History 107 (Spring/Summer 1989): 54.

¹²⁰Upton Sinclair to J. G. Phelps Stokes, 21 January 1907 and Upton Sinclair to J. G. Phelps Stokes, 24 January 1907, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

¹²¹Harris, "Upton Sinclair and Helicon Hall," 712.

Nick Carter adventure stories under the pseudonym Bertha M. Clay. Charlotte Perkins Gilman may have visited with her husband Houghton, who became the colony lawyer.¹²² John Dewey was a frequent guest, despite his wife's veto of his plan to move in once she had seen the colony.

Visitors were sometimes affiliated with the communal movement. Will Durant, a senior at St. Peter's College in Jersey City when he first met Sinclair at Helicon Home Colony, later became associated with the anarchist Ferrer Colony, as did Goldman and Coryell. He remembered thinking of Sinclair at the time, "here . . . was an honest and dedicated man" and never forgot "his handsome, almost girlish face, his modest manners, his quiet voice."¹²³ Another frequent guest was real estate developer and social critic Bolton Hall, founder of Free Acres, a single-tax community established in Berkeley Heights Township, New Jersey in 1910.¹²⁴

Art critic Sadakichi Hartmann--the self-styled "King of Bohemia"--was the colony's most infamous guest. He arrived the evening of February 16, 1907, accompanied by sculptor Jo

¹²²Sinclair, Autobiography, 133; Martin A. Bierbaum, "Bolton Hall's Free Acres Experiment: The Single Tax and Anarchism in New Jersey," Communal Societies 6 (Fall 1986): 65; Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 41.

¹²³Will and Ariel Durant, Interpretations of Life: A Survey of Contemporary Literature (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1970), 47.

¹²⁴Bierbaum, "Bolton Hall's Free Acres Experiment," 65.

Davidson and Bessie Lhevinne, who identified herself as a "teacher in elementary things." Earlier that day Sinclair had received a telegram stating that Sadakichi Hartmann would arrive at 6:00 p.m. "It had the tone of a monarch notifying a subject that he is about to be honored by a royal visitor," Sinclair told a New York Times reporter. He insisted he had never heard of Hartmann, whose fame, another reporter opined, "spreads thickly from Nagasaki to New York. . . . [He comes] with a stick and a half full of alphabetical disarrangements in 'Who's Who.'"¹²⁵

A complex character, Hartmann had achieved some notoriety by this time but was not listed in Who's Who. Born in Japan in 1867 to a German trader and a Japanese woman who died in childbirth, Hartmann had been raised by a wealthy uncle in Hamburg. His rebellious behavior led his father to disown him and send him to Philadelphia to work at age thirteen. In the 1880s he returned to Europe to study the visual and performing arts. Back again in the United States, Hartmann began writing art and photographic criticism for magazines and newspapers. By 1906 he regularly traveled around the United States, lecturing and working with museums and young artists. Biographers Harry Lawton and George Knox credit Hartmann with being the first to promote both Winslow Homer and Ezra Pound, among others,

¹²⁵"Discord in Helicon Hall," New York Sun, 17 February 1907, p. 11.

and championing photography as a fine art before Stieglitz. In contrast to the "aristocratic studiosness" he affected in art circles was his erratic, gypsy-like behavior that inspired the Bohemian culture at the turn of the century.¹²⁶

It was this more flamboyant Hartmann who appeared on the colony doorsteps in mid-February. The colonists invited the trio to dinner, although the residents who had supposedly invited them were not at home. Davidson later complained that the meal consisted only of "hash with more bread than meat in it," baked beans, an indescribable pudding, and bitter tea.¹²⁷

Sinclair informed Hartmann and his friends that they could not stay at the colony that night unless residents allowed them to sleep in their rooms; he had turned away twenty-five families because of lack of space and did not have any extra rooms available. A colony committee met while the three visitors gathered at the fireplace to wait the return of the residents who had invited them. Davidson

¹²⁶Sadakichi Hartmann, White Chrysanthemums: Literary Fragments and Pronouncements, ed. George Knox and Harry Lawton, with a foreword by Kenneth Rexroth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), viii-xxiv; Sadakichi Hartmann, The Valiant Knights of Daguerre: Selected Critical Essays on Photography and Profiles of Photographic Pioneers, ed. Harry W. Lawton and George Knox (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 1-3.

¹²⁷Hartmann, The Valiant Knights, 1; "Discord in Helicon Hall," New York Sun, 17 February 1907, p. 11; Sinclair, Autobiography, 133; "Helicon Hall Cold to Visiting Trio," New York Times, 17 February 1907, pt. 5, p. 13.

claimed that if not for their presence, the colonists would have died of ennui. Soon after midnight the committee meeting adjourned, and the housekeeper and others asked the visitors to leave. Although Lhevinne had been invited to stay by a woman resident, she chose to leave with Davidson and Hartmann.¹²⁸

The next day Hartmann contacted newspapers to indignantly report that they had been thrown out in the snow and forced to spend the night in a shanty waiting for the morning trolley. Sinclair countered that the group had been drunk and could have gone to a hotel he had recommended or caught the 1:00 a.m. trolley, which did not leave for nearly an hour. Sinclair gave the press a letter he had received after the incident in which Hartmann claimed to have been hired by a leading magazine to write a humorous article on the colony, with Davidson providing the illustrations.¹²⁹

Soon after the publication of Sinclair's first autobiography in 1932, Hartmann sent a postcard demanding, "Why don't you get things right!" He admitted that they had been carrying a bottle of liquor but had not drunk any until after they left the colony, when it proved to be a "lifesaver" from the cold. Three years later Hartmann

¹²⁸Upton Sinclair to the Editor, New York Times, 20 February 1907, p. 10; "Helicon Hall Cold to Visiting Trio," New York Times, 17 February 1907, pt. 15, p. 13.

¹²⁹Ibid.

proclaimed, "Old feuds are forgotten."¹³⁰

One researcher speculates that Hartmann may have been responsible for the colony fire. Another sees nothing peculiar in Hartmann's continuing interest in the colony and scrapbook of articles on the fire. In a foreword to a volume of Hartmann's writings, Kenneth Rexroth writes that the author "seemed to have been a great jumper of gates, crasher of doors and pusher aside of maids and secretaries. He always assumed he would be welcomed and accepted at his own evaluation, that of an equal. Since he was one of the great conversationalists of the time, once he got in he almost always was accepted." Hartmann editor Harry Lawton is uncertain as to whether or not the author was on assignment when he visited Helicon Hall but notes that he had an "abiding interest in communal colonies," especially Elbert Hubbard's Roycroft Colony and occasionally served as Hubbard's ghost writer. Lawton surmises that Hartmann "may have simply been checking out the action at Helicon as a lark. When Hartmann was drunk, he usually caused commotions--almost anywhere he went."¹³¹

While the incident itself had no effect on colony policy toward visitors, it became another example for

¹³⁰Sadakichi Hartmann to Upton Sinclair, 5 May 1932, and Sadakichi Hartmann to Upton Sinclair, 31 January 1935, Sinclair Papers.

¹³¹Hartmann, White Chrysanthemums, ix; Harry W. Lawton, letter to author, 29 June 1989.

Sinclair of how the press ignored the true significance of the colony and concentrated on sensational stories.

Biographer Floyd Dell also expressed annoyance that it was not news when Dewey and James came to discuss philosophy, but it was when members danced with Irish serving girls (a reference to the Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff story about Professor Montague).¹³² Throughout his tenure as colony impresario, Sinclair had a love/hate relationship with the press: the colony needed the publicity that would attract serious-minded residents, but suffered from the taint of socialism, free love, and general radicalism that often permeated even the briefest mention of its activities. In his autobiographies and The Brass Check he wrote bitterly of his association with the press at this time.

Sinclair was especially angered by the charges of free love that were leveled at the colony. "It was generally taken for granted among the newspapermen of New York that the purpose for which I had started this colony was to have plenty of mistresses ready," wrote Sinclair. He claimed not to have even heard the term "free love" until a frequent visitor, "himself, I suspect, strictly monogamous in practice," argued his free love theories around the colony fireplace. He further insisted, "I do not know of any assemblage of forty adult persons where a higher standard of

¹³²Floyd Dell, Upton Sinclair: A Study in Social Protest. (1927; reprint, New York: AMS Press, 1970), 124.

sexual morals prevailed than at Helicon Hall." He did, however, note that one departing colonist had "tried to take our dining room maid as his mistress, but without success" and a worker was asked to leave after annoying two young serving girls with his sexual theories.¹³³

Charges of free love were nothing new for socialists, who often found themselves identified with free love advocates. While the general public associated free love with promiscuity, its proponents championed equality and freedom in sexual relations, a concept not despicable to some socialists. Many socialists continued to believe in monogamous marriages, although they did emphasize that the economic relations between husbands and wives would change under socialism.¹³⁴

Edith Summers's assessment of colony life may come closer to the truth than Sinclair's adamant denials. Noting that they had little time for sexual relations, she wrote, "I don't say that nobody ever fell in love at Helicon Hall. Remember we were all young; and what a strange lot of young people we would have been if nothing like that had happened. The newspapers would have been quite justified in calling us

¹³³Sinclair, Autobiography, 130-31; idem, "To Marry or Not to Marry?" Physical Culture 31 (March 1914): 223-28; idem, Brass Check, 70.

¹³⁴Mary Jo Buhle, Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 251; Bruce Dancis, "Socialism and Women in the United States, 1900-1917," Socialist Revolution 6 (January/March 1976): 90.

freaks." Claiming no personal knowledge of people's private affairs, Meta Sinclair wrote, "Doubtless the human nature of its occupants was not different from that of less conspicuous people."¹³⁵

Nevertheless, both Upton and Meta describe each other's colony love affairs in their autobiographical novels. The details are similar; both agree that Upton had a brief affair with married colonist Anna Noyes, and Meta, possibly in retaliation, with single colonist John-Armistead Collier. In Love's Progress, Sinclair portrays Anna Noyes as Hildegarde Vance, the star of his opera. She becomes his "valuable assistant," and he admires her "perfection." Thrysis, Sinclair's name for himself, also realizes it is the first time he has known a happy woman and one who meant something other than "pain and sacrifice" for him. He fights the attraction out of respect for their friendship and his admiration of her husband. When Thrysis finally confesses his love, Hildegarde quickly assesses the situation and decides that she too is in love. They break into a cabin in the woods and consummate their love, Thrysis realizing he had never felt such overpowering emotions toward his wife. They soon decide it would be best for all involved to break off the affair but continue their working relationship. Thrysis is worried that Corydon might commit

¹³⁵Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 39; Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, p. 17, Stone Papers.

suicide, and both he and Hildegarde fear that the ever-present reporters will hear rumors of the affair.¹³⁶

Not surprisingly, Meta Sinclair describes Thrysis and Hildegarde's affair with much less passion. In her novel, they call her to the colony office where she is stunned to learn that they are "in love" and also would be notifying Mr. Vance of the fact. Two weeks later, she continues, Thrysis tells her that the experiment is over and that they "had been lovers during this period but had decided that it were [sic] best to discontinue the relationship."¹³⁷

At the same time both Sinclairs note the arrival of "John the Baptist," the colony nickname for John-Armistead Collier, called Jonathan Harland by Sinclair, and Paul Rivers by Meta. Sinclair writes that Jonathan "had nothing to do all day but to analyze the problems of the universe with Corydon and to write poetry about their mutual soul-states." Collier similarly depicts his relationship with Meta in his unpublished autobiographical novel, The Search. He maintains, however, that he was not "wooing her" but only sharing social theories and an innocent kiss on the cheek. Further, the other colonists did not appreciate his Southern chivalry and reverence toward women. Likewise, in Corydon and Thrysis, Meta insists that Corydon and Paul

¹³⁶Sinclair, Love's Progress--Early Draft, p. 281-321, Sinclair Papers.

¹³⁷Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, p. 16, Stone Papers.

Rivers became involved only in "petting parties." In her "biochronicle" of her husband and list of his "sweethearts," Phyllis Collier calls Meta "probably the first real love" and notes "1907? love affair with Meta."¹³⁸

While not directly related to colony administration, the Sinclairs' affairs are a curious anomaly in the picture of domestic bliss the colonists attempted to present to reporters. Important enough to include in their autobiographical novels, the affairs also apparently were important enough to them personally to risk exposure by the press--a result that would have seriously damaged the colony's reputation among its supporters, who could easily ignore the mundane innuendoes that regularly appeared in articles. Descriptions by both Sinclairs make it clear that other colonists could have easily surmised what was going on (thus making them accomplices in an effort to shield the Sinclairs' activities from the press). Upton's affair shows a hypocritical side of the author that was seldom so blatantly revealed in his actions and contrasts sharply with the puritanical image that many had for him. (In fact, his fear of impregnating Meta and his second wife Mary Craig often drove him to long periods of abstinence.) Meta's

¹³⁸Sinclair, Love's Progress, Early Draft, 328-29, Sinclair Papers; Collier, The Search, volume 3, p. 10, Collier Collection; Meta Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, p. 17, Stone Papers; Phyllis Fenington, "A few identifying names of wives, sweethearts, friends, etc.," Collier Collection.

affair also marks the beginnings of her later infidelities, contributing factors in the breakup of their marriage and continuing hostile disagreements on their son's upbringing.

Despite such intrigues, the seven to eighteen children who resided at the colony at various times were having a "gala experience." Throughout his life, Sinclair steadfastly maintained that the colony's greatest success was with the children. In his February 1907 Independent article, he listed the children's happiness and friendships, the reduction of child care costs and concerns, the hygienic nursery environment provided by the fresh air pump, and the care of children by friends, among the colony's accomplishments to date.¹³⁹

The colony provided what Sinclair had missed as a child in Baltimore and New York City and what he craved most for his son David: plenty of free space to play and explore and the companionship of other children. He considered neither the cheap boardinghouses of his childhood nor the city flats he and his colleagues had previously rented as suitable environments for children. Curiously, he had little comment on the opulence of the children's surroundings at the colony, although he had always considered his wealthy uncle's home part of his youthful puzzlement over why some

¹³⁹Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, p. 18, Stone Papers; Sinclair, "A New Helicon Hall," 580-83; idem, Autobiography, 129; idem, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 310.

people were rich and others poor.¹⁴⁰

The decision to allow children at the colony had not been unanimous, although most colonists considered their care an essential element in solving household difficulties. Although the colony could not afford a resident physician or kindergarten teacher, Anna Noyes told a reporter in early November 1906 that a woman who had held prominent positions with the New York City schools would be living at the colony and assisting with child care. Most of the time mothers took turns caring for the children, earning credit applicable toward room and board. The basic childraising theory was to allow children "no more freedom than was consistent with the happiness and peace of others."¹⁴¹

Sinclair was especially pleased with the "lessons in practical cooperation" such a theory engendered. He proudly reported that the children voted on issues of importance to them, recounting that five-year-old David had called for consensus on whether early risers should be allowed to wake others in the dormitory. The child care arrangements also encouraged independence. Edith Summers wrote that the "children had their world and we had ours and the two went

¹⁴⁰Harris, Upton Sinclair, 6-10; Sinclair, The Brass Check, 62; Sinclair, interview with Ronald Gottesman.

¹⁴¹"Helicon Hall Has Taken to Bloomers," New York Times, 14 February 1907, p. 16; "Upton Sinclair's Colony As It Really Is," Englewood Press, 3 November 1906, p. 3; Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 313; idem, Autobiography, 130.

on side by side but not interfering with each other." She believed such separation aided familial feelings and eliminated potential friction among the colonists by providing mothers with a chance for peace and quiet and grown-up conversation. "How many and many a harassed mother has sighed in vain for just such an arrangement as that," Summers wrote in 1934, after her own experience of raising two children as a single mother after the breakup of her first marriage.¹⁴²

Most of the children slept on cots in the ground floor theater, which had been temporarily converted into a dormitory; the woman in charge of the children's department and her husband slept in an adjoining room. Children also could stay with their families in their private rooms. John Dewey planned to rent rooms for his children and, at the time of the fire, newspapers reported that David Sinclair had been asleep in his mother's third-floor bedroom and the Bowles children were with their parents as they were new to the colony and not yet accustomed to the dormitory. The children ate their meals in their own dining room with furniture and food suited to their needs.¹⁴³

¹⁴²Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 310; idem, Industrial Republic, 283-284; Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 40.

¹⁴³"The Household Experiment on the Palisades," Charities and the Commons, 3 November 1906, p. 186; "Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1; Sinclair, Autobiography, 130.

Reporters expressed surprise that the children were allowed normal childhoods: the colonists' theories neither outlawed such classics as Little Red Riding Hood and Goldilocks and the Three Bears nor prevented an outbreak of chicken pox in February 1907.¹⁴⁴ The children's nightly airbaths--a chance to romp and play naked in the playroom before their actual baths--also was dutifully reported in the press. As explained by Anna Noyes: "Children raised in cities are altogether too much hampered by the clothes that conventionality compels them to wear. When we decided to admit them to the hall we also resolved to give them as much freedom as possible."¹⁴⁵ Mary Tayloe Gwathmey's memory of the airbaths was simply, "what bliss!"¹⁴⁶

"It was a beautiful, a glorious sight, which no child-lover could fail to appreciate," rhapsodized Boston Transcript reporter Alvan Sanborn on visiting the playroom. At the same time, the effect was spoiled for him when he learned he was observing "paid mothers" playing with the children.¹⁴⁷

By early spring 1907 the courtyard fig tree was in bloom, and colonists began making plans for expansion,

¹⁴⁴Sanborn, "At Upton Sinclair's."

¹⁴⁵"Helicon Hall Has Taken to Bloomers," New York Times, 14 February 1907, p. 16.

¹⁴⁶Mary Tayloe Gwathmey to Upton Sinclair, 28 October 1932, Sinclair Papers.

¹⁴⁷Sanborn, "At Upton Sinclair's."

satisfied they had straightened out earlier administrative difficulties. Sinclair pledged that such expansion would help reduce expenses by using the real estate investment to its full advantage. The colony planned to alter the roof of the main building, enlarging the third floor area and creating thirty-one more rooms. Colonists estimated the remodeling would cost ten thousand dollars and bring in an additional two thousand dollars per year in income. They anticipated paying for the alterations with a second issue of Home Colony Company stock.¹⁴⁸

Sinclair also promoted the cottage plan he had initially intended for the colony. A one-page flier invited prospective colonists to visit the colony on Sunday, February 10, 1907 "to look over the proposed sites and talk out the plan." A brochure claimed that the colony received dozens of cottage applications weekly and expected to sign contracts in March, with construction completed by May. The Home Colony Company would allow rustic cottages, tents, and bungalows on the northern grounds but require stone, cement, or stucco cottages near the main building to ensure their architectural compatibility. The company estimated building costs for a three- or four-room cottage with bath, made out of cement blocks manufactured in Englewood, to be one thousand dollars. It also planned two-, three-, and

¹⁴⁸Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 42; The Home Colony Company, 8 pg. brochure, n.d., Sinclair Collection.

four-party buildings.¹⁴⁹

Occupants would subscribe to Home Colony Company stock equal to the building costs of their own cottages. They also would lease the site for three years, at a cost of one hundred to two hundred dollars, depending on its size and location. The company would charge an additional annual fee of one-and-a-half percent of the cottage worth to cover taxes and approximately fifty cents per week per adult for recreational use of the main building and grounds. An additional five dollars a week charge for board was optional, but cottage residents would not be allowed to have their own servants or kitchens.¹⁵⁰

Sinclair anticipated arranging colony finances to ensure independence from all outside sources. The colony planned to continue its for-profit private laundry and purchase a local farm on which to raise its own food. In his February 1907 Independent article, Sinclair detailed the establishment of a colony store, which would purchase goods at wholesale prices for sale at retail costs. The profits would be shared by both the colony and the residents, with

¹⁴⁹Helicon Home Colony, Englewood, New Jersey, Collier Collection; Helicon Home Colony Cottage Plans, Sinclair Collection.

¹⁵⁰Helicon Home Colony Cottage Plans, Sinclair Collection.

rebates determined by the amount of purchases.¹⁵¹

A short news item in the March 9, 1907 Englewood Press foreshadowed the colony's future:

A monster boiler was drawn on skids from the depot to Helicon Hall on Thursday. It has capacity enough to make things warmer for the Co-operative Home Colony.¹⁵²

A week later, on March 16, 1907, at 3:00 a.m., the colony dreams came to an abrupt end when a fire broke out near the furnace and quickly spread through the building. Fleeing to the barnyard, the colonists huddled together, watching their home collapse into its central courtyard. By sunrise one man was dead, and the building was almost completely destroyed. Only the magnificent fireplace and part of the rear foundation, including the room that housed the indoor pool, were left standing.¹⁵³

Commenting on the colony's future plans, colonist William Noyes told a reporter, "We look forward with dread . . . to a return to our discarded mode of living, with the inconveniences from which for five months we have been totally free. Our life in Helicon Hall, I fear, has spoiled

¹⁵¹Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," 312; The Helicon Home Colony, Englewood, N.J., Oneida Community Records.

¹⁵²"Home and Vicinity" column, Englewood Press, 9 March 1907, p. 5.

¹⁵³"Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1; "Helicon Hall Before and After the Fire," Wilshire's, April 1907, p. 21.

us for any other way of life."¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁴"Sinclair's Colony Plans," New York Post, 19 March 1907, p. 9.

CHAPTER FOUR

HELICON HOME COLONY DESTRUCTION AND ITS AFTERMATH

At approximately 3:00 a.m. on Saturday, March 16, 1907, three loud explosions awakened several Helicon Home Colony residents. Engineer Charles Hilliker rushed downstairs to investigate, concerned there might be a problem with the new boiler he had just installed. Reaching the first floor, he discovered thick smoke and fire racing through the courtyard and hurried back upstairs to warn the others. Colonists opened their doors to find the courtyard and one set of stairs in flames. Terrified screams could be heard throughout the building as some colonists wrapped themselves in blankets and made their way down the other staircase to safety, while others jumped out of second- and third-story windows.

In less than an hour the colony's main building was completely destroyed. Only the magnificent fireplace and indoor swimming pool remained. In their hurry to escape, residents abandoned everything: clothes, manuscripts, personal possessions. For the many colonists who pursued

independent livelihoods, the fire destroyed not only their home but many months' labor.¹ The devastation contrasted sharply with the optimistic remarks Sinclair recently had written as the colony prepared for the second phase of its operations: building individual kitchenless cottages.²

Awakened by Meta, who had heard the explosions, Upton ran through the third floor hall, banging on doors to awaken sleeping residents. Meta hurried downstairs with David and helped shepherd the other children out of the dormitory, stopping only to make sure that they all had on shoes.³ Sinclair had not taken this precaution. He soon joined his family outside, his bare feet badly cut by fallen glass from the courtyard roof.

As flames engulfed both staircases, the remaining

¹Several colonists dug through the ruins in an attempt to locate lost items. Upton Sinclair found a tightly-wrapped manuscript with little fire damage that he speculated had fallen in the pond. Meta Sinclair to John-Armistead Collier, n.d., John and Phyllis Collier Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich. (hereafter cited as Collier Collection).

²Upton Sinclair, "The Home Colony: Six Months After," Independent (7 February 1907): 306-13.

³Amidst the colony's tragedy, Sinclair could not resist once again championing its success with the children. He told Wilshire's that on fleeing the burning building the occupants of the children's dormitory were well-protected from the cold and snow while those who had been staying with their parents had to face the freezing conditions without overcoats or blankets. He failed to mention that David was sleeping with Meta the night of the fire, although newspapers reported that he was in her room. "Helicon Hall Before and After the Fire," Wilshire's, April 1907, p. 21.

colonists had no choice but to exit through second- and third-story windows. Sinclair, B. H. Nadal, and Edith Summers held a blanket to catch trapped residents as they jumped. Charles Hilliker helped others climb out windows onto the portico roof and down to the ground. Edwin Potter and his family escaped down a ninety-cent rope he had purchased in town the day before.⁴

Colonists, nearly all in night clothes and most barefoot, watched in shock as their home burned down, the walls collapsing into the much-admired courtyard. Anna Noyes sprinted to a nearby fire alarm to signal the Hillside Fire Company and climbed the pole to ring the bell when the ropes would not work.⁵

The fire alarm was too late. Before the fire truck

⁴Local and New York City newspapers ran detailed reports on the fire, which were picked up by wire services and reprinted across the country. Especially useful are "Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1 and "Helicon Hall Burned Down," New York Sun, 17 March 1907, p. 5, as is Edith Summers's memory of the fire in Edith Summers Kelley, "Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living," 1934, Edith Summers Kelley Papers, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; ed., Mary Byrd Davis, The Kentucky Review 1 (Spring 1980): 43-44.

⁵Anna Noyes was most often credited with this act of heroism although some newspapers attributed it to Frances Maule Bjorkman or even the critically-injured Grace MacGowan Cooke. The difficulty Noyes had in sounding the alarm was initially thought to be possible proof that the fire had been deliberately set. It was later reported that the double-clappered bell could only be rung from the ground if a person alternately pulled its two ropes; because the two ropes had become twisted together the bell could not be easily rung. "Fire Destroys Helicon Hall," Englewood Press, 23 March 1907, p. 3.

could reach the property, the building was burned to the ground. After taking a head count, colonists realized that carpenter Lester Briggs was missing and directed firefighters to aim their hose on the spot where they believed his bedroom would have collapsed in the rubble. By 4:18 a.m. Briggs's body had been found, and the coroner had ordered an inquest.⁶ Financial superintendent Emma Erskine Hahn appointed two colony members to watch over the ruins at all times to ensure that no potential evidence was lost or destroyed.

Residents of the fashionable houses that bordered the colony property escorted the cold and shocked residents to their homes, where they provided food and comfort and offered clothes from their own closets as well as those of their servants. Two days later colonists formally thanked their neighbors in a statement released to the press:

To the people of Englewood--The colonists, residents, and workers of Helicon Hall at a meeting held in Englewood, on March 18, 1907, unanimously voted that a resolution of heartfelt thanks be tendered to the residents of Englewood, who, during and ever since the fire, which destroyed our home, have acted toward us with such notable friendliness and generosity.⁷

Meanwhile an ambulance transported six burned and

⁶Englewood, N.J. Police Log, 16 March 1907, p. 88.

⁷"Card of Thanks," Englewood Press, 23 March 1907, p. 3. In addition, William Noyes thanked the churches for taking collections to aid colony members. "Sinclair's Colony Plans," New York Post, 19 March 1907, p. 9. An agent for the Erie Railroad also offered to replace all commuter tickets destroyed in the fire. "Hint at Secrets in Sinclair Fire," Newark Evening News, 18 March 1907, p. 2.

injured residents to Englewood Hospital.⁸ The most critically injured were writers Grace MacGowan Cooke and her sister Alice MacGowan. Jumping from a second-story window, they had proved too heavy to support in the blanket held by Sinclair and others and had hit the frozen ground, injuring their backs. Early newspaper reports listed Cooke's injuries as probably fatal. After fifteen days she was released from the hospital in improved condition, although she continued to suffer leg and back pains. MacGowan checked out the same day as her sister, with prescriptions for codeine and morphine.⁹

Colony cook Leonie Fichtenberg spent twenty-two days in the hospital, the longest stay. She had been badly burned on her face and body and hurt her back when she jumped from a second-story window. Helen Knoll, the colony's assistant housekeeper; James McNiff, colony engineer; and Margaret Hogue, a waitress, also suffered burns. Newspapers called Knoll's survival miraculous as she had chosen not to jump out her third floor window, but instead jumped over the balcony into the burning courtyard, her fall broken by the

⁸Newspapers offer sketchy information on the colonists' injuries. Admission records and daily reports uncovered at Englewood Hospital, Englewood, N.J. by the author provide details on the injured colonists and their treatment and progress.

⁹Despite their release from the hospital, the MacGowan sisters continued to suffer from their injuries. Two months after the fire they were still recuperating, and the Cooke children were living with the Sinclairs. Meta Sinclair to John-Armistead Collier, 29 May 1907, Collier Collection.

fig tree. She spent two days in the hospital.¹⁰ Hogue stayed overnight in the hospital only because she had no clothes to wear and had to wait for donations.¹¹ McNiff had run barefoot down the burning staircase and suffered smoke inhalation as well as burns on his hands and face, requiring a fourteen-day hospital stay.

Newspapers reported that Edith Summers and Henrietta D. Kimball were treated for shock at the hospital, although no record of this was found. Two days after the fire, colonist Emma Taber was admitted suffering from nervous exhaustion and was released three days later. Other colonists were most likely treated by private physicians and did not require hospitalization. Sinclair, for one, was treated by a surgeon and spent several days at Gaylord Wilshire's New York City apartment recovering from infected burns and cuts on his feet.

Scandal and intrigue quickly surrounded the fire, as news of the colony's demise temporarily pushed the sensational Thaw trial off the front pages of newspapers across the country.¹² A local paper reported that

¹⁰Fellow employee Dora Steinlein also had jumped from the balcony but landed in the fishpond and did not require hospitalization. "Helicon Hall Burned Down," New York Sun, 17 March 1907, p. 5.

¹¹"Englewood Fire a Mystery," Evening Record and Bergen County Herald, 18 March 1907, p. 1.

¹²By mid-March the nearly twelve-week trial of wealthy playboy Harry K. Thaw, for the June 15, 1906 murder of architect Stanford White, was more than half over. Thaw's

thousands had driven from around the state and New York to view the colony ruins.¹³ Five days after the fire, smoldering rubble continued to shoot sparks dangerously close to the nearby barn, warranting another visit from the fire company.¹⁴

Speculation on the cause of the fire was immediate, with opinion divided among those who thought it was the work of an arsonist and those who blamed faulty equipment. Colonists revealed that a stick of dynamite had been discovered in the basement when the new boiler was installed and had been turned over to the police. Sinclair speculated that the fire was connected to his research on the Steel Trust. He claimed to have lost papers in the fire documenting the Carnegie Steel Company's armor-plate frauds against the U.S. government, including original shop records of poor quality plates used in the battleship Oregon. Although Sinclair noted these facts twelve years later in The Brass Check, he told at least one reporter at the time

wife, former chorine Evelyn Nesbit, became known as "the girl in the red velvet swing" for her testimony. She scandalized the country with revelations of her seduction and subsequent affair at age sixteen with White, a partner in the prestigious firm of McKim, Mead & White and designer of Madison Square Garden, where he was shot pointblank by Thaw. Paul R. Baker, Stanny: The Gilded Life of Stanford White (New York: The Free Press, 1989), 385-91.

¹³"Englewood Fire A Mystery," Evening Record and Bergen County Herald, 18 March 1907, p. 1.

¹⁴"Home and Vicinity," Englewood Press, 23 March 1907, p. 3.

that he had been misquoted and personally believed the fire was an accident.¹⁵

Rumors abounded that a mysterious man had been seen lurking around the colony property. Some colonists identified him as a disgruntled colonist who had been threatened with dismissal for his violent temper (his identity was not given in the newspaper reports). There were also claims that one resident was fully dressed on leaving the burning building. Colonists told reporters that his room was near that of Emma Erskine Hahn, a light sleeper known as the colony "watchdog;" on the night of the fire she was in New York buying a portable fire escape for the colony. Others stated that two fully-dressed people had been seen entering the building around 2:00 a.m.; Sinclair later revealed them to be Edith Summers and John-Armistead Collier, returning from dinner and the theater in New York City.¹⁶

¹⁵"Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1 and Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism (Pasadena, Calif.: By the Author, 1919; reprint, New York: Arno & The New York Times, 1970), 68-69. Sinclair is quoted as denying he ever made the charge against U.S. Steel in "Hint at Secrets in Sinclair Fire," Newark Evening News, 18 March 1907, p. 2. In 1908 the U.S. Navy acknowledged that Sinclair's description of defective armor plate in The Moneychangers was accurate. "U.S. Navy Admits Rotten Armor," New York American, 6 September 1908, p. 1-2.

¹⁶"Dynamite Found at Helicon Hall," New York Herald, 18 March 1907, p. 3; "Did Bomb Fire Helicon Hall?" Newark Evening News, 18 March 1907, p. 1. Summers remembered with sad irony a remark Collier had made when she complained of the bitterly-cold wind on the ferry ride home, "Cheer up,

Attention also focused on the new boiler and the explosions that had been heard. Colonists Edwin Bjorkman and Ernest Eberlein believed a gas leak had caused the fire.¹⁷ Charles Hilliker had reported seeing flames shooting out of the organ pipes, raising speculation that gas had collected in the pipes and ignited because of the organ's close proximity to the courtyard fireplace. The coroner dismissed this charge, believing that an explosion in the organ pipes could not have started the rapidly-spread fire, although acknowledging it could have occurred after the building had been on fire for some time.

The colony's financial status came under close scrutiny, with special attention given to who would benefit from the insurance (the colony's three policies all favored the mortgage). Reporters claimed that the colony board of directors had recently voted an increase in room and board and that Sinclair had planned to sell four acres to reduce

Cherub . . . You might be worse off. Suppose you were running around barefoot in the snow and had no home to go to" (Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 43).

¹⁷"To Investigate Helicon Fire," New York Times, 18 March 1907, p. 16. Eberlein family lore blamed the steel trust for the fire. Family friend Laurel Hessing speculates that Eberlein's comments were an intentional ruse. She has written a play on Helicon Hall, based on the Eberleins' remembrances, which conjectures that steel trust spies were posing as residents and had set the fire. Laurel Hessing, "Dream of a Summer Night," unpublished; Laurel Hessing to author, 4 March 1992.

the mortgage.¹⁸ Sinclair also had been charged the day before the fire with failing to pay a painting bill. He explained that the colony had not paid the bill because painter James Harris had demanded an hourly rate when it had been agreed that payment would be based on the number of rooms painted. For three months the colony had refused to pay the bill because it averaged out to twenty-three dollars a room rather than the contracted twelve dollars a room. Sinclair insisted that "the colony was prosperous financially [and] had refused money." A July 19, 1907 memo from Sinclair to Home Colony Company stockholders indicates that Harris eventually was paid seven hundred dollars.¹⁹

Despite Sinclair's remarks to the contrary, some colonists were worried about Helicon's financial conditions. After the fire, Grace MacGowan Cooke labeled the colony's aims inchoate, and Frances and Edwin Bjorkman claimed to

¹⁸"Dynamite Found at Helicon Hall," New York American, 18 March 1907, p. 3; "Did Bomb Fire Helicon Hall?" Newark Evening News, 18 March 1907, p. 1.

¹⁹"Did Bomb Fire Helicon Hall?" Newark Evening News, 18 March 1907, p. 1. Sinclair was later summoned to appear before the N.J. Supreme Court to answer Harris's suit for \$898 against the colony, although no record of this appearance was located, probably because the \$700 had been paid. Baltimore Sun, 4 April 1907, p. 11; Upton Sinclair to Charles H. Castle and Frederick W. Sparks, 19 July 1907, Upton Sinclair Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Papers). Lilly Library houses the Sinclair Papers, which include his personal papers, and the Sinclair Collection, which includes printed works.

have seen rough times ahead.²⁰ Meta Sinclair was more blunt. While she accused Sinclair of arson during their bitter divorce battle, she also prepared a more clinical dissection of the colony's problems for her unpublished autobiographical novel Corydon and Thrysis:

The affairs of H.H. were taking a very bad turn. They were beginning to run behind and it seemed impossible to make it pay for itself. Apparently it was doomed to failure. Everyone was paying as much as he could or thought he should and yet the responsibility fell upon Thrysis. There was always a deficit which he had to make up.²¹

Bergen County Coroner Archibald Lees scheduled an inquest into Briggs's death for March 21, 1907, five days after the fire. He contributed to speculation on the colony's demise by freely commenting on any and all rumors. Lees sent detectives to interrogate colonists and appointed six prominent Englewood residents to the jury: Donald Mackay, Englewood mayor and millionaire banker; G. L. Miller, city assessor; William Conklin, city councilman; J. H. Tillotson, owner and editor of Englewood Press; F. W. Bergendahl, grocer; and T. S. Treadwell, doctor.

During the inquest the coroner and jury members queried Sinclair and other colonists. According to newspaper

²⁰Grace MacGowan Cooke to My Dear Nautilus Friends, 21 March 1907, in The Nautilus 5 (May 1907): 10-11; Frances Maule Bjorkman, "Practical Experiment in Fletcherism," World's Work 15 (February 1908): 9877-78.

²¹Meta Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, p. 18, Meta Fuller Stone Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Stone Papers).

reports, they focused on conditions at the colony rather than the cause of the fire. Financial superintendent Emma Erskine Hahn claimed that she personally had decided not to buy five thousand dollars worth of Home Colony Company stock because of poor administration.²² Further, she stated:

I told Mr. Sinclair that the project would never be a success because we were running behind in money and because of dissensions among the colonists. . . . Things were in a bad state.²³

Newspapers reported that the jurors "grilled" Sinclair, who arrived on crutches. Often badgering him with aggressive and sarcastic questions, they asked for a description of the temporary quarters constructed for employees in the third floor studio and why there were locks on neither the front door nor on individual rooms. Additional questions focused on financial matters and the building's lack of fire escapes. Sinclair admitted that kerosene and explosive powders usually stored in the barn were in the main building as painting and excavating were in progress. Only one newspaper reported that Sinclair admitted that the colony had monetary concerns.²⁴

²²"Sinclair Colony Censured," New York Times, 22 March 1907, sec. 3, p. 2; "Censure for the Colony Managers," Evening Record and Bergen County Herald, 22 March 1907, p. 1.

²³"Sinclair Colony Censured," New York Times, 22 March 1907, sec. 3, p. 2.

²⁴"Grills Author at Coroner's Inquest," New York World, 22 March 1907, p. 7. Because the colony's accounting books were destroyed, it is difficult to assess its financial status at the time of the fire.

During the questioning a mail carrier delivered an anonymous letter to the coroner:

If you want to get the truth, probe. Find who is to gain by the fire. The plan miscarried. Therefore, a life was lost. Force the Hahn woman to tell all. Put Sinclair on the rack. Edwin Bjorkman can give some facts if forced. One who knows.²⁵

The jury decided to ignore the letter and proceed with the inquest.

Sinclair left immediately after the jurors finished questioning him. The coroner reminded the jurors of the colony directors' disregard "for the care and safety of all these persons piled in one place."²⁶ Five minutes later the jury returned with its verdict:

We hereby severely censure the board of managers of Helicon Hall Colony and the corporation for not making any adequate provision for the saving of life from fire in a building containing sixty-two souls.²⁷

The coroner announced that Assistant Prosecutor John S. Mackay would present the case to the Bergen County Grand Jury in April.²⁸ He indicated that he believed the fire

²⁵"Grills Author at Coroner's Inquest," New York World, 22 March 1907, p. 7.

²⁶"Sinclair Colony Blamed for Fire," New York Herald, 22 March 1907, p. 3.

²⁷"Fire Destroys Helicon Hall," Englewood Press, 23 March 1907, p. 3.

²⁸It is unlikely that any Grand Jury investigation was ever made of the fire and Briggs's death. No newspaper reports of the investigation could be located, nor does Sinclair, or anyone else, make any reference to this. Bergen County records do not list any hearing on the colony; according to the office of the court administrator, minutes of Grand Jury hearings are destroyed after six years.

might have been caused by a lighted match dropped by a careless student. The mysterious student is not identified, and it is unclear to whom the coroner is referring.

Curiously, at least one scholar blamed Yale undergraduate Sinclair Lewis for the fire, an allegation he implies was commonly held. However, Lewis is not listed among colony survivors in newspaper articles and had left the colony in early December, according to biographer Mark Schorer.²⁹

The inquest did not determine why no one had been able to rouse Lester Briggs from a deep sleep. Margaret Hogue thought she had heard him respond when she banged on his door and was surprised that he had not escaped. Sinclair later charged that the only one who had ever drunk liquor at the colony was Briggs the night of the fire. Several newspapers reported that Briggs, an apprentice carpenter, had been initiated into the local union a few hours before the fire.³⁰ Others speculated that Briggs may have been suffering the effects of an anesthesia administered the previous afternoon when he had stitches removed from his eyes following surgery a week earlier; colonists remembered

²⁹George Kummer, Harry Leon Wilson (Cleveland: Press of Western Reserve University, 1963), 69; Mark Schorer, Sinclair Lewis: An American Life (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1961), 115.

³⁰"Fire Destroys Upton Sinclair's Colony Home," New York World, 17 March 1907, p. 4.

him complaining of drowsiness and going to bed early.³¹

No new evidence has come to light substantiating either the arson or accidental theories offered to explain the Helicon Home Colony fire. The fact that the colony may have been having financial difficulties does not appear significant, as the insurance policies did not benefit any one person. The coroner's supposition that the fire was caused by a careless smoker may have been closer to the truth. In Love's Progress, a car driven by Jonathan Harland (Sinclair's fictional name for John-Armistead Collier) skids off the road, killing Mrs. Huntley Sheldon, one of his passengers. Mrs. Sheldon's estate refuses to continue financing Thrysis's proletarian opera, forcing him to move out of her house in the Adirondacks. After the car accident Thrysis describes Harland as,

a much saddened and chastened evangelist. Pitiful it was to see his humility. 'It is I who have wrecked everything,' he seemed to say.³²

While no direct evidence has been found to link Collier with the colony fire, it is at least possible that Sinclair thought he was somehow involved, especially since he knew Collier had been awake only an hour before the blaze was discovered.

Ensconced once again in New York City, Sinclair

³¹"Sinclair's Colony May Not Be Revived," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 17 March 1907, p. 5.

³²Sinclair, Love's Progress--Early Draft, p. 378, Sinclair Papers.

attacked the jurors' line of questioning and attempted to explain his answers. He resented questions related to keys and accommodations, which he believed implied that the colonists were immoral. Their doors were unlocked because they trusted their friends, and the employees' quarters offered "as much privacy . . . as in any Pullman car." Sinclair insisted that the colonists had not socialized with Englewood residents because they "were ashamed of our mode of living," but because they were busy and "did not care to take the time to go outside of our own circle." He speculated that the jurors were angry because there had been some delays in paying bills due to former financial superintendent Stephen Randall's illness and subsequent recuperation in Cuba, where he had taken the accounting books. According to Sinclair, these bills had been paid upon Randall's return prior to the fire. He concluded that the colony would be reestablished, although not in Englewood because of the "psychological obstacles" such a decision would create.³³

The Englewood Press disputed Sinclair's claim that the colony had done business with the jurors and asserted that he was lying again, just as he had in The Jungle. In contrast, the nearby Hackensack Republican criticized the jury for trying "to bait" Sinclair and "drag from their

³³"Helicon Hall's Morals Good," New York Sun, 23 March 1907, p. 3.

lurking places a choice aggregation of skeletons with which the gossips had peopled the Bohemian house of the dreamers."³⁴

Twelve years after the fire, Sinclair cynically criticized the jurors as "the village horse-doctor and the village barber and the village grocer." He again praised the colonists' morals, although he admitted that every hotel manager--even one running a co-operative hotel--considers himself lucky when only a few indiscretions occur.³⁵ The jurors' accusations continued to infuriate Sinclair. His autobiography rails against their charges of "free love" and emphasizes their inconsistency in censuring the colony both for failing to purchase fire escapes before the fire and for voting to purchase fire escapes the week of the fire.³⁶

In the days following the colony destruction, residents took stock of their personal situations. Most scattered to the homes of friends and relatives in the area, while a few camped out on the Englewood property. They met several times in the colony barn to discuss plans for a new site and for re-establishing the colony. Emma Erskine Hahn and Anna and William Noyes distributed donations of food and clothes.

³⁴"Press Observation," Englewood Press, 30 March 1907; Untitled Editorial, Hackensack Republican, 28 March 1907, p. 4.

³⁵Sinclair, Brass Check, 69-71.

³⁶Upton Sinclair, The Autobiography of Upton Sinclair (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1962), 135.

In separate interviews Sinclair, William Noyes, and Michael Williams stated that the fire was only a temporary setback and had not destroyed the colony's drive. They claimed that donations and sympathy would soon rebuild the colony, possibly at Hahn's Stamford, Connecticut estate.³⁷

The amused and tolerant tone that had characterized reports of colony life was missing from much of the coverage of the fire and its aftermath. Editorialists blamed Sinclair personally for Briggs's death and criticized him for endangering the lives of the other colonists. Many characterized him as a hypocrite--eager to expose dangerous conditions in the meatpacking industry but unwilling to safeguard the lives of those for whom he had responsibility. "In the light of the flames of Helicon Hall it is interesting to glance through the frantic pages of 'The Jungle' a second time," commented Pearson's Magazine. An American Magazine writer cited selfishness and a lack of "proper intelligence" for both the colony fire and the beef trust, adding that The Jungle would have had another

³⁷For discussion of colonists' immediate plans, see "Sinclair Colony to Try Tent Life," New York Times, 19 March 1907, p. 16; "Sinclair Colony's Plans," New York Post, 19 March 1907, p. 9; "Sinclair Colony May Not Be Revived," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 17 March 1907, p. 5; "Helicon Hall Destroyed," Appeal to Reason, 30 March 1907, p. 3; and "The Burning of Helicon Hall," The Reader 9 (May 1907): 678-79. In May 1907 Frances Maule Bjorkman wrote Meta Sinclair that she and Edwin had no money left "thanks to our Stamford adventure." This may have been a reference to an attempt by some colonists to reorganize at Hahn's estate; no other mention or record was located. Frances [Maule Bjorkman] to Meta Sinclair, 30 May 1907, Stone Papers.

"thrilling" chapter had Sinclair discovered employers crowding workers into one house and "as negligent of their lives and property" as he had been with those of the colonists.³⁸

Other journalists cynically used the fire "to prove" that socialists were not as morally superior as they acted. "Human nature in Socialists is very human," read a New York World editorial that likened the colony destruction to any other failed capitalistic venture. The Newark Evening News ran a front-page editorial cartoon of a burning Helicon Hall with the caption, "For All Such Dreams Must End in Smoke."³⁹ A number of favorable articles written before the fire but appearing after March 16 detailed colony life and added only a postscript noting its demise.⁴⁰

Despite optimistic predictions by Sinclair and others that the colony would soon be back in operation, Helicon Home Colony for all practical purposes ceased to exist the night of the fire. In November 1907 Sinclair and Michael Williams announced that Helicon Home Colony would be

³⁸"The Two Sides of It," Pearson's Magazine 17 (June 1907): 711; "In the Interpreter's House," American Magazine 64 (June 1907): 220.

³⁹"Socialist Human Nature," New York World, 23 March 1907, p. 6; "For All Such Dreams Must End in Smoke," Newark Evening News, 19 March 1907, p. 1.

⁴⁰See, for example, Mrs. L. H. Harris, "Upton Sinclair and Helicon Hall," The Independent 62 (28 March 1907): 711-13 and "The Helicon Home Colony," in William Alfred Hinds, American Communities and Cooperative Colonies (2nd rev. 1908; reprint, Philadelphia: Porcupine Press, 1975), 580-87.

resurrected as a wagon caravan that would travel up the western coast of California to Oregon and then on to England and Europe. "Helicon Hall on the Hoof"--as Sinclair christened the expedition--would feature maids, stenographers, and a governess. As with the original colony, children would benefit most from the new adventure. Sinclair claimed that at least a dozen people were planning to join the "utopians on a trek." His autobiography calls the caravan "a brilliant scheme for a vacation and book combined."⁴¹ The expedition was never undertaken.

Sinclair's lighthearted caravan proposal belied the difficult months he and Meta, and all the colonists, endured following the fire. The first order of business had been to deal with the colony finances and provide aid for the homeless residents. Six days after the fire Sinclair informed Home Colony Company stockholders that colonists were "nearly all completely stranded" and some were "entirely destitute." He sought permission to distribute to the former residents any profits from the sale of the property.⁴² Sinclair settled the insurance claims for \$36,600 in mid-July and received \$19,500 for selling part of the property. After paying bills, the mortgage and interest, the real estate commission, the insurance

⁴¹"Helicon Hall Will Go On the Road," New York Times, 27 November 1907, p. 8; Sinclair, Autobiography, 141.

⁴²Upton Sinclair to the Holders of the Stock of the Home Colony Company, 22 March 1907, Sinclair Papers.

adjustor, the colony lawyer, and painter James Harris, the company had a balance of \$8,350, which it paid out as a stock dividend. Sinclair also offered to purchase any stock at par.⁴³ Although Sinclair biographer Leon Harris believed that no stockholders lost money on the colony, at least one person remembered differently. Nonresident stockholder Frances Boulton recalled receiving \$660 and a complete set of Sinclair's books in lieu of her thousand-dollar investment.⁴⁴

Although Sinclair never stated directly that he had distributed personal funds to destitute colonists, this is implied in his Autobiography. He claimed that he could not take the time to sue the insurance company for an honest assessment of the property value, as he did not want people to suffer any more "even though they had no legal claim upon me or the company."⁴⁵ On August 6, 1908 the Home Colony Company, represented by President William Noyes and Secretary Anna G. Noyes, sold the property to Amey Mowry Reinmund for ten thousand dollars. That year Reinmund and her husband built the house that still stands on the former

⁴³Upton Sinclair to Charles H. Castle and Frederick W. Sparks, 19 July 1907; Upton Sinclair to Home Colony Stockholders, 3 August 1907, Sinclair Papers.

⁴⁴Harris, Upton Sinclair, 98; Frances S. Boulton to Upton Sinclair, 31 May 1933, Sinclair Papers.

⁴⁵Sinclair, Autobiography, 136.

colony land.⁴⁶

After the fire, the Sinclairs moved to West Point Pleasant, New Jersey while Upton settled the colony's financial affairs. In mid-August, Meta, accompanied by her mother and a doctor, entered Dr. J. H. Kellogg's Battle Creek, Michigan sanitarium to recuperate from an appendectomy and a near-fatal abortion.⁴⁷ Leaving David with a maid, Sinclair fled to a cabin in the Adirondacks to finish The Metropolis (1908). He later blamed its faults on his personal problems.⁴⁸ He joined Meta at Battle Creek, where he tried a vegetarian diet, a regime he would adopt whenever stomach and head pains interfered with his writing.

Also staying in Battle Creek was colonist Michael Williams, who was writing a magazine article on the sanitarium. Together he and Sinclair devised the "Helicon Hall on the Hoof" scheme for spring 1908. In the meantime, they decided to take their families to Bermuda for the

⁴⁶Home Colony Company to Amey Mowry Reinmund, 6 August 1908, Grantee Index, Individuals, 1714-1962, Book 700, p. 413-15, Bergen County Courthouse, Hackensack, N.J.; see photos and floor plan of "Residence of Mr. B. F. Reinmund, Englewood, N.J. Designed by Davis, McGrath & Kiessling," American Architect 98 (26 October 1910).

⁴⁷Although Sinclair wrote in Love's Pilgrimage that appendicitis often was a euphemism for abortion, Leon Harris believes Meta underwent two life-threatening operations in summer 1907. Harris, Upton Sinclair, 99-100. In Love's Progress, Corydon has an abortion because she no longer wants Thrysis's child after his affair with Hildegarde Vance. Sinclair, Love's Progress--Early Draft, p. 381, Sinclair Papers.

⁴⁸Sinclair, Autobiography, 137.

winter. Sinclair wanted to apply the cooperative methods attempted at Englewood on a much smaller scale.⁴⁹ He paid for the families' traveling and living expenses, with Williams promising to pay him back from future earnings.⁵⁰

The Bermuda group included Upton, Meta, and David Sinclair; Michael, Peggy, Margaret, and Philip Williams; two governesses; a secretary; and Minnie Campbell, the Irish maid who had caused a scandal in the newspapers by dancing with Professor Montague at Helicon. The two wives prepared the meals, which consisted primarily of fruits, vegetables, nuts, and occasionally eggs. Everyone lived together in a large house with rose gardens and a tennis court, located on an isolated bay. Meta invited Helicon colonist John-Armistead Collier to join them, although he decided not to go.⁵¹

During their stay, Sinclair wrote Millenium and Williams wrote about their diet and briefly outlined their

⁴⁹Upton Sinclair and Michael Williams, Good Health and How We Won It (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Co., 1909), 404.

⁵⁰Sinclair, Autobiography, 141.

⁵¹The decision to invite Collier was apparently one of great soul searching for Upton, who was hurt by Meta's relationship with the poet. He wrote that the "painful memories of my unhappiness at Helicon Hall" would have to be resolved before Collier could visit. Upton Sinclair to John-Armistead Collier, 7 April 1908, Collier Collection.

living arrangements in Good Health and How We Won It (1909).⁵² The book's numerous photographs show the families playing on the beach in an attempt to demonstrate how well the children were doing with their new diet and lifestyle. Despite this apparent idyllic existence, the sojourn ended bitterly when, according to Sinclair, Williams pocketed the entire advance he received for Good Health during negotiations in New York. Sinclair was forced to borrow money to return to the United States. The experience ended their friendship and engendered a longlasting public feud. It also marked the last time Sinclair actually organized his own communal experiment, large or small, although he wrote several colony proposals during the next two years.

While Sinclair continued to champion the cooperative ideal and Helicon Home Colony's success with children, he soon discovered that the experiment remained a scandalous failure to many who remembered the unfavorable news stories that surrounded its existence and demise. O. Henry considered colony recognition great enough to casually mention it in his writings. In his 1908 short story "What You Want," a young man, convinced that an older character is trying to swindle him, cautions,

⁵²The book was written by Williams, with Sinclair contributing only his name and the introduction. Harris, Upton Sinclair, 111. Sinclair never reprinted the book and does not identify it by name in his Autobiography, "having changed my ideas to some extent" (142).

You can't work off any fountain pens, gold spectacles you found on the street, or trust company certificate house clearings on me. Say, do I look like I'd climb down one of them missing fire-escapes at Helicon Hall?⁵³

In 1914 Sinclair found himself once again defending the colony against free love charges. He had traveled to Tarrytown, New York, the hometown of John D. Rockefeller Jr., to campaign against the imprisonment there of radicals protesting the Ludlow, Colorado massacre.⁵⁴ The Tarrytown News reported that Helicon Home Colony had been raided by police for immoral practices, a charge reprinted by other newspapers. Sinclair had the newspaper editors arrested for criminal libel and asked several Helicon Home Colony residents to testify in his behalf. When his witnesses were unable to attend the trial due to illness and personal business, the defense attorney refused to agree to a postponement, and Sinclair was forced to drop the criminal case. He pressed civil charges and received a front-page retraction from the News, which he claimed was not picked up

⁵³O. Henry, "What You Want," American Magazine 66 (September 1908): 435; reprinted in Strictly Business; More Stories of the Four Million (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1910), 302-10.

⁵⁴On April 20, 1914 twenty-four people were killed when the Colorado militia fired on and burned down the tent colony of striking coal miners and their families. The general public blamed the Rockefeller family for the violence as they owned forty percent of the stock of Colorado Fuel and Iron Company, the largest employer. H. D. Gitelman, Legacy of the Ludlow Massacre: A Chapter in American Industrial Relations (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1988), 1-4.

by the newspapers that had reprinted the original libelous story.⁵⁵

In 1919 the movie industry apparently thought Helicon Home Colony was well enough known to refer to it in promotions for a film about a socialist colony. Based on Thomas Dixon's 1909 novel Comrades, Shattered Dreams (retitled Bolshevism on Trial) follows wealthy Norman Worth's attempt to establish a colony on an island off California. Ventura, as the colony is called in the novel, quickly deteriorates when a Bolshevik agitator encourages colonists to refuse menial jobs and strike for higher wages. The colonists ultimately are rescued from the agitator's tyrannical takeover by soldiers sent by Worth's father, who had informants living in the colony. A Moving Picture World article advised theater owners to promote the film by hiring soldiers to tear down red flags they had hung around town. The article recommended that letters criticizing socialism be placed well in advance in local newspapers:

Work gradually to the contention that Socialism will not be possible in this or the succeeding generation because people are not yet prepared for liberty such as Socialism aims at. Later work in allusion to the feature of the limited experiment made by Upton Sinclair some years ago at Halycon [sic] Hall, where the community idea fell apart because all wanted to live without working.⁵⁶

⁵⁵Sinclair, Brass Check, 71-72.

⁵⁶"Bolshevik Play Has Big Points," Moving Picture World, 19 April 1919, p. 424. While it was not unusual for Helicon to be misspelled as Halycon or Halcyon, there was a utopian community called Halcyon Colony located near Pismo

Dixon's novel and the film differ from Helicon Home Colony in several fundamental respects. For example, while Ventura required colonists to live at the isolated colony for five years, Helicon Home Colony was within easy commuting distance from New York City, and colonists could come and go as they chose. The socialist Ventura attracted fifteen hundred residents, while the nonpolitical Englewood colony was home to less than seventy at one time. Additionally, Helicon Home Colony residents pursued their own livelihoods and were not required to work for the colony as were the Ventura colonists.⁵⁷

Inaccurate reports of Helicon Hall plagued Sinclair during his life and continue today. Journalists and historians have labeled Helicon a socialist colony because of Sinclair's own political beliefs, despite his and other socialists' denial of any affiliation. At the same time, Mark Sullivan reports in Our Times (1926) that Sinclair was offended by his description of the colony as a "co-operative

Beach in California from 1903 to approximately 1914, which produced Halcyon Art Pottery. Leslie Greene Bowman, American Arts & Crafts: Virtue in Design (Los Angeles: Los Angeles County Museum of Art, 1990), 186. Harry Kemp calls the Englewood colony Halcyon Hall in his autobiographical novel More Miles (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), 87.

⁵⁷For a discussion of the film, see Kevin Brownlow, Behind the Mask of Innocence (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990), 443-45. Brownlow mistakenly identifies Helicon Home Colony as a socialist operation but maintains that the filmmakers viewed it as the film's inspiration. Kevin Brownlow to author, 19 September 1991. No reviews of Comrades could be located that mention any connection between the novel and Helicon Home Colony.

boarding house," explaining that the residents "employed professional people to do the housework; the difference was that we did not treat them as social inferiors."⁵⁸ Even Charlotte Perkins Gilman, whose theories had informed Sinclair's colony prospectus, disavowed any connection with Helicon's arrangements. Recalling bitter childhood memories of cooperative housekeeping, Gilman reiterated her call for professional housekeepers and maintained that Sinclair "attributed [Helicon Hall] to my teachings, without the least justification."⁵⁹ Clearly Sinclair did understand her emphasis on scientifically-trained personnel, suggesting she misunderstood his definition of "cooperative distribution." At the same time, Gilman must have strongly disapproved of the colony mothers' involvement with Helicon's young charges. Alfred Kazin and Robert Spiller both incorrectly aligned Helicon Home Colony with Henry

⁵⁸Mark Sullivan, Our Times, the United States, 1900-1925 (1926; New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), vol. 2, America Finds Itself, 480.

⁵⁹Charlotte Perkins Gilman, The Living of Charlotte Perkins Gilman; An Autobiography (1935; Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 25-26. It is interesting to compare the colony proposal with an article Gilman wrote a week earlier on vacation homes. She suggested that families build separate cottages on jointly-purchased woodland and share the costs and services of cooks, maids, and nursemaids. "Except for the co-operative feature," she wrote, "the thing is done all over our country . . . in transient summer homes" ("A Sensible Vacation," Independent 60 [7 June 1906]: 1342).

George's single-tax theory.⁶⁰

While the colony's reputation suffered after its demise, Sinclair's personal life also deteriorated, as he sought relief from a troubled marriage and continued to experiment with domestic arrangements. Only with his marriage to Mary Craig Kimbrough in 1913 did he finally settle down to a more traditional familial lifestyle--albeit one where his wife completely managed his domestic and business affairs--leaving him free at last to pursue his creative muses.

⁶⁰Alfred Kazin, On Native Grounds: An Interpretation of Modern American Prose Literature (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1942), 117; Robert E. Spiller and others, eds., Literary History of the United States (4th ed., rev., New York: Macmillan, 1974), 978.

CHAPTER FIVE

HELICON HOME COLONY'S PLACE IN COMMUNITARIAN HISTORY

"Our greatest success was with the children," Upton Sinclair responded, whenever the subject of Helicon Home Colony was raised in the years following its demise. While child care was certainly a priority issue for the colonists, it was only one facet of the troublesome domestic economy they had hoped to untangle. Early on, Sinclair claimed to have solved the servant problem, which he had identified as the colony's *raison d'être* in his initial proposal. A few months later he again was lamenting the difficulty in finding good help--hiring college students and part-time writers had not proven the answer to their prayers. The not-so trivial concerns of who scrubs the pots and irons the clothes were not satisfied until the colony hired amenable and experienced servants. With funds in short supply, the colony also forsook the expertise of trained nurses and kindergarten teachers, compromising by paying mothers and providing relief from round-the-clock mothering through group care.

For nearly six months Helicon Home Colony challenged the assumptions of middle-class life, striving for new ways to satisfy both individual goals and family responsibilities. For the most part, colony recollections transcend petty disagreements and rumors of financial problems, focusing instead on personal fulfillment and the happy camaraderie engendered by working toward a common purpose. Quite simply, Helicon Hall residents enjoyed their time together and considered it a success.

At the same time, colonists were aware of the confusion and criticism created by their experiment in "cooperative distribution." A week after the colony fire, stockholder Edwin Bjorkman reported that members recently had debated changing the group's name to Helicon Home Club, as residents "were tired of explaining that they were not repeating . . . Brook Farm."¹ Love's Progress, Upton Sinclair's unpublished autobiographical novel, echoes this dilemma in its description of the theater production that substitutes for Helicon Hall. By labeling "The Mother" a proletarian opera, "it became a document in the class-war, and they [critics, reporters] had to disapprove it, whether they would or no."² Ultimately, the colonists voted to

¹Edwin A. Bjorkman, "Predecessors of Helicon Hall," New York Evening Post, 23 March 1907, Sat. supp., p. 1.

²Upton Sinclair, Love's Progress--Early Draft, p. 379, Upton Sinclair Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Papers). Lilly Library houses both the Sinclair Papers, which include

persevere as Helicon Home Colony, despite the "connection in the American mind with a long series of communistic, altruistic, and cooperative experiments."³

Describing themselves as "a home club, or a hotel which is owned by its guests and run by them for their own benefit," the Helicon colonists rejected the organization of nineteenth-century colonies but retained their vision of a better life possible through communal activity.⁴ Their experiment is part of the rich tradition of communitarianism in the United States, itself reflective of the search for the ideal society.

As communal scholar Robert S. Fogarty has observed, these efforts did not appear out of thin air, but "grew organically from a utopian tradition that was deeply rooted in American history."⁵ Roughly divided between secular and religious endeavors, these groups share certain characteristics, regardless of time period, ideology, or purpose. At the same time, Robert Walker's observation that "it is hard to imagine any social form more idiosyncratic

his personal papers, and the Sinclair Collection, which includes printed works.

³Bjorkman, "Predecessors of Helicon Hall."

⁴Helicon Home Colony, illustrated brochure, January 1907, Upton Sinclair Collection, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Collection).

⁵Robert S. Fogarty, All Things New: American Communes and Utopian Movements, 1860-1914 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 8.

than the commune" is clearly true.⁶ Helicon Home Colony proves the accuracy of both statements.

Helicon also exemplifies the perseverance of the communal impulse in the United States. Until the late 1960s and early 1970s, most historians--including those who focused on communal societies--had concluded that, with a few notable exceptions, the American communitarian movement had ended with the Civil War, only to resurface in the 1960s. Since that time scholars have uncovered communal activity extending from Reconstruction into the early twentieth century and beyond.

Issues fundamental to the Helicon Hall colonists are the same faced by communitarians past and present. Why is the colony being established? Who will make the rules and decisions? What are the financial arrangements? Additionally, communal living affects not only the physical aspects of domestic space but the role of women, the relationship of husband and wife, the treatment of children, and the basic questions of who earns a living and who takes care of the home.

At Helicon Hall, the focus was on transferring the household responsibilities from family members to paid experts so that everyone--fathers, mothers, and children (and the employees themselves)--could lead better lives.

⁶Robert H. Walker, The Reform Spirit in America: A Documentation of the Pattern of Reform in the American Republic (New York: G. P. Putnam's, 1976), 123.

Taking their cue from the writings of Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the colonists believed the efficiencies and savings realized by cooperative service would allow them to enjoy luxuries beyond their individual means and, at the same time, be secure in the knowledge that children and home were well-attended. In this way they would realize their goal of solving "problems in Domestic Economy."⁷

Upton Sinclair advocated cooperative distribution as the solution to the financial problems he perceived among middle class families and as the foundation of his proposed colony. His terminology confused and alienated outsiders who associated Helicon Hall with the communal cooperatives of the past. Americans were familiar with groups whose members labored together for sustenance, profit, or both. They knew that communalists often shared domestic chores, as well as farm or factory work. Collective labor was a facet of the pure communism of the Shakers, the joint stock membership of the Fourierists, and the farming cooperatives of the Midwest.

Robert Fogarty divides communal activities into three categories based on leadership style and membership interest: charismatic perfectionists, political pragmatists, and cooperative colonizers. Charismatic perfectionists focus on personal and religious development and believe that

⁷The Helicon Home Colony Constitution, n.d., Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

a perfect community is possible, given the personal sanctity of the members or leader. Typical of this category are the Shakers, who believed that the Second Coming had occurred with the group's formation and that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Political pragmatists--single taxers, Christian socialists, anarchists--are more interested in "seeking an arena within which to test their principles and publicize their ideals."⁸

Cooperative colonizers hoped "by collectively assuming responsibility for [their] financial future" to "improve both their moral and economic conditions."⁹ Fogarty places Helicon Home Colony in this category. Helicon residents clearly did hope to better themselves economically; however, they made no specific statements on how they would improve themselves morally (although the benefits to the individual, community, nation, and world are explicit in Gilman's writings). It also is important to stress that Helicon did not follow the cooperative tradition of sharing household responsibilities or working collectively for a jointly-owned farm or manufacturing concern, but instead offered domestic services on a cooperative basis (what Sinclair called "cooperative distribution"). Reporters and others ignored this distinction--clarified by Sinclair in magazine articles

⁸Fogarty, All Things New, 18. See also pages 16-17 and idem, Dictionary of American Communal and Utopian History (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1980), xx-xxi.

⁹Fogarty, All Things New, 16.

and colony brochures--and associated Helicon with the well-known communal and cooperative ventures of the past century.

Large-scale promotion of the cooperative ideal in the United States began in the 1820s with the writings of Englishman Robert Owen. Having successfully built a profitable model village at his New Lanark, Scotland cotton mills, he purchased the Rappites' old property at Harmony, Indiana to prove the social benefits of cooperation combined with scientific principles. In 1825, more than eight hundred participants joined Owen's experiment at New Harmony, many attracted to its promised educational and cultural activities. They worked the farm and textile mills, receiving equal credit for their labors. Owen's long absences, combined with colonists more interested in his philanthropy than in working, resulted in the colony's dissolution in 1827.¹⁰

While the New Harmony Gazette insisted "Individuality Detracts Largely from the Sum of Human Happiness," the next generation of cooperative colonies emphasized the importance of individuality for their success.¹¹ Nevertheless, Owenism laid the groundwork for Fourierism, the communitarian philosophy most often linked with Helicon Home

¹⁰Mark Holloway, Heavens on Earth: Utopian Communities in America, 1680-1880, 2d ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 111.

¹¹Quoted in Edward K. Spann, Brotherly Tomorrows: Movements for a Cooperative Society in America, 1820-1920 (New York: Columbia University Press, 1989), 31.

Colony's goals and organization. Writer Albert Brisbane, with the support of New York Tribune editor Horace Greeley, promoted a scaled-down version of Frenchman Charles Fourier's social system in the United States beginning in the late 1830s (Fourier died in 1837).¹² Brisbane deleted the more capricious aspects of Fourier's theories and emphasized an orderly cooperative system of shared living, working, and playing. With the aid of joint stock ownership and "attractive labor," the phalanxes--as Fourier communities were called--pledged to eliminate class warfare and bring members together in communal harmony. After providing a basic subsistence for members, the phalanx's profits were divided on the basis of each individual's investment, talents, and effort.

The Fourierist guarantee of immediate financial security proved enticing, with the result that dozens of phalanxes were established between 1842 and 1845. Well-known was Brook Farm in Massachusetts, originally established in 1841 as a Transcendentalist colony. Among its goals was the development of each person's intellectual and physical capacities. The members formed a joint stock company, with farm ownership based on what each had contributed. In late 1843 they became interested in the

¹²For more information on Fourierism see Holloway, Heavens on Earth and Carl J. Guarneri, The Utopian Alternative: Fourierism in Nineteenth-Century America (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1991).

Fourierist labor system and began reorganizing Brook Farm as a phalanx. Dissension impaired the colony, which broke up with the destruction by fire of its partially-completed phalanstery (main building) in 1846.

The North American Phalanx, established in Red Bank, New Jersey in 1843, became the best known Fourier colony, and lasted until 1854 when it was destroyed by fire. Colonists toiled in workshops and on the six-hundred-acre farm and paid for lodging, board, and other expenses from their labor credits. Although their wages were not competitive, they valued the accommodations and environment, educational activities, and provisions for illness and old age.¹³

Colonies established in New Jersey, Minnesota, Ohio, Missouri, and Colorado in the 1860s and 1870s conform to Fogarty's cooperative colonizers model. By sharing land, resources, and labor, members hoped to create a better life, responsive to both individual and group needs. Among these groups were the German Colonization Colony of Colfax (1870), which had persuaded German factory workers in Chicago to attempt farming in Colorado, and Silkville, a Fourierist community established outside Ottawa, Kansas in 1869. Silkville founders started a cooperative silkworm farm and recruited most of the members from the silkraising regions of France. Although the colony prospered in the late 1870s,

¹³Spann, Brotherly Tomorrows, 111.

receiving high praise for its display at the Philadelphia Centennial Exhibition, it ultimately failed, unable to compete with foreign markets or to attract workers committed to Fourier ideals.

The last quarter of the nineteenth century saw additional cooperative efforts, many promoting the idealism of Laurence Gronlund's 1884 The Cooperative Commonwealth In Its Outlines; An Exposition of Modern Socialism, which advocated the socialization of all forms of production, and Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward (1888), which envisioned a nationalized society. Cooperative colonies held great interest for the labor movement, when producer cooperatives were viewed as an alternative to violent strikes.¹⁴ The Kaweah Co-operative Colony is typical.¹⁵ In 1886 California labor leaders Burnette G. Haskell and James J. Martin brought together a group interested in establishing a cooperative lumber business and model community. Many were members of the San Francisco branch of the Marxist International Workingmen's Association. For more than four years the colonists labored to build an eighteen-mile road connecting their timber lands with the main county highway leading to the San Joaquin Valley. The colony and its joint stock company collapsed in 1891 when Congress claimed the

¹⁴Fogarty, All Things New, 144-45; Spann, Brotherly Tomorrows, 212-23.

¹⁵Fogarty groups Kaweah with the political pragmatists for its advocacy of Gronlund.

property for the Sequoia National Park, maintaining that the colonists had never rightfully owned the land. As the cavalry arrived to ensure that no trees were cut, colonists disbanded amidst disagreements among themselves and the larger reform community about their goals and accomplishments.¹⁶

Also striving to create the cooperative commonwealth was the Ruskin Co-Operative Association of Tennessee, named after English social theorist John Ruskin. Editor/publisher Julius A. Wayland initiated the colony by offering charter memberships to Coming Nation subscribers. In 1894 he relocated his publishing operations from Indiana to one thousand acres in Tennessee. By 1897 two hundred and fifty people had joined the colony, with families paying \$500 each in exchange for one share of stock. Members worked ten-hour days in the printing plant, machine shops, and communal laundry and dining room, earning certificates to exchange for food and housing. Internal dissension destroyed the colony in 1899.¹⁷

Cooperative efforts were not limited to secular

¹⁶For more information on Kaweah, see Paul Kagan, New World Utopias: A Photographic History of the Search for Community (New York: Penguin Books, 1975); Robert Hine, California's Utopian Colonies (1953; reprint, Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

¹⁷For more information, see John Egerton, Visions of Utopia: Nashoba, Rugby, Ruskin, and the "New Communities" in Tennessee's Past (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1977).

experiments. From 1896 to 1900 the Christian Commonwealth Colony of Muscogee County, Georgia advocated Christian socialism through its cooperative farm, publishing house, and manufacture of Turkish towels. It published the influential Social Gospel and promoted equal rights and privileges amidst a cultured, democratic setting. Similarly, the Straight Edge Industrial Settlement, established in 1899 in New York City, took the Golden Rule as its constitution and attempted to apply "the teachings of Jesus to business and society." The settlement established such cooperative industries as a bakery, restaurant, pure-food laboratory, print shop, and laundry.¹⁸ Communal living also may have been part of its activities prior to 1906. Financial difficulties weakened the settlement by 1918, although founders Wilbur and Ella Copeland sought to reestablish their efforts in the 1920s and 1930s. Both the Potters and the Eberleins were associated with Straight Edge before moving to Helicon Home Colony.

Ruskin, Kaweah, and the Owenite and Fourier experiments are typical of the cooperative colonies established in the nineteenth century. Unquestionably, their purpose and labor structure differed markedly from Helicon's organization. With the exception of paid servants and mother/caretakers,

¹⁸See Wilbur F. Copeland, "The Straight Edge Industrial Settlement," in The New Encyclopedia of Social Reform, ed. William Dwight Porter Bliss and Rudolph M. Bender (New York: Funk & Wagnalls, 1910; New York: Arno Press and New York Times, 1976), 1164.

the Helicon members did not form the colony's work force but instead held jobs independent of its organization. While other colonies did hire nonmembers to perform menial tasks or help with the workload--such arrangements can be found at the North American Phalanx and various Shaker communities--none gave explicit attention to "the servant problem" in their stated purposes.

As much as Helicon differed from the other "cooperative colonizers" in its orientation, it mirrored previous efforts in its architectural configuration. Dolores Hayden's study of utopian communities detected an aversion to the isolated, individual home, regardless of whether colonists grouped model homes in clusters or designed several small or one large collective dwelling.¹⁹ Helicon Home Colony's single communal residence was not unique. Essential to Fourier's theories were the phalansteries--buildings that accommodated all aspects of lives of their 1,620 occupants (a number based on one male and one female of each of his 810 basic character types). He predicted a period of harmony on Earth in several thousand years, when more than two million of these structures would cover the earth, disease would be eradicated, and humans would grow tails with eyes. Brook Farm's phalanstery (or unitary dwelling) was typical and, at least in its basic components, resembled Helicon Hall. The

¹⁹Dolores Hayden, Seven American Utopias: The Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975 (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1976), 24.

first story included the kitchen, communal dining room, and large lecture hall. Second and third stories housed families in private sleeping room/parlor suites, and the attic contained small rooms and dormitories for single residents.²⁰ At Raritan Bay Union, Fourierists could live in the phalanstery or in individual kitchenless homes.

Despite Fourier's insistence that his ideal community required six thousand acres and 1,620 residents, Americans attempted to realize his goals through more modest cooperative stores and urban communes. The latter resembled large cooperative boardinghouses and, consequently, their organization was more similar to Helicon than was that of the larger phalanxes. In 1858 twenty people, including feminist Marie Stevens [Howland] and poet Edmund Clarence Stedman, established Unitary Household in New York City. The residents rented private suites and jointly supported the shared living spaces, including a dining room and nursery. In existence until 1860, the group expanded to one hundred people in four attached row houses and employed a manager and staff to handle domestic chores.²¹

Communitarian history provides numerous other examples of how architecture complemented a group's philosophy. Reflective of their belief in the bisexuality of God, the celibate Shakers built austere dwellings that segregated the

²⁰Guarneri, Utopian Alternative, 185.

²¹Ibid, 185.

sexes for most activities. Although men and women ate together, a rigid code of silence was enforced, contrasting sharply with the noisy camaraderie of Helicon meals. Another community of perfectionists, the Oneida Association of New York, designed the communal Mansion House to accommodate "complex marriage," which challenged monogamy in its assertion that all adult females at Oneida were married to all adult males and vice versa. The Mansion House also featured a library, parlors, and community dining hall.

Helicon Home Colony's plan for kitchenless cottages serviced by a cooperative dining room also was not unusual. The Amana Society Inspirationists established seven communistic farming villages from 1855 to 1862, each composed of separate homes for two to four families and kitchen-houses that fed thirty to fifty families. Kaweah colonists constructed individual homes and a common dining hall, although some preferred to cook their own meals. Along with well-cared-for individual homes, Ruskin featured a communal dining room and laundry and boasted the Great Cave, a natural wonder large enough to accommodate a garden, baseball field, and various industries.

As appropriate as it is to compare Helicon Home Colony with communal efforts, it also must be seen in light of the domestic experiments that characterized the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and instituted activities analogous to Helicon's stated purpose. Dolores Hayden has

coined the label "material feminists" to denote the theorists who "identif[ied] the economic exploitation of women's domestic labor by men as the most basic cause of women's inequality . . . and dared to define a 'grand domestic revolution' in women's material conditions."²²

Among the earliest material feminists was Melusina Fay Peirce, who advised women to collectively perform such domestic tasks as laundry, cooking, and sewing and charge their husbands for these services; with their success she hoped to see the creation of kitchenless homes. During 1870 and 1871, wives of Harvard University professors ran the Cambridge Cooperative Housekeeping Society, which ultimately failed, according to Peirce, because it had not begun with a cooperative store as its economic base.²³

Projects ranging from collective kitchens to garden cities reflected Charlotte Perkins Gilman's critique of the isolated home--the same theories that inspired the Sinclairs and Helicon Home Colony.²⁴ By the turn of the century, a

²²Dolores Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1981), 3.

²³Melusina Fay Peirce, Co-operative Housekeeping; How Not to Do It and How to Do It. A Study in Sociology (Boston: J. R. Osgood & Co., 1884).

²⁴One such undertaking was the Feminist Alliance's Feminist Apartment House, planned for Greenwich Village in 1914, which appears to follow Gilman's design for kitchenless apartments more closely than other endeavors. Although architectural plans for the twelve-story building--complete with Gilmanesque rooftop nursery--were readied and a site chosen, the project ultimately collapsed from

few middle-class families had experimented with cooperative dining and housecleaning while addressing the servant question and budgetary concerns. Dolores Hayden identified thirty-three neighborhood dining clubs and cooked food delivery services--lasting from six months to thirty-three years--established between 1884 and 1925.

In addition, Helicon Hall's arrangements bore a strong resemblance to middle- and upper-class apartment houses of the late nineteenth century. The term "apartment house" was sometimes used in the 1880s to describe a building with private bedroom/sitting room suites and communal kitchens, laundries, and dining rooms.²⁵ One of the earliest was the Grosvenor Apartments, which opened in New York City in 1871; residents lived in kitchenless suites and had their own maid provided by the management. They could eat in the public dining room or have their meals served in their apartments. While these apartment-hotels were initially praised, they fell out of favor by the end of the 1800s with the renewed attention to "conventional domesticity."²⁶ A lower-class stigma attached to these experiments; as noted by Hayden, "For every apartment hotel built for the affluent in this

disagreements between older investors and younger radical supporters over issues related to child care. Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution, 197-202.

²⁵Ibid, 318.

²⁶Gwendolyn Wright, Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America (New York: Pantheon Books, 1981), 138.

era with collective kitchens, laundries, and other facilities, there were fifty tenements crowded with immigrant workers living in kitchenless apartments from need rather than from choice."²⁷

Similarities also can be seen between Helicon and the concurrent Garden City Movement of Ebenezer Howard in England. In Garden Cities of To-morrow (1902), Howard had described a town/country amalgam that would highlight the advantages of each locale and cancel the other's disadvantages. This new environment would offer natural beauty, social opportunity, low rents, and high wages. In 1907 Howard opened the Letchworth Cooperative Houses to address the "domestic service problem" of those with limited incomes, who became shareholders in the operation. On property located forty-two minutes from London by train, he arranged four types of attached homes--ranging from sleeping rooms to three-bedroom apartments--on three sides of a square. The fourth side consisted of a kitchen, dining room, and servant quarters; meals were delivered for an extra charge. The grounds included public and private gardens.²⁸ Despite some early interest in the garden city movement in the United States, similar efforts were not attempted until the Regional Planning Council's design of

²⁷Hayden, Grand Domestic Revolution, 153.

²⁸Ebenezer Howard, Garden Cities of To-morrow (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1902) and "Letchworth Cooperative Houses," The Garden City 2 (October 1907): 436-8.

Radburn, New Jersey in 1928.²⁹

In addressing the "domestic economy" problem, Helicon Home Colony's efforts were not completely removed from the solutions of their contemporaries. Ultimately, however, the noncommunal efforts failed to match either the scope of activities or the commitment undertaken by the Helicon colonists. The courage and self-confidence demonstrated by the deceptively-simple act of coming together in a separate place cannot be equaled by those who experimented with cooperative laundries and food delivery services but maintained their separate, traditional households. While both challenged the status quo, it was Helicon Hall's mission, however imperfectly realized, that set it apart from the more modest endeavors.

Despite an emphasis on economic, and sometimes political, equality, the communitarians' reorganization of domestic space often did not challenge traditional male-female roles nor provide relief from the workloads that characterized the isolated home. Some colonies, notably New Harmony, Oneida, and the Shaker communities, allowed women to pursue nontraditional labor but maintained their conventional responsibilities. A woman could work a full day in an Owenite community's various industries, then spend her free time caring for her own family's food, clothes, and

²⁹Robert H. Walker, Reform in America: The Continuing Frontier (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1985), 148.

home. New Harmony's promise of equality for women proved attractive but unrealized.³⁰ Similarly, Jeanette and Robert Lauer refer to women at Oneida and the Shaker communities as "the nineteenth century version of today's superwoman" because of their dual responsibilities in and outside the home.³¹ In comparison, the women at Helicon did find freedom to pursue their own interests, released from the more mundane aspects of housekeeping. They might choose to participate in cooking or child care (and receive wages for their work) but were not forced to take on these jobs in addition to their own careers and activities.

Whether they pursued their own professions or cared for the children, Helicon women were active in colony administration. They voted, kept the books, and served on committees and the board. The extension of political rights to women is not unique among communitarian groups, many of which promoted women suffrage decades before it became law. Women voted at colonies as disparate as Brook Farm, New Harmony, the Shaker communities, and Kaweah.³²

Helicon also did not challenge the conventional family unit. Husbands and wives had private bedrooms or suites,

³⁰Carol A. Kolmerten, Women in Utopia: The Ideology of Gender in the American Owenite Communities (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 68.

³¹Jeanette C. Lauer and Robert H. Lauer, "Sex Roles in Nineteenth-Century American Communal Societies," Communal Societies (Fall 1983): 23.

³²Ibid.

while most children stayed in the dormitory. Neither free love nor group marriage were part of the Helicon Hall philosophy. The Sinclairs' probable affairs do not disclose the colonists' actual disregard for monogamy but rather reveal the private relations of the people involved. Sexuality and familial arrangements have been an important component of communitarian experiments. Shaker celibacy, Oneida complex marriage, and Mormon polygamy questioned the traditional bonds of marriage within the context of their beliefs. Some colonies, such as the Amana Inspirationists, advocated celibacy but did not require it. Anarchist colonies emphasized freedom of choice, with sexual autonomy a natural component of their philosophy. Generally ignoring Fourier's attention to "passional attractions"--varied sexual relationships that included heterosexuality, homosexuality, and incest--American Fourierists emphasized how individual families were strengthened by their integration into the extended phalanx family. The dozen members of the Spirit Fruit Society followed the teachings of the leader Jacob L. Beilhart, who combined Christianity, theosophy, and the theories of sexual libertarian Edward Carpenter and lived together on farms in Ohio, Illinois, and California from 1899 to 1929. Helicon colonist John-Armistead Collier became a member of April Farm, a communistic free-love colony that continually evoked the wrath of Massachusetts law officers in the 1920s.

The communitarian challenge of mainstream views--in areas as diverse as economics, marital relations, religion, and diet--often necessitated the instruction of both children and adults. In 1936 Ralph Albertson determined that education was the primary interest in the well-known religious and secular colonies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.³³ Communitarians recognized the benefits of education for instilling beliefs and values, controlling opinions, and safeguarding their way of life.³⁴ The Hutterites, for example, radical Anabaptists who immigrated to the United States from the Ukraine in the 1870s, begin religious indoctrination early in order to ensure the uniformity necessary in the rural, secluded colonies that eschew most modern conveniences.

Along with education, communards have integrated child care into their policies and procedures, by necessity if not by choice. By assuming responsibility for children's supervision, colonies enabled both parents to participate fully in extrafamilial life--whether within or outside the colony structure. Even those who left children to the attention of their own parents made a statement on how they

³³Ralph Albertson, A Survey of Mutualistic Communities in America (Journal of History and Politics, 1936; New York: AMS Press, 1973), 425.

³⁴Donald E. Pitzer, "Patterns of Education in American Communal Society," in Communal Life: An International Perspective, ed. Yosef Gorni, Yaacov Oved, and Idit Paz (Rutgers, N.J.: Transaction Books, 1987), 275.

viewed children and their place in the colony scheme.

Communitarians often implemented "the most progressive contemporary educational theories and methods," although their teaching methods became outdated if they did not change with the times.³⁵ This was true with both the Shakers and the Hutterites, initially leaders in educational experimentation. The Shakers, who took in orphans and raised members' children, promoted the monitorial system and the education of both boys and girls.

Robert Owen also was an educational innovator. He pledged to build the "best Library & the best School in the United States" at New Harmony, bringing respected educational and scientific leaders to Indiana.³⁶ His three-tiered, coeducational system combined infant care, traditional schooling augmented by industrial and domestic education, and adult classes. Owen pioneered Pestalozzian methods but was unable to carry through on his promise of infant care and education beginning at age two.³⁷

Brook Farm's children department preceded the first Froebel kindergarten, established in the United States in 1837. In theory, if not always in practice, Fourier

³⁵Ibid., 276.

³⁶Quoted in Arthur Eugene Bestor, Jr., Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian and Owenite Phases of Communitarian Socialism in America, 1663-1829 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1950), 133.

³⁷Kolmerten, Women in Utopia, 82; Pitzer, "Patterns of Education," 276.

emphasized activities for children's developmental stages, trusted their own initiative in choosing learning experiences, and placed them in miniature workshops, all with "the goal . . . the development of the 'social virtues' of justice, truth, and a sense of the unity or solidarity of the whole community."³⁸

Oneida also adapted the Froebelian method as a complement to its comprehensive children's program. At nine months infants left their mothers' care, spending the day at the Children's House, a wing of the Mansion House. Between eighteen months and three years they moved away from their parents. For the next ten years they lived in the Children's House under the supervision of both women and men, attending the community school, working part time, and participating in their own nightly religious study.

Children were the focal point of two spiritualist colonies in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. John B. Newbrough founded Shalam, a colony for orphans, drawing inspiration from the Oahspe, a spiritualist bible he claimed to have produced through automatic writing. Gathering infants from New Orleans, Chicago, Kansas City, and Philadelphia, Newbrough and his followers established Shalam in New Mexico in 1884. The colony lasted seventeen years, providing a Faithist education that combined

³⁸See "Education in Harmony," in Jonathan Beecher, Charles Fourier: The Visionary and His World (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 259-73.

intellectual and spiritual growth with vocational training.³⁹ At Point Loma, founded by Theosophist Katherine Tingley in 1896, "lotus buds"--as the children were called--entered the educational system when only a few months old. Moving from a communal nursery, to dormitories, to small cottages, the children progressed from seeing their parents once a day to once a week. Teachers combined short concentrated lessons, featuring an emphasis on the fine arts, with work in the community garden and industries.

Like many of their predecessors, the Helicon Hall residents strove to create a separate and distinct children's culture amidst the general colony life. However, their activities stemmed from their critique of the isolated home rather than a mission to inculcate particular values or beliefs in colony offspring. Their efforts instead focused on members' need for inexpensive, quality child care. Parents freely chose whether children stayed in their private suites or the communal nursery.

Sinclair boasted of the Helicon children's ability to cooperate and make group decisions; however, as he never explicitly discussed teaching cooperation, the children's actions probably resulted from their imitation of the adults' frequent meetings rather than specific training. Helicon Hall child care lacked the manual arts emphasis of

³⁹See K. D. Stoes, "The Land of Shalam: A Strange Experiment in Child Life," New Mexico Historical Review 33 (January and April 1958): 1-23, 103-27.

Straight Edge's Play-Work School, for example, most likely because the parents themselves were not cooperative producers. Mothers supervised the children's play but did not focus on work skills, although attention to cooperation may have been natural in the communal environment.

Helicon Home Colony's efforts to create a children's environment were remembered by one radical journalist twenty-seven years later in his report on Newllano's Kid Kolony, which he claimed had achieved much more than Sinclair's group.⁴⁰ The Louisiana colony's roots reached back to 1914 when socialist lawyer Job Harriman had established Llano del Rio outside Los Angeles. Harriman reasoned that potential socialists needed to be shown the economic advantages of socialism even when they were suffering the ill-effects of capitalism.⁴¹ By 1917, the colony had attracted eleven hundred people, who worked for the cooperative farm and related industries.⁴² Financial

⁴⁰Bob Brown, Can We Co-Operate? (Staten Island, N.Y.: Roving Eye Press, 1940), 193-94, 202. Brown published his assessment of Newllano after its demise but appears to have written the book in the early 1930s when he lived at the colony for ten months.

⁴¹Knox Mellon, "Job Harriman and Llano del Rio: The Chimerical Quest for a Secular Utopia," Communal Societies 5 (Fall 1985): 194-206.

⁴²Otohiko Okugawa identified probable participation in Llano in Nevada by a former Helicon Home Colony resident; to date, I have been unable to learn who this was. See Otohiko Okugawa, "Intercommunal Relationships Among 19th Century Communal Societies in America," Communal Societies 3 (1983): 68-82.

difficulties and leadership disputes drove Harriman to abandon the Nevada colony and resettle in Louisiana with two hundred settlers in 1918. While mothers and fathers worked in community industries, children spent their days at a separate Kid Kolony, a miniature cooperative colony where they built their own classrooms, grew their own vegetables, and prepared their own meals.⁴³ In 1932 Helicon residents Cora Potter and her son Lloyd worked at the Kid Kolony. By 1938 Newllano was bankrupt.

Sinclair's later writings indicate that children might have participated in manual and domestic arts activities had Helicon not been destroyed. One article, written during the colony's tenure, describes the promised swings and sand piles, as well as "gardens to plant things in, and work shops to make things in," only as examples of how the children will be kept "busy and happy."⁴⁴ As David matured and needed more than simple child care, Sinclair began to consider the educational and moral value (as well as the cost savings) of children growing their own food, cooking their own meals, and cleaning their own clothes and rooms and gave specifics on such activities in his later

⁴³For more information, see Paul K. Conklin, Two Paths to Utopia: The Hutterites and the Llano Colony (1964; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1983).

⁴⁴Upton Sinclair, "The Cooperative Home," Times Magazine 1 (December 1906): 100.

proposals.⁴⁵

Comparisons between Helicon Home Colony and its predecessors demonstrate both its uniqueness and the ways in which it resembled these past efforts. Throughout Helicon's existence, journalists associated the colony with Brook Farm and other Fourier experiments. Their statements belie any understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of these groups and appear to center on two obvious characteristics which challenged the norm: unrelated families living together under one roof and the communal care of children. Little attention is given to the more important difference of cooperative production versus "cooperative distribution." It is not surprising that these comparisons were made, given the notoriety of Brook Farm, if not an accurate understanding of its policies. Even an unidentified Helicon resident--most likely Anna Noyes--disregarded the distinction between various forms of cooperation, claiming the difference between Helicon Hall and Brook Farm was that "the only product that comes from Helicon Hall is grown on a typewriter" not in the ground.⁴⁶ Confusion also may have arisen over the attention of the two groups to domestic service; while Brook Farm colonists eliminated servants by doing the work themselves, Helicon members aspired to hire

⁴⁵Upton Sinclair, "A New Helicon Hall," Independent 67 (9 September 1909): 580-83.

⁴⁶"Helicon Hall Has Taken to Bloomers," New York Times, 2 February 1907, p. 16.

servants who could be considered as equals, if not members.⁴⁷ The difference is more than semantic: the Helicon residents wanted expert housekeepers, not just educated colonists taking on the responsibilities of housekeeping.

Comparisons between Brook Farm and Helicon Home Colony also stemmed from the public's perception of who was attracted to the colonies. Brook Farm's sizable artisan and blue collar membership (67 percent) was often overlooked in the attention given to the group's intellectual elite.⁴⁸ The press accurately took note of Helicon Home Colony's large writer population, but also repeatedly mentioned that it attracted college professors when only two--William Montague and William Noyes--were members.⁴⁹

Of greater interest are the comparisons that can be made between Helicon Home Colony and the single-tax colonies, especially since these proved attractive to Helicon colonists, including Sinclair. Single-taxers promoted the theories of Henry George, author of the classic Progress and Poverty (1879). . . George wrote that the "unearned increment," land values derived from the general

⁴⁷Holloway, Heavens on Earth, 129-30.

⁴⁸Guarneri, Utopian Alternative, 170.

⁴⁹See the Appendix for biographical information on the members. In one press account William Grinnell also is identified as a Teachers College professor; however, no records could be located to confirm this affiliation.

progress of mankind rather than individual improvement, should be taxed and used for government and social services. George's followers founded ten single-tax colonies between 1894 and 1932.

The oldest and largest single-tax community was Fairhope, established in late 1894 in Baldwin County, Alabama. The colonists were interested in setting an example for others to follow at a time when most literate people were familiar with George. The community held the land in common, charging residents rent, based on George's system of taxation. While Fairhope had a definite communal atmosphere enhanced by its community hall, school, and library, among other facilities, it promoted a "system of 'cooperative individualism,' wherein all property except land was privately owned."⁵⁰ Fairhope residents jointly determined how to spend money raised through land rents while individual entrepreneurs handled other community businesses. Cooperative production was considered anathema to individual freedom.

Fairhope became associated with progressive education with the founding of Marietta Johnson's School of Organic Education in 1907. Although Fairhope already had a public school, it provided funds for Johnson, who charged tuition only to northern visitors, including former Helicon Hall

⁵⁰Paul M. Gaston, Women of Fairhope (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1984), ix-x.

children David Sinclair and Lloyd and Amy Potter. Johnson devised a curriculum that nurtured children's creativity and self-confidence and was sensitive to their spiritual, mental, and physical needs and stages. Her efforts became "so tightly [woven] into the fabric of the Fairhope design for a better world that visitors and Fairhoppers alike thought of organic education and the single tax as two complementary expressions of the same urge for freedom and social democracy."⁵¹ The school lasted until 1938.

Cooperative individualism also characterized the other single-tax colonies established in Delaware, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Maine, Maryland, and Mississippi. Two--Arden, Delaware and Free Acres, New Jersey--attracted Helicon colonists and are still in existence. Upton Sinclair and his family lived at Arden from 1910 to 1911, convincing Helicon colleagues Ed and Cora Potter to join them. The Potters eventually bought a home in Arden, and their daughter lives there today. Arden's history reaches back to 1896 when a group of single-taxers attempted to gain political control of the state. With funds from wealthy Georgist Joseph Fels they established a single-tax community outside Wilmington on 162 acres of farm land. Homeowners lease their property from the town trustees, who determine

⁵¹Gaston, Women of Fairhope, 79-80. For additional information on Fairhope, see Paul Edgar Alyea and Blanche R. Alyea, Fairhope, 1894-1954: The Story of a Single-Tax Colony (Birmingham: University of Alabama, 1956).

land rents and supervise their dispersion for county taxes and community activities. Ardenites continue to take pride in both their longstanding tradition of individualism and active community life.⁵²

These attributes are shared by Free Acres, a New Jersey single-tax community that became home to Helicon colonists Ernest and Undena Eberlein and Davida deGuibert in 1919. Helicon Hall visitor Bolton Hall established Free Acres in 1910 near Berkeley Heights. He himself did not live at the community, which "attracted an interesting collection of artists, writers, and actors from New York City [who] came in search of a rugged commune with nature as well as interaction in the unusual group of people who had discovered the place."⁵³ As depicted by longtime resident Laurel Helsing, Free Acres has had its share of characters and cranks along with just-plain folks and talented people from all walks of life, who continue to participate in town meetings as well as social activities.⁵⁴

By 1906, Fairhope and Arden were the only single-tax colonies that had been established and their individual

⁵²For an overview of Arden from an insider's perspective, see The Arden Book: 75th Anniversary, 1900-1975 (Arden, Del.: Community Planning Committee, 1974).

⁵³Martin A. Bierbaum, "Bolton Hall's Free Acres Experiment: The Single Tax and Anarchism in New Jersey," Communal Societies 6 (Fall 1986): 73.

⁵⁴Laurel Helsing, ed., Annotated Anthology of Free Acres Writing, forthcoming.

homes seem in stark contrast to Helicon Hall's communal living. However, it is important to consider Helicon's imminent plans for building separate cottages. Here they would achieve a new separateness impossible in the single building, which had always been considered a temporary expedient. Helicon residents might continue to eat in the communal dining room and socialize in the main hall, but they also would have the added privacy of their own homes. With the exception of the dining room, the features of Helicon's main building are comparable to those of the single-tax colonies' community centers. The importance of community socializing--picnics, theatricals, lectures, and dances--to the single-tax colonies' communal milieu is stressed by Fairhope founder Ernest Gaston in 1903 and Free Acres resident/historian Laurel Hessing in 1992.⁵⁵

The single-tax colonies' focus on "cooperative individualism" also compares favorably with the organization of Helicon Home Colony. Under both systems, residents were responsible for securing their own employment and paying their own expenses but desired the benefits of joint land ownership. Likewise, each insisted on progressive forms of governance, complete with initiative and referendum. Residence necessitated acceptance of the colonies' premises (single tax or cooperative distribution) but did not require

⁵⁵See Ernest B. Gaston, "Fairhope, the Home of the Single Tax and the Referendum," Independent 55 (16 July 1903): 1670-77 and Hessing, Annotated Anthology.

or signify allegiance to either Henry George or Charlotte Perkins Gilman. Female single-taxers and Helicon residents had an equal vote in decision-making and, although few challenged the traditional roles of wife and mother, strongly supported suffrage and women's right to work outside the home.⁵⁶

While communal child care was not a founding principle at the single-tax colonies, informal arrangements were common and carried no stigma of "poor mothering." Progressive education became an integral component of the Fairhope milieu, and a Montessori preschool now occupies space at the Arden community center. Helicon, Arden, and Free Acres shared the less tangible quality of sheltering children in a safe, supportive environment while giving them freedom to explore the delights and vagaries of childhood--no matter how noisy, dirty, or unproductive. The children's paradise described by Sinclair is easily rivaled by the blissful memories of former Free Acreites.

Another similarity between Helicon and the single-tax communities transcends the specifics but instead centers on a more elusive quality they shared: their responsiveness to the new "companionate marriage" that began to emerge at the turn of the century.⁵⁷ As defined by Steven Mintz and

⁵⁶Gaston, Women of Fairhope, 53.

⁵⁷Benjamin Lindsay and Wainright Evans first used the term in The Revolt of Modern Youth (1925), which promoted birth control for married couples, trial marriages, and

Susan Kellogg, the term refers to a family in which spouses are friends and lovers, and parents and children are pals. The marital bond is no longer held together by "sexual repression, patriarchal authority, and hierarchical organization" but by "mutual affection, sexual attraction, and equal rights." Further, the "Victorian ideal of childhood, emphasizing innocence and insulation from the corruptions of the adult world . . . [gave] way to a 'democratic' ideal offering children greater freedom from parental control, greater latitude in expressing their feelings, and increased interaction of adolescents with peers."⁵⁸ These qualities were inherent in Helicon Home Colony, Arden, and Free Acres, as children created their own world, parents treated each other as equals, and families came together to play and learn.

Comparisons also must be made between Helicon Home Colony and more recent communal schemes. The 1960s witnessed a surge in communitarianism, with journalists and scholars numbering such groups in the thousands. Like their nineteenth-century predecessors, these groups shared many of the basic communitarian characteristics with Helicon. While the rural communes are often isolated and economically independent, the urban communes mirror Helicon's emphasis on

uncontested divorces for childless couples.

⁵⁸Steven Mintz and Susan Kellogg, Domestic Revolutions: A Social History of American Family Life (New York: Free Press, 1988), 111-115.

providing the economic and social benefits of group living while maintaining ties with the outside world.

These urban colonists value the financial advantages of living together as much as "the opportunity for forming deep and meaningful human relationships."⁵⁹ Studies of San Francisco area communal homes in 1979 and 1983 reveal other similarities. Members worked and socialized outside the home, often hiring maids to clean the shared areas of their middle- or upper-middle-class residences. Unquestionably part of mainstream America, the urban colonists

seem to be more liberal, interested in issues of ecology, health and peace, and more experimental by nature than most people considered middle class. In other words, it would be hard to find a conservative Republican in a communal house.⁶⁰

Allowing for historical differences, these comments could be made about the Helicon colonists.

In characterizing the communal efforts established between the 1860s and World War I, Robert Fogarty concludes that they "were self-conscious 'enclaves of difference' that sought to establish religious, social and economic institutions that supported island values and, at the same time, tried to create new patterns for emulation and hope."⁶¹ Helicon Home Colony was both mission and retreat.

⁵⁹Patricia Baum, Another Way of Life: The Story of Communal Living (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1973), 14.

⁶⁰Lewis E. Durham, "The Urban Middle-Class Communal Movement," Communal Societies 6 (Fall 1986): 31.

⁶¹Fogarty, All Things New, 215.

The colony--beginning with Sinclair's initial proposal in The Independent--energetically promoted itself by holding public meetings, answering inquiries, distributing brochures, and inviting journalists and visitors into their midst. The colonists took great pride in their domestic arrangements, even when the initial vision of "cooperative distribution" was revised. They also believed that their experiences had direct application in the coming cooperative commonwealth, even if they made no direct contribution toward that end. Sinclair's comments in The Industrial Republic echo those he had made earlier in a December 1906 Times Magazine article:

We should never have given the time and strength which we have given to this experiment, but for our certainty that all the world will some day be following in our footsteps. We are living in a cooperative home because we wish to do it--but some day you will be doing it because you have to. . . . When that time comes, you will be grateful to us pioneer 'home colonists.'⁶²

Despite these brave proclamations, the Helicon colonists also craved refuge from a world unsympathetic to both their creative yearnings and their financial troubles. Here no one would question their devotion to the literary muse. Instead they would find privacy when they needed it, companionship when they desired it, and an economy suited to

⁶²Upton Sinclair, The Industrial Republic: A Study of America of Ten Years Hence (New York: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1907; reprint, Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, 1976), 280-81.

providing both. The colony was a practical retreat rather than a luxury, enabling middle-class families to enjoy privileges they were fast losing at a price they could afford. As Amy Potter Cook has observed, Helicon Home Colony first had to fit her parents' budget, regardless of its goals or attractions. Addressing immediate needs at the outset, rather than ideological concerns, was a common characteristic of secular groups from this period, even when they perceived themselves as models for the larger society.⁶³

The question of Helicon Home Colony's success is difficult to answer. Sinclair usually claimed the colony was most effective in dealing with children, and clearly both parents and children benefitted from the communal arrangements. In The Brass Check, he also praised the colony's success in solving the servant problem, commenting "from first to last those who did the monotonous household work of our colony conducted themselves with dignity and sympathy."⁶⁴ The colony's short duration makes it difficult to assess whether these arrangements portended

⁶³Fogarty, All Things New, 144.

⁶⁴Upton Sinclair, The Brass Check: A Study of American Journalism (Pasadena, Calif.: By the Author, 1919; New York: Arno and the New York Times, 1919), 66. Curiously, in a 1908 colony proposal, Sinclair lists Helicon's failures without mentioning its success with the children, although the proposed colony would provide play areas for his son (no mention is made of other people's children!). "A Plan for a Co-Operative Group (Personal and Confidential)," September 1908, Sinclair Collection.

long-term success; references to colony financial problems were made by the reliable Frances Maule and the less-believable Meta Sinclair and Grace Seymour but are impossible to prove.

Scholars employ a variety of criteria to evaluate communal activities. In proposing new standards, Jon Wagner admits the difficulty of eschewing value-laden measures. Under his criteria, Helicon Home Colony was successful because it "accomplish[ed] its own goals" (at least in Sinclair's opinion) and "provide[d] for the personal growth of individual members." Further, it was successful in proportion to its size (the colony had a waiting list) but unsuccessful in terms of duration (it is impossible to determine how long the colony would have lasted had it not been destroyed by fire). The colony's societal influence appears negligible, while its degree of social perfection cannot be objectively determined. On a final criteria--social cohesiveness--Helicon Hall appears somewhat successful.⁶⁵

Historians have found Rosabeth Moss Kanter's study of communal "commitment measures" useful in evaluating both recent and past colonies. A sociologist, Kanter analyzed thirty-one utopian communities founded between 1780 to 1860 to determine the degree they demonstrated such qualities as

⁶⁵See Jon Wagner, "Success in Intentional Communities: The Problem of Evaluation," Communal Societies 5 (Fall 1985): 89-100.

sacrifice, investment, and renunciation; the more commitment measures a colony demonstrated, the more likely it was have been successful. Like most groups, Helicon Home Colony valued human perfectibility, order, brotherhood, group coherence, and experimentation. At the same time, it was moderately successful in only one commitment area: communion (high in homogeneity and regular group contact but low in communal sharing and labor). In contrast, to follow Kanter's thesis, Helicon rates poorly in terms of sacrifice, renunciation, investment, mortification, and transcendence--indicative of potential problems had the colony continued.⁶⁶

In light of Helicon Home Colony's goal of reorganizing domestic arrangements, it is interesting to assess its role in social change. Robert H. Walker has identified three broad divisions or "modes" of reform indicating both the general direction of social change in the United States and its continuity. Walker's third mode--the presentation of model societies--encompasses communitarian efforts, as well as utopian novels and science fiction, city planning and visionary architecture, and helps reinforces the now-accepted view that intentional societies did not fade from

⁶⁶See Rosabeth Moss Kanter, Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1972).

the American scene in the mid-nineteenth century.⁶⁷

Like most model builders--to use Walker's term--the Helicon colonists saw themselves as a "social outpost where new modes" of living could be tested.⁶⁸ Walker has delineated a reform taxonomy useful in dissecting Helicon Hall's components: actors--Upton Sinclair, Helicon Home Colony, and the Home Colony Company; form--communitarian entity; dynamics--Sinclair's initial proposal (structured positive) and colony establishment (institutionalization); and arguments and assumptions--economy, efficiency, elimination of master/servant dichotomy, and rejection of the status quo. On every component, Helicon Hall is comparable to other communal groups. As Walker cautions, however, not every effort contributed to social change, even if it realized its own goals. To have social consequence, communes must garner public attention, which few did between the Civil War and World War II.

Helicon Home Colony did receive notice in the press, both positive and negative. There was a discernible shift from benign interest and bemusement during the colony's existence to criticism and innuendo after its demise. News of the colony fire ran on front pages across the country, with charges of fraud and negligence obliterating any

⁶⁷See Walker, Reform Spirit and Reform in America. His two other modes are politico-economic reform and reform for special groups.

⁶⁸Walker, Reform Spirit, 513.

accomplishments. Reporters apprised readers of the colony's free love reputation, communal living arrangements, and group child care, often incorrectly describing its cooperative orientation. Thus, the interest evoked by the fire permanently linked Helicon Home Colony to failure and misery rather than progress in the minds of many.

The horror and devastation of the colony fire also became permanently etched on the minds of the survivors. Margaret Williams, then five years old, can still recall being woken in the night and seeing the "heavy, terrifying curtain of yellow smoke."⁶⁹ Along with the psychological toll came physical damage, such as the back injuries of the MacGowan sisters and the disfigurement of Helen Knoll.

Immediate interest in regrouping after the colony fire is apparent in correspondence and comments to the press. Colonists had lost not only their homes and manuscripts but also the time and effort spent constructing a new way of living. Sinclair was "emphatic" in his determination to revive the colony, while colonist William Noyes declared that the colony had "spoiled us for any other way of living. . . . [and] we all look forward to a speedy return to Helicon Hall."⁷⁰

Noyes was one colonist who did not participate in

⁶⁹Margaret Williams to author, 22 January 1992.

⁷⁰"Helicon Hall Burned Down," New York Sun, 17 March 1907, sec. 1, p. 5; "Sinclair Colony's Plans," New York Post, 19 March 1907, p. 9.

another communal experiment. With the exception of the few who may have gathered at Emma Hahn's Connecticut estate, no one immediately joined another colony. For a number of colonists, however, the communal urge was not exhausted but rather deferred as they dealt with the loss of their belongings and searched for new ways to realize their ideal living arrangements. The Sinclair and Williams families appear to have been the first to put their quest in action, as they attempted their miniature Helicon Hall in Bermuda. The Potters and Eberleins considered various alternatives, ultimately selecting the cooperative individualism found at Arden and Free Acres. Artist colonies also proved attractive to a number of colonists, including the Bjorkman, Updegraff, and MacGowan/Cooke families; although not communitarian enclaves in the strictest sense, these communities offered a pace and temperament that matched the spirit the writers had sought at Helicon Hall.

Few Helicon children appear to have opted for a communal or cooperative lifestyle as adults. For many, their parents' experiment was a forgotten episode during their early years--most of their childhood was spent in more traditional surroundings. For the Potter and Eberlein children, whose parents continued to actively seek colony settings, the draw of free-spirited communities was strong, and they intermittently returned to the communal fold.

The Helicon Hall colonists were not unusual in

abandoning their communitarian lifestyle. Otohiko Okugawa has traced the migrations between 270 communal groups between 1787 and 1919. He discovered that, at the time of the colonies' dissolution, members in 38.5 percent of the colonies did not join any other group, compared to 33.3 percent in which at least one member did move to another communal setting and 27 percent in which members remained there until their deaths or moved to another site of the same colony.⁷¹ Twenty-one of the known Helicon adults and children eventually joined another colony; this number rises to twenty-eight if the artist colonies are included.

Perhaps more long lasting than the communal urge were the friendships forged at Helicon Hall, where no explanation was needed for a particular lifestyle or point of view. Members chose to move to new locations together: the Sinclairs, Eberleins, and Potters to Arden; the MacGowan/Cookes, Williamses, Emma Williams, and Sinclair Lewis to Carmel; the Bjorkmans, Updegraffs, and Freeman Tilden to Woodstock. Letters between colonists demonstrate interest in the goings-on of their former colleagues while a second-generation friendship--Amy Potter Cook and Ernestine Eberlein Benninger--is still strong.

Any discussion of Helicon Home Colony's impact eventually must return to Upton Sinclair and what the experience meant for him and his family. Single-handedly,

⁷¹Okugawa, "Intercommunal Relationships," 81.

Sinclair had written a proposal that drew families away from the security of home and challenged them to forge new ways of relating to themselves and others. Despite the popular press given to Charlotte Perkins Gilman's ideas, it was Sinclair who galvanized a group into action and kept the momentum going. The experience nearly overwhelmed the young author, who would have happily lived a hermit-like existence had his wife and child not demanded more. At the same time, he was thrilled by the response to his proposal and determined to make it succeed.

The destruction of Helicon Home Colony left Sinclair exhausted physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Journalists compared him to the insensitive, irresponsible meatpackers in The Jungle, an association that must have been particularly onerous to the somewhat morally superior young crusader. Not even Meta was there to comfort him, her own indescribable longings still unsatisfied.

Sinclair refused to abandon his hope in the efficacy of the communitarian ideal. He took his family to Bermuda, to Fairhope, to Arden. He stayed at Club A, a cooperative boardinghouse in Greenwich Village.⁷² He reveled in his time alone in Carmel. He proposed a more isolated home colony and a cooperative boys school. Through it all he kept searching for the best arrangement for a poor writer

⁷²Albert Parry, Garretts and Pretenders; A History of Bohemianism in America, rev. ed. (New York: Dover Publications, 1960), 267.

with a family, convinced of the immediate value of sharing space and expenses and the long-lasting goal of reordering domestic arrangements.

Ultimately, Sinclair came to two important realizations about himself. The first was practical: he could not write and run a colony at the same time; his intense devotion to research and writing precluded taking on the equally demanding role of colony administrator. Sinclair also came to accept an important aspect of his character--his driving need for solitude. A soul-searching letter to Meta strips away any pretense; remembering Helicon Hall, he writes "God, what a fool I made of myself--shutting myself in a dungeon with that swarm of human insects!"⁷³ To another friend he reveals

a new conviction, that I mean to stand by if I die for it; that never again will I contemplate any permanent way of life in the same house with any one else. When I came to that resolution, it seemed as if all my problems were solved.⁷⁴

Less than a month later, in August 1911, Sinclair filed for divorce. After two requests were denied in New York, Sinclair, accompanied by David and Mary Craig Kimbrough, moved to Holland, where he was granted a divorce in 1912. With his marriage to Kimbrough a few months later,

⁷³Upton Sinclair to Meta Sinclair, n.d., Meta Fuller Stone Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. This was most likely written in 1909 or 1910.

⁷⁴Upton Sinclair to Lady, 27 July 1911, Sinclair Papers.

Sinclair's personal involvement in colony life ended, although he continued to praise Helicon's success with children and herald the cooperative home as a portent of the future.

Biographer Leon Harris labels Sinclair's colony involvement selfish, pointing to his abandonment of communal living once David was safely ensconced at boarding school. He further discredits Sinclair's statements about Helicon Home Colony and its future application, noting they would

have been much more moving if they were not so transparently untrue. Nothing prevented Upton from starting a new Helicon Hall except the fact that he didn't want to. He had learned that the individual who leaves his own home to run a utopian colony does not lessen his problems but rather magnifies and multiplies them.⁷⁵

Sinclair himself had admitted as much. Nevertheless, his personal rejection of colony life cannot be taken as the additional renunciation of the utopian ideal, which has always contained two components: attention to the immediate and consideration of future application. This view is reinforced when one examines Sinclair's new home life and his theoretical writings, particularly those related to his 1934 campaign for the California governorship.

With Mary Craig handling the domestic and business aspects of running a home, Upton slipped comfortably into a pattern of solitary writing and limited social activities.

⁷⁵Leon Harris, Upton Sinclair: American Rebel (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Co., 1975), 98.

Barring David from their home, Craig eliminated a further disruption to his work. Sinclair was happy, recalled his son, because she had arranged "a situation which allowed him to do his writing."⁷⁶ His new wife had "fulfilled the purpose he had envisioned for Helicon Hall: freedom from the burden of domestic care."⁷⁷

As a committed and idealistic socialist, Sinclair could not be content with just his own salvation. Too many people were suffering under the "dead hand" of capitalism, burdened by the isolated home and unnecessary duplication of effort. In fiction and nonfiction he strove to enunciate the benefits of socialism to his readers. When they failed to respond, still wary of socialism's true intentions, Sinclair switched to the Democratic Party in order to run for governor of California in 1934. He thus could champion the less-threatening End Poverty In California (EPIC) Plan, still insisting, "this is your way out, and there is no other way, and you will have to take it."⁷⁸ Although not explicitly stated, the EPIC colonies and cooperatives could

⁷⁶David and Jean Sinclair, interview by Alden Rogers Whitman, n.d., Leon Harris Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.

⁷⁷William Bloodworth, "The Early Years of Upton Sinclair: A Study of the Development of a Progressive Christian Socialist" (Ph.D diss., University of Texas-Austin, 1973), 222.

⁷⁸Upton Sinclair, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty: A True Story of the Future (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1933), 63.

clearly be seen as part of the evolution toward the cooperative commonwealth in Sinclair's view:

The process of EPIC was like that of a swiftly flowing river eating into a sand bank. Private industry began to crumble; and as quickly as any productive enterprise failed, it was made over into a public institution. Nothing could withstand the current of co-operation.⁷⁹

Sinclair's plans for action share the cooperative commonwealth as their ultimate objective, although the details on how it would be achieved differ. The Industrial Republic and EPIC--as well as The Jungle, Letters to Judd and The Way Out--all promote "industrial democracy, which meant democratic control and social ownership of the means of production."⁸⁰ William Bloodworth identifies Helicon Hall as the climax of Sinclair's early career and the gubernatorial campaign the culmination of his later years.⁸¹

EPIC's emphasis on production for use did represent a change from Sinclair's earlier personal disassociation from cooperative production at Helicon Home Colony. While he had never intended Helicon to be completely self-supporting, he now saw this as the goal of the land colonies and cooperative factories. He again promotes the value of

⁷⁹Sinclair, I, Governor, 59.

⁸⁰Clarence Fredric McIntosh, "Upton Sinclair and the EPIC Movement, 1933-1936" (Ph.D. diss., Stanford University, 1955), 53.

⁸¹Bloodworth, "Early Years," 192.

communal living for parents' freedom and growth. His discussion of child care at the land colonies is reminiscent of the upset inkstands and candlestick puddings of David's childhood that helped inspire Helicon Hall:

There will be no tired mothers standing around scolding their babies all day long. . . . no loose scissors lying around for the children to injure themselves with. There will be no open fireplaces in which they may be burned, no lamps for them to overturn, and no pins for them to swallow. The nursery will be a place where children belong.⁸²

Reorganization of traditional domestic arrangements was a vital part of Upton Sinclair's utopian vision. He held this view at the time of Helicon Hall, when he admitted their employees were still wage slaves under the capitalist system, and retained it in EPIC, convinced of its value in a cooperative state. The consistency of this conviction disputes the charges that Helicon Home Colony was merely a self-serving terminus rather than an integral sojourn in his quest toward "those wider freedoms and opportunities that the future will grant to all men and women."⁸³ It does not matter that Helicon Hall's arrangements were driven by Sinclair's own personal battles and selfishness.

Twelve years after the demise of Helicon Home Colony, Sinclair wrote:

I manage to keep cheerful and to do my appointed task; but nothing can alter the fact in my own

⁸²"No 'Don'ts' In EPIC Colonies, No Tired Mothers," Upton Sinclair's Paper End Poverty, April 1934, p. 7.

⁸³Sinclair, The Brass Check, 67.

mind--I have lived in the future, and all things about me seem drab and sordid in comparison. I feel as you would feel if you were suddenly taken back to the days when there was no plumbing and when people used perfume instead of soap.⁸⁴

Upton Sinclair and the Helicon Hall colonists thus take their place in the communitarian search for utopia in America. Thwarted in their own attempt, they continued to treasure the promise of Helicon Home Colony of a better life now and tomorrow.

⁸⁴Ibid.

APPENDIX
HELICON HOME COLONY RESIDENTS

As discussed in chapter 2, there was no typical Helicon Home Colony resident, although many of the colonists shared similar backgrounds and experiences. A comparison of the colonists with the general United States population at the time reveals how much they both resembled and differed from the average American.

Helicon Hall residents were slightly older than the general adult population. The median age of Helicon males was 36.5, compared to 24.9 for all white males in 1910; the median age of Helicon females was 29.5, while the median age for white females in 1910 was 23.9.¹

Of the residents for whom birthplace is known, eleven were born in the North Central Region of the United States, as defined by the U.S. Bureau of Census. Nine were born in the North East Region, five in the South Region, and one in

¹U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970 (White Plains, New York: Kraus International Publications, 1989), 19.

the West Region.² In 1910, the North Central Region also had been the birthplace for more Americans than any other region. In contrast, 83 percent of the population still lived in the state of their birth in 1910, while all known adult Helicon Hall residents had moved from theirs.³

While 13 percent of the U.S. population had immigrated to this country by 1910, one-fourth of the known Helicon Hall colonists were born outside the United States. Anecdotal information suggests that this percentage likely would drop if the birthplaces of more residents were known. At the same time, it is important to note that more than half of the foreign-born Helicon Hall residents came from Northwestern Europe, as defined by the U.S. Census Bureau, while 45 percent of the foreign population of the United States had arrived from Central and Eastern Europe by 1910.⁴

Although religion had little influence on activities at Helicon Hall, most its members were part of the Protestant mainstream. Eighteen colonists were or had been affiliated with denominations included among the eight most popular religious bodies in the United States in 1906. Four colonists were affiliated with the Unitarian Church, which ranked twenty-first in membership. Two colonists belonged

²Ibid., 5.

³Ibid., 89.

⁴Ibid., 117.

to the Roman Catholic Church, which accounted for 37 percent of United States church membership of churches with more than 50,000 members. At least six Helicon Hall residents had some connection with the Episcopal Church, which attracted only 2.72 per cent of the church members in 1906.⁵

Helicon Hall colonists generally were better educated and held more white-collar jobs than the general U.S. population. Nearly all known adult residents had graduated from high school. By 1910, only 8.6 percent of the general United States population had graduated from high school.⁶ Seventy-two percent of the Helicon Hall residents held occupations grouped under the U.S. Census Bureau's white-collar classification, compared to twenty-one percent of the general population in 1910. While the percentage for manual and service workers is much closer--28 percent for Helicon Hall and 35 percent for the general population--42 percent of United States residents over age fourteen were classified as laborers or farm workers in 1910.⁷ In addition, 81 percent of occupations known to be held by colonists' fathers can be grouped under the white-collar heading.

In summary, Helicon Home Colony residents generally

⁵U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Religious Bodies: 1906, Bulletin no. 103 (Washington, D.C., 1910), 16.

⁶Historical Statistics, 379.

⁷Ibid., 140-45.

were better educated, held more white-collar positions, and were more likely to have moved away from their place of birth than the general United States population in 1910. While the exact numbers will change as more information on other colonists is uncovered, it appears that these generalizations will hold. For example, even without knowing the educational background of thirty-five of the sixty-one identified adults, the percentage of persons who completed high school is forty-one--much higher than the 8 percent for the general U.S. population.

The following list provides information on persons known to have lived at Helicon Home Colony between October 1906 and March 1907. Biographical and anecdotal information has been included in order to illuminate who was attracted to the colony and how the experience affected their lives. The occupation listing identifies how they earned their living during their colony stay. In addition to those persons hired as servants, the colony included members who worked for the colony, sometimes changing or leaving positions during their stay. Persons identified by an asterisk were reported to have been at Helicon Home Colony the night of the fire.

Edwin August and Frances Gertrude Maule Bjorkman*
 Edwin (1866-1951)
 Birthplace: Stockholm, Sweden
 Father's Occupation: Bank Clerk
 Education: South-End Higher Latin School, Stockholm
 Occupation: Newspaper Reporter
 Frances (1878-1966)

Birthplace: Fairmont, Nebraska
 Father's Occupation: Lawyer
 Education: St. Mary's Academy, Notre Dame, Indiana;
 University of Nebraska, 1896-1898
 Occupation: Magazine Writer

The Bjorkmans had been married six months when they attended planning meetings for Upton Sinclair's home colony in the summer of 1906. The experiment allowed Frances to keep one of two promises she had made to herself: never to keep house (the other promise--never to marry--already had been broken). By living in a cooperative home, she reasoned, she could keep her independence and freedom from household responsibilities.⁸

Edwin was less enthusiastic about the arrangements but pursued colony life with vigor, purchasing a share of Home Colony Company stock. Both witnessed the colony and company incorporations. They paid sixteen dollars a week for two rooms and three meals a day. Frances served on the colony board of directors and worked for a short period as housekeeper.

Socialists, the Bjorkmans were strong supporters of Charlotte Perkins Gilman.⁹ Edwin called her "one of the

⁸Frances Maule Bjorkman, "Practical Experiment in Fletcherism," World's Work 15 (February 1908): 9877-80.

⁹Frances identified herself as a socialist in 1914; Edwin joined the Socialist Party in 1908. John William Leonard, ed., Woman's Who's Who of America (1914, reprint; Detroit: Gale Research Co., 1976), 102; Edwin Bjorkman, Membership Card, Socialist Party of the State of New York, 24 October 1908, Edwin A. Bjorkman Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library, Chapel Hill, N.C. (hereafter cited as

most vital forces among many now at work on the rebuilding of our individual and social existences in accordance with more scientific, sensible and more humane ideals."¹⁰

Frances later worked on Gilman's journal The Forerunner. The couple were active suffragists. Edwin lectured and wrote on women's rights while Frances toured New York for the state suffrage campaign and authored several books on women's suffrage. Edwin demonstrated an extensive knowledge of past communal efforts in a feature story for the New York Evening Post prepared several days after the colony fire.¹¹ In 1906 they were both actively involved in helping Emma Goldman, John Coryell, and Sadakichi Hartmann found the anarchist Mother Earth.¹²

Edwin's ascetic nature, combined with a quick temper, made him appear domineering and serious, according to colonists and others.¹³ Meta Sinclair recalled his "acid

Bjorkman Papers).

¹⁰Edwin Bjorkman, "On Mrs. Gilman," unidentified newspaper clipping, Bjorkman Papers.

¹¹Edwin Bjorkman, "Predecessors of Helicon Hall," New York Evening Post, 23 March 1907, Sat. supp., p. 1, 3.

¹²Sadakichi Hartmann, White Chrysanthemums: Literary Fragments and Pronouncements, ed. George Knox and Harry Lawton, with a foreword by Kenneth Rexroth (New York: Herder and Herder, 1971), xxiii.

¹³Edith Summers Kelley, "Helicon Hall: An Experiment in Living," 1934, Edith Summers Kelley Papers, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale; ed., Mary Byrd Davis, The Kentucky Review 1 (Spring 1980): 34; Archie Rice to Robert S. Lee, 18 January 1919, Bjorkman Papers.

exaggerated observations."¹⁴ Colonist Grace Seymour blamed Edwin for the Sadakichi Hartmann incident, recalling that it was Bjorkman, and not Sinclair, who forced the poet and his friends into the snowy night.¹⁵ People remembered Frances as an ardent feminist, although Meta Sinclair thought she acted subserviently toward Edwin.¹⁶

Edwin had immigrated to the United States in 1891 and become a citizen in 1903. In Minnesota he worked first for a Swedish-language paper and later for the Minneapolis Times, continuing a career he had pursued briefly in Sweden.¹⁷ In 1897 he moved east and by 1906 was working

¹⁴Frances told Meta Sinclair that Edwin acted the way he did because of his superior intelligence and neurasthenia. Meta Sinclair, "One of the Characters at H.H.," handwritten description of Helicon Hall, Corydon and Thrysis box, Meta Fuller Stone Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Stone Papers). Bjorkman later apologized to Meta for his rude behavior, especially since she was "herself the impersonation of kindness and consideration for others." Edwin Bjorkman to Meta Sinclair, 1 August 1907, Upton Sinclair Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind. (hereafter cited as Sinclair Papers). Lilly Library houses the Sinclair Papers, which include his personal papers, and the Sinclair Collection, which includes printed works.

¹⁵If her story is true, Bjorkman would have known Hartmann from their association on Mother Earth. "Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

¹⁶Meta Sinclair, "One of the characters at H.H.," Stone Papers.

¹⁷For more information on Bjorkman's life before Helicon see his autobiographical novels: The Soul of a Child (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922; reprint, St. Clair Shores, Mich.: Scholarly Press, 1971), Gates of Life (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923; reprint, St. Clair Shores, Mich.: Scholarly Press, 1971), and Closed Chapters,

for the New York Evening Post. Frances was a reporter for several Denver newspapers before moving to New York in 1903 to earn a living as a magazine writer.¹⁸

The colony fire left the Bjorkmans destitute as their small savings went to replace everything from toothbrushes to typewriters. While they had fond memories of colony life, they concluded it was not a practical solution to their domestic concerns. Feeling indecisive and bewildered, Edwin suffered a nervous breakdown and spent the next three years recuperating.¹⁹ Frances felt equally helpless and overcame her writer's block only after adopting Fletcherism.²⁰ Until 1918, when they divorced, the Bjorkmans lived together only sporadically.²¹

unpublished, Bjorkman Papers.

¹⁸Meta Sinclair remembered that Frances worked at Columbia University library, although Frances identified herself as a magazine writer during this period. "One of the Characters at H.H.," Stone Papers; Woman's Who's Who, 102.

¹⁹Frances Maule Bjorkman, "Practical Fletcherism," 9878; Edwin Bjorkman to Frances Bjorkman, 29 May 1917, Bjorkman Papers; "The Sin of the Churches," manuscript, Bjorkman Papers.

²⁰Frances Maule Bjorkman, "Practical Fletcherism," 9878.

²¹James Edward Maule, The History and Genealogy of the Maules (Mechanicsburg, Penn.: W+M Printing, 1981), 276. Letters suggest their divorce actually was in 1922, when Edwin suffered another nervous breakdown. He remarried three times: his second marriage ended in divorce, his third wife committed suicide, and his fourth wife survived him. Although biographical records indicate that Frances was his first wife, the unpublished Closed Chapters records a brief marriage to a Swedish immigrant, which ended with the death

Supporting themselves as writers, the Bjorkmans pursued separate careers after the fire. Edwin continuously urged Frances to develop her writing skills and not write for the market. She, in turn, criticized his self-importance and blamed his depression on his perfectionism but later ruefully admitted that "apparently in this world you have to take your pick of cultivating your gifts and living in poverty, or selling yourself body and soul for security and comfort. You, it would seem, have done the former, I the latter."²²

Despite Edwin's feminism, their marriage faltered over Frances's disinterest in children and a traditional home. He confided to a friend that, despite his "demand that woman shall have the utmost freedom in choosing and regulating her life," he was disappointed that Frances never gave him children--"the supreme importance of [woman's] mission."²³

Frances continued writing on a wide range of subjects, especially health and women's issues, and worked in advertising and radio. She served as editor for the

of their child. Frances never remarried; one scholar suggests she may have been a homosexual. Judith Schwarz, Radical Feminists of Heterodoxy: Greenwich Village, 1912-1940, rev. ed. (Norwich, Vt.: New Victoria Publishers, 1986), 36.

²²Frances Bjorkman to Edwin Bjorkman, 30 November 1914[?]; Frances Maule to Edwin Bjorkman, 13 February 1926, Bjorkman Papers.

²³Edwin Bjorkman to Grace [?], 29 July 1920, Bjorkman Papers.

National American Woman Suffrage Association, where she wrote a history of the women's rights movement.²⁴ Frances also dealt with the practical side of getting ahead in a man's world, advising women on how to find and keep jobs in business, home economics, and sales, among other fields.²⁵ In 1944 she became editor of Independent Woman, a publication of the Business and Professional Women's Foundation, a position she held until her retirement in 1955.

Edwin was both an experienced journalist writing on a wide range of topics and an author convinced of his own genius and the importance of remaining true to his ideals. His correspondence with fellow colonist Freeman Tilden indicates their shared aversion to writing for popular tastes. Edwin's career was plagued with financial problems, leading him to seek loans from Sinclair, Tilden, George Gilman, and others.

Edwin was best known as a translator of Scandinavian playwrights, serving as August Strindberg's official

²⁴Frances Maule Bjorkman, Woman Suffrage; History, Arguments and Results (New York: National American Woman Suffrage Association, 1913). Two revised editions appeared in 1915.

²⁵See, for example, Frances Maule, She Strives to Conquer; Business Behavior, Opportunities and Job Requirements for Women (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1934); idem, "I Want To Be a Secretary," Independent Woman 20 (March 1941): 75; and idem, Careers for the Home Economist; Fields Which Offer Openings to the Girl With Modern Training in the Home-Making Arts (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1943).

translator.²⁶ He held a variety of positions, including health columnist for World's Work (1909-10) and editor of the Modern Drama Series (1912-15). With the publication of several articles on William James and an optimistic essay collection, Is There Anything New Under the Sun? (1911), friends believed he had received the recognition he deserved, and Van Wyck Brooks wrote, "Your writings have formed the starting point of so many interesting conversations that I begin to think of you as a remote celebrity."²⁷ Edwin also wrote fiction; his short story "Dinner a la Tango" is the only piece by a Helicon colonist in Sinclair's anthology, A Cry for Justice (1915).

Edwin traveled extensively to Europe, offering his services as an expert on Scandinavian affairs. From 1915 to 1917 he represented the British Department of Information in Sweden and returned to the United States to direct the Scandinavian Bureau of the American Committee on Public Information, touring the country with reporters on Scandinavian-language newspapers.

Edwin wrote literary criticism for a variety of publications and in 1926 became literary editor of the

²⁶Bjorkman's translations were "dreadful" but produced widespread interest in the United States. Michael Meyer, Strindberg (New York: Random House, 1985), 556, 574.

²⁷Van Wyck Brooks to Edwin Bjorkman, 21 March 1912, Bjorkman Papers.

Asheville (N.C.) Times.²⁸ As state director of the North Carolina Federal Writers Project from 1935 to 1941, he supervised the preparation of the state's WPA guide.²⁹ Throughout his career Edwin kept in contact with Sinclair, commenting on his newest books and seeking loans and advice. While the Bjorkmans did not enter into any further communal arrangements, they did spend time in the artist community in Woodstock, New York, along with Florence Maule and her husband, former Helicon resident Allan Updegraff.

Joseph Moore and Janet Byfield Payne Bowles, Mira, Jan*
Joseph (1865 [1866?]-1934)

Birthplace: Indianapolis, Indiana

Father's Occupation: Lawyer

Religion: Episcopal

Occupation: Editor, The Collector and Art Critic until November 1906; Editor, Interior Decoration

Janet (1876-1948)

Birthplace: Indianapolis, Indiana

Father's Occupation: Auctioneer, Later Postal Clerk

Religion: Unitarian

Education: Indianapolis High School graduate; studied at Radcliffe College, Columbia University, in Paris

Occupation: Metalsmith and Jeweler

Mira (1902-1986)

Jan (1904-1974)

By 1906 Janet and Joseph Bowles had been actively involved for nearly fifteen years in the emerging Arts and

²⁸See, for example, Edwin Bjorkman, Voices of Tomorrow: Critical Studies of The New Spirit in Literature (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1913).

²⁹Federal Writers' Project of the Federal Works Agency Work Projects Administration for the State of North Carolina, North Carolina: A Guide to the Old North State (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1939).

Crafts Movement in the United States, beginning in their hometown of Indianapolis.³⁰ Joseph wrote and lectured on the Movement and in 1893 began the quarterly Modern Art to promote the arts, literature, and philosophy.³¹ In 1895 he married Janet and moved to Boston when he sold the journal, which he continued to edit until 1897, to a printer in that city.

After living in Rye, New York from 1902 to 1905, the family moved to an artist community in Leonia, New Jersey. During these years Joseph worked as a designer and writer for various periodicals and art publishers. Initially interested in music and philosophy, Janet contributed to Joseph's periodicals and exhibited her book illuminations in Boston in 1899. The next year she began studying and working in metals, the craft for which she would become best known.

Newspapers reported that the Bowles family had only lived at the colony a short time before its demise. The night of the fire the two children, who had bad colds, were

³⁰Much of the biographical material on the Bowles family was provided by Barry L. Shifman, an associate curator at Indianapolis Museum of Art, which owns the largest collection of Janet Bowles's work. Shifman has organized a traveling exhibit on Bowles for 1993-95. For more information, see Shifman, "The Arts and Crafts Movement in Indianapolis" Traces, forthcoming.

³¹See, for example, his promotion of Mission furniture as the potential classic American style in J. M. Bowles, "Better Furniture Increasing," World's Work 8 (July 1904): 5031-33.

sleeping with their parents. Because their second-story window opened onto the porch roof, Joseph was able to climb down and catch the children as Janet dropped them. Both parents suffered burns on their feet, and Joseph's nose was severely burned; the children's hands also were burned. The family lost everything, including the manuscript of Janet's novel, which recently had been accepted for publication.³²

After the fire the family moved to New York City. Joseph continued his career in graphic arts, founding the Forest Press in 1907. That same year Janet set up a metalworking and jewelry studio. By 1909 her commissions included gold jewelry, chalices, spoons, and plates for Sir Caspar Purdon Clarke, then director of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York; financier J. P. Morgan; and St. Patrick's Cathedral. She also designed the dagger and jewelry worn by actress Maude Adams in a Berkeley, California production of "As You Like It" and depicted in the portrait of Adams by John Alexander.³³

In 1912 the Bowles separated, and Janet moved with the children back to Indianapolis.³⁴ She became an instructor

³²"J. M. Bowles Family in Upton Sinclair Fire," Indianapolis News, 18 March 1907, p. 3.

³³"Mrs. Bowles, Famed Jewelry Designer, Dies," Indianapolis Star, 19 July 1948, p. 4. Bowles's work is shown in Rena Tucker Kohlman, "Metalcraft Spiritual," International Studio (October 1924): 54-57.

³⁴To avoid the stigma of divorce, she identified herself as a widow. Barry L. Shifman, telephone interview with author, 6 February 1991.

of jewelry, metalwork, and later pottery, at Shortridge High School in Indianapolis, a position she held until her retirement in 1942. Janet exhibited in Indianapolis, New York, and Paris; among her awards was first prize in the 1912 and 1918 London-Paris International Jewelers Competitions and third prize for jewelry in the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exposition.

For the Bowleses, Helicon Home Colony provided an inexpensive and stimulating haven for their family. As artists, they were subjected to many of the same financial constraints that attracted writers to the colony. There is no evidence that they promoted or participated in similar communal activities after Helicon's demise.

Lester Briggs (1886-1907)³⁵*

Birthplace: Little Compton, Rhode Island

Occupation: Apprentice Carpenter working at the colony

Briggs was the only person killed in the colony fire. Well-known in Providence, Rhode Island, he had come to Englewood to work with head carpenter William Grinnell. The night before the fire he had been initiated into the local Carpenters Union.³⁶ That afternoon he had also had

³⁵According to newspaper reports, Briggs was from Little Compton, Rhode Island. The 1900 U.S. Census lists a Lester L. Briggs, born 1886, living in Little Compton with his mother and the family for whom she was employed as a housekeeper. 1900 U.S. Census, Rhode Island, vol. 3, ED 211, sheet 9, line 64.

³⁶"Fire Destroys Upton Sinclair's Colony Home," New York World, 17 March 1907, p. 4.

stitches removed from his eyes following surgery a week earlier for strabismus, a visual defect in which eyes have difficulty focusing together because of muscle imbalances.³⁷

After the fire, colonist Margaret Hogue remembered banging on Briggs's door on the third floor where they both lived. She heard him respond and thought he would be able to escape. Others recalled that he had gone to bed early that night because the anesthesia used in the operation had made him drowsy.³⁸ Upton Sinclair later claimed that the only time alcohol was consumed at the colony was the night of the fire, with the result that Briggs died in a "drunken stupor."³⁹

Minnie Campbell [McClatschey (McClatchey?)]*
 Birthplace: Ireland
 Occupation: Colony Maid

Campbell had worked for the Sinclairs since their time at the Princeton farm and stayed with them for seven years, primarily serving as David's nurse. She was the Irish maid who caused a small sensation in the newspapers when she

³⁷"One Death in Colony Home Fire," Newark Evening News, 16 March 1907, p. 2.

³⁸"Sinclair's Colony May Not Be Revived," Brooklyn Daily Eagle, 17 March 1907, p. 5.

³⁹Upton Sinclair, The Cup of Fury (Great Neck, N.Y.: Channel Press, 1956), 70. There is no evidence to corroborate this story other than the speculation that Briggs may have consumed alcohol at his union initiation which, combined with the anesthesia he had received earlier, would have made it difficult to awaken him.

danced with Professor William Montague at the colony.⁴⁰

She knew the family intimately and gave sworn testimony in 1912 during the Sinclairs' divorce proceedings that Meta was an unfit and uncaring mother.⁴¹

Charles Henry Castle (1859 [1860?]-1918)

Birthplace: Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Father's Occupation: Lawyer

Religion: Episcopal

Education: Academy of the Protestant Episcopal Church, Philadelphia, 1869-1876; University of Pennsylvania, A.B., 1880; Miami Medical College of Ohio, M.D., 1885

Occupation: Physician, specialist in ophthalmology and otolaryngology

Although Castle was active in colony activities since the early planning meetings, little is known about his time in Englewood. Articles indicate he was interested in directing dietary concerns, but there is no mention of his actual participation in this.⁴² He was identified in various colony documents as both treasurer and member of the Home Colony Company board of trustees and owned \$1,200 worth of stock.⁴³

A licensed physician, Castle had served as a surgeon

⁴⁰Upton Sinclair, Autobiography (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, 1962), 131.

⁴¹"Affadavits in Possession of Upton Sinclair," Sinclair Papers.

⁴²"Sinclair Explains His Home Colony," New York Times, 18 July 1906, p. 7; "Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

⁴³Upton Sinclair to the Holders of the Stock of the Home Colony Company, 22 March 1907, Sinclair Papers.

for the First Ohio Volunteer Infantry during the Spanish-American War, later overseeing the treatment of war casualties in a Florida hospital. Returning to Cincinnati, he was associated with a local hospital and then went into private practice, specializing in ophthalmic surgery. He was married in 1891 to Mary Andrews and had one son, Charles Archibald;⁴⁴ there is no record of his wife or child living at the colony.

In 1894 Castle was described as a Free-Silver Protectionist.⁴⁵ In 1912, a Cincinnati author called him "public-spirited, energetic and progressive [with] the pride of a patriotic citizen in assisting in forwarding every cause that seeks to promote the happiness or permanent welfare of his fellowmen."⁴⁶ There is no evidence that he pursued further communal activities.

John-Armistead Collier⁴⁷ (1874-1947)*

Birthplace: Memphis, Tennessee

Father's Occupation: Lawyer; Publisher, Memphis Appeal

Religion: Episcopal, later Unitarian

Education: Memphis public schools; University of Virginia, 1892-93; Stanford University, 1894-95; Union Theological Seminary and Columbia University, 1905-06; University of Tennessee School of

⁴⁴Charles Frederic Goss, Cincinnati; the Queen City, 1788-1912 (Cincinnati: S. J. Clarke Publishers, 1912), 294-95.

⁴⁵Cincinnati (S. B. Nelson & Co., 1894), 696.

⁴⁶Goss, Cincinnati; the Queen City, 295.

⁴⁷Born William Armistead Nelson Collier, John-Armistead Collier wrote under both names, as well as Nelson Collier, John Darmstadt, and J. Kris Carpenter.

Agriculture, 1910
Occupation: Student, Writer

On his way to a monastery outside New York City, Collier stopped at Helicon Home Colony to learn how to become a published writer.⁴⁸ He stayed at the colony from early December to its March 16 demise.⁴⁹ Calling himself a socialist and "mystical anarchist," Collier was considered "a rather wild visionary" by even "freakish" colonists. Calling him "John the Baptist," Edith Summers remembered that "his ideas, advanced in a slow, southern drawl, contrasted rather oddly with his personal character which was unusually mild, gentle and even childlike."⁵⁰ Collier appears as Jonathan Harland, also nicknamed John the Baptist, in Upton Sinclair's Love's Progress.

Like many of the colonists, Collier had tried newspaper work, beginning with his father's newspaper at age seventeen. After attending college for several years, he joined Edward Everett Hale's Hale House in Boston to prepare

⁴⁸John-Armistead Collier should not be confused with John Collier (1884-1968), another southern socialist who worked for the New York City People's Institute from 1906 to 1914 promoting city schools as recreational centers and later became active in Native American rights. See Lawrence C. Kelly, The Assault on Assimilation: John Collier and the Origins of Indian Policy Reform (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1983).

⁴⁹John Collier, The Search, vol. 5, "Experimental Living," p. 10, John and Phyllis Collier Collection, Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Mich. (hereafter cited as Collier Collection).

⁵⁰Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 43.

for the Unitarian ministry. In a "fervor of poetic and religious ecstasy," he attacked Hale, who had expelled him for taking food without permission. As a result, his father had him committed to an insane asylum for nine months. According to the New York Times, Collier shouted that he was the second Messiah during the attack, a charge he denied in his autobiography.⁵¹ In early 1906 his father again questioned his sanity. Cuthbert Hall, president of Union Theological Seminary, where Collier was a student, understood how the father could mistake his son's passion for insanity. However, he disputed the idea, insisting,

There can be no question that he possesses a mind of the finest fibre, that his intellectual processes are upon a plane far superior to the average. With this intellectual equipment, he possesses a deeply emotional nature, extraordinary sensitiveness, a passionate temper.⁵²

At Helicon, Collier found a sympathetic audience in Meta Sinclair. Both Upton and Meta's autobiographies recount the hours she spent with Collier discussing their "soul states." Upton was acutely jealous of their friendship, which Meta characterized as "intellectual and semi-emotional" but not sexual.⁵³ Correspondence indicates

⁵¹Collier, The Search, vol. 2, "Mystic or Lunatic?" p. 5, Collier Collection; "To Kill the Rev. Dr. Hale," New York Times, 16 August 1897, p. 1.

⁵²Cuthbert Hall to William Armistead Collier, Sr., 28 March 1906, Collier Collection.

⁵³Meta Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, Stone Papers.

that all three were struggling to define the relationship, with Upton reluctantly accepting Collier "as a sort of inevitable family accessory."⁵⁴ Although Collier did not join the Sinclair and Williams families in Bermuda as originally planned, he did live at Fairhope, Alabama from 1910-1912, arriving during the period when the Sinclairs also lived at the single-tax community. According to a biography by his wife, Collier had love affairs with Meta and Mary Craig Kimbrough, Sinclair's second wife.⁵⁵

The night of the colony fire Collier had attended a New York City play with Edith Summers, arriving home around 2:00 a.m. An hour later a deep rumbling alerted him to the impending disaster. Although he considered rescuing his nearly-finished book, the intensity of the smoke and flames drove him out into the snow barefoot and empty-handed. As noted in chapter 4, it is possible that Collier's careless smoking may have been responsible for the colony's demise. The fire also ended his mother's plans to spend the summer writing at the colony.⁵⁶

⁵⁴See correspondence between Meta Sinclair and John Collier, especially Sinclair to Collier, April 1908, Collier Papers. By 1919 Upton had tired of Collier and demanded he leave him and his second wife alone. Upton Sinclair to John Collier, 10 June 1919, Sinclair Papers.

⁵⁵Phyllis Fenington, "Biography: John Armistead Collier," Collier Papers.

⁵⁶Collier, The Search, vol. 3, "Experimental Living," p. 12; Alice Collier to John Armistead Collier, no date, quoted in The Search, vol. 3, "Experimental Living," p. 59, Collier Collection. See chapter 4 for speculation regarding

After the fire Collier drifted from job to job, working for the Nashville American and Knoxville World, writing advertising, and leading labor protests in England and Scotland. In 1908 his father once again questioned his sanity, motivated by his son's distrust of private land ownership.⁵⁷ Meta and Upton Sinclair both defended him, although Meta advised him not to read any of his poems in court. Upton attested to Collier's brilliance and sincerity and declared him "no more insane than I am," a statement that made the courtroom erupt with laughter, according to Harry Kemp.⁵⁸ In 1910 Collier's father dropped the charges.

Collier's interest in communal living continued. He studied Charles Fourier, taking copious notes on his writings. His personal papers include a floor plan for Fluidia, his proposed "Communist-Anarchist-Co-Operative Colony," and a humorous letter from a future free love colony in which sleeping partners (both Meta and Mary Craig Kimbrough are among those available) must be chosen by 6:00

Collier's role in starting the fire.

⁵⁷27 August 1909, Insanity Hearings, Reflections, 1909, Collier Collection.

⁵⁸Meta Sinclair to John Armistead Collier, 13 December 1908 and Upton Sinclair to "To Whom It May Concern," 18 December 1908, Collier Collection; Harry Kemp, More Miles; An Autobiographical Novel (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1926), 88.

p.m.⁵⁹

In the 1920s, Collier took a more serious interest in April Farm, Charles Garland's communistic free love colony in North Carver, Massachusetts.⁶⁰ April Farm and a Garland colony in Pennsylvania received adverse publicity because of members' views against marriage and sending young children to school. In 1925 Garland asked Collier, a colony member, to handle the dissolution of the Massachusetts farm. Collier attempted to turn the two hundred acres into an educational and recreational center for workers but was thwarted in his efforts by the local Communist Party, which hoped to take over the farm.⁶¹

Collier continued to write under various pseudonyms and became business manager of The Modern Quarterly in 1927, using the name John Darmstadt. In the 1930s he moved to California and organized student groups on contemporary problems. He also served as Los Angeles research director for the American Society for Psychical Research. A book of

⁵⁹John Collier, "Fluidia" and "A Letter from the Future Colony," October 1931 [1911?], Collier Collection.

⁶⁰Garland, a socialist, had inherited a million dollars, which he quickly distributed to labor and radical groups through his American Fund for Public Service. See "Heir to a Million Gives Up \$800,000," New York Times, 24 July 1922, p. 1, and "Opposes Charter to Garland Farm Colony," New York Times, 9 January 1926, p. 3, among other articles.

⁶¹William Armistead Collier to Alten Rosenberg, 24 February 1926; William Armistead Collier to Bert Miller, 29 March 1926, Collier Collection.

poems, In the Wilderness: Poems of Pessimism from the Journal of a Rebel and Mystic was published posthumously.

Collier's communal interests were closely tied with his philosophical beliefs, especially socialism and free love. At the same time, he mirrored the experience of other young struggling writers looking for an inexpensive lifestyle. His maturity and commitment to communal living is evidenced by his stay at April Farm where he became caretaker and helped run the farm.

Stella Com[m]insky [Ballantine] (1884-1961)⁶²
Occupation: Assistant to Emma Goldman

Edith Summers remembered Cominsky, one of the pioneer colonists, as "lovely, but a dangerous person."⁶³ Her maternal aunt was anarchist Emma Goldman, who had been forced to go underground after the 1901 assassination of President William McKinley. Soon after, Cominsky began representing her aunt in public, a role that gave her freedom and self-confidence. In 1903 she became secretary to a New York judge and continued to speak out about the Russian people's struggles. She left Helicon Home Colony in early 1907 to work at the American Consulate in Paris but resigned in 1908 when the Attorney General investigated her as a potential anarchist infiltrator, charges which proved

⁶²Emma Goldman's biographers disagree on the spelling of Cominsky's last name.

⁶³Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 35.

unfounded.

By 1914 Cominsky was living in London and had married actor and stage manager Ted Ballantine. Colonist Edwin Bjorkman described her as "respectable but . . . as friendly as ever."⁶⁴ Along with Frances Maule, she was a member of Heterodoxy, a feminist club. She had a son Ian who was raised "in total libertarian fashion," according to socialist Hutchins Hapgood.⁶⁵ In 1938 Cominsky suffered a nervous breakdown, which Goldman blamed on Ballantine's affairs and Stella's isolation in Bearsville, New York.⁶⁶ There is no record of her participating in any further communal experiences.

Grace MacGowan Cooke, Katherine, Helen*

Grace (1863-1944)

Birthplace: Grand Rapids, Ohio

Father's Occupation: Lawyer; Editor, Chattanooga Times

Religion: Raised Presbyterian, Became Unitarian

Education: Private tutoring

Occupation: Magazine writer

Helen [Wilson] (1895-?)

Katherine "Kit" [Ryan] (1898-?)

For Cooke, Helicon Home Colony offered a quiet place to

⁶⁴Edwin Bjorkman to Frances Bjorkman, 3 September 1914, Bjorkman Papers.

⁶⁵Hutchins Hapgood, A Victorian in the Modern World (New York: Harcourt, 1939), 280.

⁶⁶Candace Serena Falk, Love, Anarchy, and Emma Goldman (1984; New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1990), 36, 40, 151, 301; Richard Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise: A Biography of Emma Goldman (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 95.

write without the burden of housework.⁶⁷ A few months earlier she had left her husband William, whom she had married in 1887, and was raising their daughters by herself.⁶⁸ Cooke began contributing poems and short stories to magazines in 1888 and had published five novels by 1906. Edith Summers described Cooke and her sister Alice MacGowan, who also lived at the colony, as "just plain craftswomen and no nonsense about it."⁶⁹

Cooke favored woman's suffrage and was the first president of the Tennessee Woman's Press Club. She published extensively in popular and women's magazines and was said by one reviewer to have an "excellent and yet simple" style.⁷⁰ Although most of Cooke's short stories focus on people's everyday lives, she did not shy away from social issues. For example, in "Shadow" and "Wisdom of Yesterday," Cooke and her sister explore the pain experienced by African Americans when whites dismiss them as ignorant and childlike. "A Sacred Meal" humorously reveals

⁶⁷Grace MacGowan Cooke to My Dear Nautilus Friends, 21 March 1907, in The Nautilus 5 (May 1907): 10-11.

⁶⁸In 1908 William filed for divorce on the grounds that Grace had deserted him, claiming she preferred a life of "celibacy, retirement, and intellectual effort." Kay Baker Gaston, "The MacGowan Girls," California History 59 (Summer 1980): 117.

⁶⁹Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 34.

⁷⁰"Return," Canadian Monthly 25 (May 1905): 89-90. Readers' Guide lists forty-four poems and short stories written by Cooke between 1905 and 1912.

the self-centered racism of a white woman living among Hopi Indians.⁷¹

Active in the New Thought movement, Cooke reserved her personal observations for The Nautilus, a publication founded by Elizabeth Towne. She contributed a novel, The Way Out, and several articles connecting New Thought ideals to Biblical teachings and detailing how osteopathy and Fletcherism were aligned with New Thought beliefs.⁷²

Cooke was initially thought to have been fatally injured in the colony fire after hitting the frozen ground when she jumped from a second-story window. She spent fifteen days in the hospital. Although her back had not been broken, Cooke continued to experience spinal pain and mobility problems from slipped vertebrae. She lost manuscripts and childhood mementos in the fire, estimating the loss at between ten thousand and fifteen thousand

⁷¹Grace MacGowan Cooke and Alice MacGowan, "Wisdom of Yesterday," Everybody's 21 (August 1909): 184-90; idem, "Shadow," Everybody's 22 (March 1910): 350-56; Grace MacGowan Cooke, "A Sacred Meal," Sunset 29 (October 1912): 370-82.

⁷²An example of how Cooke scrupulously avoided mention of the colony in her mainstream writing can be illustrated by examining two articles she wrote on osteopathy. A Nautilus article provides specific details on the injuries received in the fire, while a Delineator piece mentions only that she had spine problems. See Grace MacGowan Cooke, "Osteopathy and New Thought," The Nautilus 10 (October 1908): 22-23; idem, "Founder of Osteopathy," Delineator 75 (May 1910): 420, 459-60.

dollars.⁷³ For Cooke, the colony provided a bitter lesson in how she had mismanaged her life and deserted her New Thought principles. She and her sister had considered leaving the colony because it was noisy and its aims were "inchoate," but stayed because they enjoyed its delightful, companionate atmosphere. The fire, she wrote, served to remind her that something even worse, such as losing her daughters, could happen if she let "inexpert hands tangle [her] plans" and did not take charge of her own affairs.⁷⁴

After spending nearly a year recovering in Douglaston, New York, the MacGowan/Cooke family moved first to Missouri then settled permanently in the writers colony at Carmel-By-the-Sea in California at the invitation of Helicon colonist Peggy Williams.⁷⁵ There they were joined by colonist

⁷³"Thrilling Experiences," Chattanooga Sunday Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1.

⁷⁴Grace MacGowan Cooke to My Dear Nautilus Friends, 21 March 1907. Nautilus Editor Elizabeth Towne was easier on Cooke, writing that "It jars my instinct for justice, not to mention loving kindness, to think God spanked Grace so severely for turning aside on a little 'junket!'" She saw the colony as a chance for Cooke to obtain experience to make her writing "bigger, better, broader, deeper." While Sinclair may have needed the fire to help him begin anew, Towne maintained that it also held a simpler lesson for him: "provide fire escapes" ("Editorials," The Nautilus, 5 [May 1907]: 11).

⁷⁵Shortly after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, real estate developers had interested poet George Sterling and writer Mary Austin in helping establish an artist community in Carmel. Ambrose Bierce, Jack London, Theodore Dreiser, and Lincoln Steffens were among those attracted to Carmel during its literary heyday between 1906 and 1912. See Lionel Rolfe, Literary L.A. (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 1981), 5, 117 and Franklin Walker, The Seacoast of Bohemia

Sinclair Lewis, who had agreed to work as their secretary and collaborate on a novel about Jesus reincarnated in modern times. Grace and Alice purchased a large bungalow built originally as a summer home by a San Francisco millionaire.⁷⁶ Resuming their industrious habits, they were considered to be the leaders of Carmel's "respectable element."⁷⁷ In her later years, Cooke continued to work hard, publishing articles anonymously or under pseudonyms.⁷⁸

Cooke and her daughters participated in Carmel's many theater productions. Helen was considered especially attractive and mature. She married the forty-five-year-old writer Harry Leon Wilson in 1912 at age seventeen. They had two children and were divorced in 1928.⁷⁹

Although Carmel was not a communal colony, it did offer Cooke many of the same benefits as Helicon Hall. Undeveloped in 1908, it was an inexpensive, comfortable

(Santa Barbara: Peregrine Smith, 1973), 9, 65.

⁷⁶"Portrait," Putnam's 7 (October 1909): 116.

⁷⁷Willard Huntington Wright, "Hotbed of Soulful Culture, Vortex of Erotic Erudition," Los Angeles Times, 22 May 1910, pt. 3, p. 1.

⁷⁸Alice MacGowan to Upton Sinclair, 13 August 1919, Sinclair Papers. This may explain why no publications for Cooke after 1928 could be located.

⁷⁹Harry Leon Wilson (1867-1939) was best known for his short stories published in Saturday Evening Post and elsewhere. George Nicholas Kummer, Harry Leon Wilson (Cleveland: Press of Western Reserve University, 1963), 1.

haven for a working, single mother and her children. Here Cooke found a private home that provided the peace and quiet missing from the Englewood colony, plus the unconventional friends and neighbors who appreciated the demands of her career.

Mr. and Mrs. A. C. Craig and child*

Little is known about this family although Mr. Craig owned five hundred dollars worth of Home Colony Company stock. They may have been among the few colonists not to lose everything in the fire; one reporter claimed that Mrs. Craig called her husband a fool when he tossed their belongings out the window before exiting himself.⁸⁰

David Leverne deGuibert [Lester] (1884-1947?)⁸¹*

Birthplace: United States

Father's Occupation: Lawyer

Religion: Disciples of Christ

Education: Eureka College, one year

Occupation: Child care for her niece, Lisbeth Undena Eberlein

DeGuibert joined her sister and brother-in-law, Undena and Ernest Eberlein, at Helicon Home Colony. She cared for her niece Betty, who turned two years old in March 1907, while her sister toured the United States with May Tully in a vaudeville play. The night of the fire, deGuibert, with

⁸⁰"Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1.

⁸¹Information on deGuibert was provided by her niece, Ernestine Benninger, youngest daughter of Undena and Ernest Eberlein. Ernestine Benninger to the author, 21 December 1991.

Betty in her arms, slid down a rope to escape.

After the fire, deGuibert, described by her niece Ernestine Benninger as "very statuesque, quiet, and with a hilarious sense of humor," worked as an artist model. She moved with the Eberleins to Bolton Hall's single-tax community of Free Acres, New Jersey in 1919. In 1920 she married artist Charles Fitch Lester and became a homemaker. Apart from some time spent caring for her parents in Maryland, deGuibert lived in Free Acres until her death in the late 1940s. For her and her sister's family, Helicon Home Colony, and more significantly Free Acres, provided a stable and comfortable community of active and involved friends.

Lillian [deGroff?] Davis [Richards?]
Occupation: Colony Cook

Identified as a Cornell University graduate in newspaper reports, Davis was hired as the colony cook.⁸² She planned to earn a doctorate at Columbia University and had been visiting schools of domestic science to study the latest kitchen methods.⁸³ Davis may have been the "college

⁸²The only Lillian Davis located in Cornell records was Lillian deGroff Davis Richards, who graduated in 1897. Cornell University, Alumni Directory 1868-1931 (Ithaca, N.Y.: The University, 1931), 216, 730.

⁸³"Upton Sinclair's Socialist Colony," Evening Record and Bergen County Herald, 26 October 1906, p. 1; "Upton Sinclair's Colony As It Really Is," Englewood Press, 3 November 1906, p. 3. Columbia University has no record of her attendance.

girl" who quit her colony position when the work proved too difficult.⁸⁴

In 1912, Davis offered her support to Meta Sinclair in a letter detailing how she had foreseen her future unhappiness. Davis believed Upton associated Meta with his past failures rather than his current successes, and she encouraged Meta to remain steadfast to her own ideals.⁸⁵ No further information on Davis could be located.

Athanasios (Anastias?) Diokos*
Occupation: Colony Nightwatchman

Little is known about Diokos, who was identified by the Newark Advertiser as the "Greek boy" who tended the colony boiler. According to the reporter, there were rumors that Diokos had been terminated the night of the fire.⁸⁶

Ernest and Undena deGuibert Eberlein, Lisbeth Undena⁸⁷
Ernest (1876-1931)*
Birthplace: Farm outside Hamilton, Ohio
Father's Occupation: Farmer, later employed by safe company
Religion: Atheist
Education: Attended public schools for sixth to eighth grade

⁸⁴Upton Sinclair, "A New Helicon Hall," The Independent 67 (9 September 1909): 580.

⁸⁵Lillian Davis to Meta Sinclair, 20 February 1912, Stone Papers.

⁸⁶"Hint at Secrets in Sinclair Fire," Newark Advertiser, 18 March 1907, p. 2.

⁸⁷Information on the Eberlein family was provided by Ernestine Benninger, the youngest daughter of Undena and Ernest Eberlein. Ernestine Benninger to the author, 21 December 1991.

Occupation: Artist for New York City lithography company
Undena (1880-1937)
Birthplace: St. Louis, Missouri
Father's Occupation: Lawyer
Religion: Disciples of Christ
Education: Eureka College, two years
Occupation: Stage Actress
Lisbeth Undena (1905-1982)*

Married in 1904, the Eberleins had met at the Straight Edge Club Room, a vegetarian restaurant operated by the Straight Edge Industrial Settlement, to which Ernest belonged. Ernest had been raised in Cincinnati, Ohio by his immigrant father, who had come to the United States from Germany in the late 1860s. As a child he took painting lessons from a Cincinnati artist, and at twelve years old won a competition sponsored by the local art museum. His parents, who had taken him out of school so that he could help support the family, would not allow him to accept his prize, a year's study in Paris. Instead, he worked with his father at a safe-building company, painting flowers on the safes.

As a young man, Ernest left home for New York City. There he became a lithographer, skilled in drawing the female stars of the period. He was an active union organizer and, although blackballed, was able to find work because his skills were in demand until the mid-1920s. In 1906 and 1907 Undena, whose stage name was Jane Gilbert, toured the United States with May Tully and Company in the

well-received vaudeville play, "Stop, Look and Listen."⁸⁸ Although she had spent time at Helicon, Undena was in San Francisco with the troupe at the time of the fire. Her sister Davida lived at the colony and cared for the nearly two-year-old Betty.

The Eberleins were attracted by Helicon Hall's living arrangements and promise of healthy foods. Englewood was also an easy commute from Ernest's job in New York City. The night of the fire Ernest had come home exhausted from work and went to bed fully clothed. Awakened by Sinclair's shouting, he realized he had not undressed and removed his money from his pockets and took off his shoes before he realized what had woke him.⁸⁹

In 1909 Ernest joined with Julius Hopp and William Doll to promote a summer colony for "artists, writers, social workers, members of the theatrical profession, and thinking people of all schools" in Liberty, New York. No evidence has been located to verify the existence of the colony, which rivaled Helicon Hall's luxuries, with its lake, croquet grounds, modern bathrooms, billiard room, and

⁸⁸"San Francisco," Variety, 23 March 1907, p. 15.

⁸⁹As children, Ernestine Benninger and her sisters heard about Helicon and the fire, and a childhood friend has written a play based on the colony. Laurel Hessing to the author, 13 December 1991 and 30 December 1991; Laurel Hessing, "Dream of a Summer Night," 1981.

library.⁹⁰ After living in the single-tax colony of Arden, Delaware and rental apartments in New York City, the Eberleins eagerly moved to the single-tax community of Free Acres, New Jersey in 1919. Both Eberleins were socialists who took an active interest in "developing an ideal form of government which would give the most freedom to the individual and the most involvement in governing themselves." While Ernest was an atheist who scoffed at organized religion, Undena had been raised in the Disciples of Christ church and took her religion seriously, singing hymns and reading the Bible to her daughters.

At Free Acres the Eberleins participated in town meetings and committees, coordinating individual and familial concerns with community interests. Here they raised four daughters who also chose to stay in Free Acres for at least part of their adult lives. The town's theater productions were of special interest to Undena, who remained an active thespian, although she never returned to the professional stage after 1907. She directed and acted in plays at Free Acres and helped lawyers with their elocution.

While the Eberleins ultimately rejected the communal arrangements of Straight Edge and Helicon, they thrived in the congenial communities of Arden and Free Acres, where

⁹⁰William Doll, Julius Hopp, and Ernest Eberlein to All Those Interested, [April 1909] and brochure on "Lakeview House. Known As Dolls House." Private collection of Laurel Helsing, Berkeley Heights, N.J.

like-minded individuals governed and played together. Willing to experiment with new living arrangements, the Eberleins were well-satisfied with Free Acres and declined job opportunities, even when work was scarce, that would return them to "a dull, uninteresting strata of the society."

Leonie Fichtenberg (1862-?)*

Birthplace: France (Had been in the U.S. for thirty-five years)

Religion: Protestant

Occupation: Colony Cook

A widow, Fichtenberg was badly burned in the Helicon Home Colony fire before she received further injuries jumping from her third-story window into a blanket held by other colonists. She spent twenty-two days in the hospital and suffered severe back and neck pain.⁹¹

William T. Grinnell*

Occupation: Colony Head Carpenter

Little is known about Grinnell, although he appears to have been more actively involved in Helicon activities than most employees. Sadakichi Hartmann claimed he was one of the people who had invited him to visit the colony.⁹²

According to colonist Grace Seymour, Grinnell was a progressive and, with William Noyes, one of the only two

⁹¹"Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1.

⁹²"Helicon Hall Cold to Visiting Trio," New York Times, 17 February 1907, pt. 5, p. 13.

practical men at the colony. Seymour further asserted that Grinnell helped keep the colony from financial ruin and operated "behind the throne" by helping Noyes replace Sinclair as colony "czar."⁹³ After the fire, Grinnell told reporters that he thought an enemy of the colony or of Sinclair was responsible for the fire.⁹⁴

James Tayloe and Margaret L. Riddle Gwathmey, Mary Tayloe, Winthrop

James (1863?-1944)

Birthplace: Buena Vista Plantation, Roanoke, Virginia

Religion: Episcopal

Education: Norfolk Male Academy; Virginia Military Institute; Vanderbilt University, M.D., 1893; postgraduate work, 1896-99⁹⁵

Occupation: Physician

Margaret (1875-?)

Birthplace: Tennessee

Mary Tayloe

Winthrop

Later known for his promotion of painless childbirth in the 1920s, James already was experimenting with anesthetics when his family moved to Helicon. He had become a doctor after belonging to an acrobatic troupe and beginning ministerial studies.⁹⁶ In 1906 the Gwathmeyes had been

⁹³"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

⁹⁴"To Investigate Helicon Fire," New York Times, 18 March 1907, p. 16.

⁹⁵According to Vanderbilt University records, Gwathmey completed a two-year medical degree in 1893 and returned to complete a three-year degree in 1899. Enclosure, Gerald S. Gotterer to the author, 30 September 1991.

⁹⁶"Dr. J. T. Gwathmey, Anesthetist, Dies," New York Times, 13 February 1944, p. 13.

married sixteen years and had two children. James had been practicing medicine in New York since 1902.

Margaret Gwathmey was most likely the southern Mrs. G. who served her fellow colonists fried chicken and sweet potatoes.⁹⁷ Sinclair remembered that the Gwathmeyes had left the colony because Margaret, whom he labeled "completely respectable and antisocialistic," thought the children "could not survive without hot bread."⁹⁸ Gwathmey also may have been the conventional, capitalist doctor who left the colony after asking one of the Irish servant girls to visit at his office.⁹⁹

In 1915 the newspapers reported that James had undergone surgery using an injected anesthetic, a procedure with which he had been experimenting.¹⁰⁰ During World War I he served as a U.S. Army captain, treating the wounded at the English and French fronts.¹⁰¹ He returned to New York City to pioneer painless childbirth methods through the injection of sedative drugs combined with a colonic

⁹⁷Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 36.

⁹⁸Sinclair, Autobiography, 130; Upton Sinclair to Mary Tayloe Gwathmey, 31 October 1932, Sinclair Papers.

⁹⁹Sinclair, The Brass Check, 70.

¹⁰⁰"Tests His Own Discovery," New York Times, 22 December 1915, p. 12.

¹⁰¹The "Gwathmey sandwich"--a glass of port followed by a glass of ether in oil and another glass of port--became well-known among injured soldiers. Constance L. Todd, Easier Motherhood; A Discussion of the Abolition of Needless Pain (New York: John Day Company, 1931), 20-21.

analgesia, which relieved pain while allowing women to retain consciousness. The procedure became known as the Gwathmey technique.¹⁰²

In addition to publishing articles and books on anesthesiology, James wrote Tumbling for Amateurs, a small booklet that went through nine printings between 1910 and 1931.¹⁰³ He also was interested in the establishment of city recreational centers. No political affiliation could be located for James, who was a member of the American Medical Association and the first president of the American Society of Anaesthetics. The Gwathmeys were divorced sometime before James's death in 1944. By 1920 Margaret Gwathmey was living with her father in Nashville and calling herself a widow.¹⁰⁴

In 1932 the Gwathmeys' daughter Mary wrote Sinclair a newsy letter full of reminiscences of her life at the colony. After a short career as a stage actress until "my dear conservative family intervened," she had worked as a writer and editor and now was a theatrical agent. She offered her services in selling They Call Me Carpenter to a

¹⁰²Ibid., James Tayloe Gwathmey, "Must Safe Childbirth Be Painful?" Parents Magazine 13 (February 1938): 22-23, 76-77.

¹⁰³J. T. Gwathmey, Tumbling for Amateurs (New York: American Sports Publishing Co., 1910).

¹⁰⁴1920 U.S. Census, Tennessee, vol. 10, ED36, sheet 1, line 34. According to James's 12 February 1944 New York Times obituary, the couple were divorced.

movie producer looking for such a story. Sinclair agreed, although there is no record of such a picture ever having been made.¹⁰⁵ The Gwathmeys' son Winthrop is identified in his father's obituary as a retired army captain.

Emma Erskine Hahn

Birthplace: London, England

Occupation: Colony financial manager

Hahn immigrated to the United States thirty years before Helicon Home Colony began operations in 1906. She described herself as a former aristocrat and royalist who had accepted socialism as "the only hope for improving the condition of the masses." She favored women's suffrage and was an agriculturist and "student of and writer upon philanthropy and political economy."¹⁰⁶

Hahn had traveled extensively and was married in Germany to Thomas Lane, with whom she had one child, Beatrice Erskine Lane. In 1906 she was the widow of Alfred J. Hahn of Stamford, Connecticut. She claimed to have had a typical well-to-do English childhood but to have suffered poverty in recent years. Newspaper reports at the time of the fire identified her as a "wealthy widow."¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁵Mary Tayloe Gwathmey to Upton Sinclair, 28 October 1932; Upton Sinclair to Mary Tayloe Gwathmey, 31 October 1932, Sinclair Papers.

¹⁰⁶Elisa H. Badger, "A Craftswoman in Agriculture," Craftsman 10 (August 1906): 630-37; Woman's Who's Who, 351.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., "Grills Author at Coroner's Inquest," New York World, 22 March 1907, p. 7.

A 1906 Craftsman article featured Hahn as an advocate of specialized farming as a means for families to escape the poverty and depression of tenements and factories. Specialized farming, in contrast to general farming, allowed its practitioners to develop the skills necessary to produce a highly competitive product. Hahn recommended purchasing abandoned farms and hiring workers on a cooperative basis. She herself had three farms in the Stamford region and had success raising Angora goats.

The night of the fire, Hahn was in New York City purchasing a portable fire escape. Much was made in newspaper reports about her absence as she was a light sleeper and the colony "watchdog." Articles recounted that a resident whose room was next to Hahn's was seen leaving the burning building fully dressed.

Beside Sinclair, Hahn was the only witness identified by name at the coroner's inquest into Lester Briggs's death.¹⁰⁸ She claimed that she had discussed the colony's financial problems with Sinclair and had personally decided against investing five thousand dollars.¹⁰⁹ Statements soon after the fire indicated that some colonists were

¹⁰⁸"Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1; "Dynamite Found at Helicon Hall," New York Herald, 18 March 1907, p. 3.

¹⁰⁹"Sinclair Colony Censured," New York Times, 22 March 1907, sec. 3, p. 2; "Censure for the Colony Managers," Evening Record and Bergen County Herald, 22 March 1907, p. 1.

considering reestablishing the colony at Hahn's Stamford estate.¹¹⁰

Little information on Hahn's life after the fire was located. In 1914 she was living in New York City and was a member of the International Peace Society, Woman's Press Club, and the Equal Franchise League, among other organizations.¹¹¹

Charles H. Hilliker*

Occupation: Consulting Engineer¹¹²

Employed by the colony to supervise the installation of the new boiler, Hilliker was first to discover the fire and alert the other residents. He denied that the fire started in the boiler, although he had earlier found a stick of dynamite in the basement.¹¹³ Residents credited Hilliker with personally rescuing five women, whom he assisted from second-story windows onto the portico roof and down to the

¹¹⁰In May 1907 Frances Maule Bjorkman wrote Meta Sinclair that she and Edwin had no money left "thanks to our Stamford adventure." This may have been a reference to colonists' attempt to reorganize at Hahn's estate; no other mention or record was located. Frances [Maule Bjorkman] to Meta Sinclair, 30 May 1907, Sinclair Papers.

¹¹¹Woman's Who's Who, 351.

¹¹²One newspaper identifies Hilliker as an engineering instructor at Columbia University, although this could not be verified. "Helicon Hall Burned Down," New York Sun, 17 March 1907, p. 5; Paul R. Palmer to the author, 9 December 1991.

¹¹³"A Fatal Fire at Englewood," Evening Record and Bergen County Herald, 16 March 1907, p. 1; "Dynamite Found at Helicon Hall," New York Herald, 18 March 1907, p. 3.

ground. Although Hilliker had not been at the colony for long, colonist Grace Seymour insisted that he helped William Grinnell and William Noyes keep the group from financial ruin. She also recalled that he "plays adorably on the violin and is a Connecticut Yankee, with a penchant for individualism and a mild form of socialism."¹¹⁴

Margaret Hogue (1887-?)*

Birthplace: Scotland
Religion: Protestant
Occupation: Waitress¹¹⁵

Hogue suffered minor burns in the colony fire and escaped by climbing down the rope ladder that the Potter family had just purchased. She stayed overnight at the hospital only because she had to wait for a donation of clothes. According to a 1908 Englewood directory, she lived at the same address as colonist Dora Steinlein.¹¹⁶ No additional information could be located.

Ellis O. Jones (1874?-1967)*

Birthplace: Columbus, Ohio
Education: Yale College, B.A.-1899
Occupation: Writer

A recent convert to socialism, Jones wrote Sinclair to express interest in his colony plan and later became a

¹¹⁴"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

¹¹⁵Some newspapers identified Hogue as a writer, although others, as well as the hospital records, listed her as a waitress.

¹¹⁶Tillotson's Englewood and Northern Valley Directory (Englewood, N.J.: Joseph H. Tillotson, Publisher, 1908).

colony trustee.¹¹⁷ In 1904 he had sold the Democratic Columbus Press-Post, which he also edited, when he realized the futility of capitalism in accomplishing his reform goals. While at Helicon he wrote for both socialist and general interest publications and served as secretary of the Intercollegiate Socialist Society.¹¹⁸

Jones often employed humor and satire to illustrate his philosophy. In a typical piece he describes the "prosperity disease"--an affliction of "those who have too much money"--which causes, for example, its victims to give books to starving people.¹¹⁹ He likened socialism to a church with its own doctrine and creed as moral as any other religion.¹²⁰ Articles identify Jones as a staff member of The Masses, Ladies Home Journal, and Life, although the exact dates or nature of his assignments could not be determined.

Jones is cited in John Reed's 1,500-line The Day in Bohemia or Life Among the Artists (1912), as a member of the Dutch Treat Club, a group of successful writers, editors,

¹¹⁷"Sinclair Explains His Home Colony," New York Times, 18 July 1906, p. 7.

¹¹⁸"An Editor Comes Into Camp," Progress 1 (April 1907): 7; Max Horn, The Intercollegiate Socialist Society, 1905-1921: Origins of the Modern American Student Movement (Boulder, Colo.: Westview Press, 1979), 235.

¹¹⁹Ellis O. Jones, "The Prosperity Disease," Lippincott's 85 (April 1910): 507.

¹²⁰Ellis O. Jones, "Unique Features of the Socialist Party," Arena 38 (October 1907): 423-26.

and artists.¹²¹ Masses editor Max Eastman described Jones in 1912 as "a slim prim, stiff little person, so stiff that he curved backward, but he had a smiling eye."¹²² In the 1920s Jones published eleven one-act farces, as well as three books on playing bridge.

A firm believer in isolationism, Jones accompanied Henry Ford on his ill-fated December 1915 peace ship to Europe and promoted the auto magnate as a Republican presidential candidate.¹²³ In 1918 Jones was arrested for sedition when he advocated the disbanding of the army and navy at a socialist rally in New York City. Committed to Bellevue Hospital for observation, Jones was declared sane but received a suspended sentence when his wife told the judge that Jones had suffered a nervous breakdown.¹²⁴

Jones was back in the news in 1941 when he was arrested in California for calling General Douglas MacArthur a deserter. He also was indicted three times by three separate federal grand juries in 1941, 1942, and 1943 for

¹²¹Alex Baskin, John Reed: The Early Years in Greenwich Village (New York: Archives of Social History, 1990), 11, 14. The book includes Reed's poem; the line about Jones appears on page 48.

¹²²Max Eastman, Enjoyment of Living (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1948), 398.

¹²³Ellis O. Jones, "Those Henry Ford Votes," Independent 86 (15 May 1916): 241-42.

¹²⁴"'Mourning' Meeting Is Damp and Dismal," New York Times, 14 December 1918, p. 24; "Bolshevik in Bellevue," New York Times, 15 December 1918, sec. 2, p. 1; "Court Releases Ellis O. Jones," New York Times, 24 December 1918, p. 4.

"conspiracy to undermine the morale of the armed forces." He was identified as leader of the isolationist National Copperheads and associate of Robert Noble, head of the pro-Nazi Friends of Progress. Jones and Noble had staged a mock impeachment trial of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in Los Angeles, an action for which they had received five- and four-year sentences, respectively, under California state sedition laws. In 1946 the federal sedition cases were dismissed, although Jones was fined several times throughout the process for contempt of court.¹²⁵

There is no evidence that Jones wrote about or participated in any communal activities after Helicon Home Colony. In 1967, four months before his father's death, Ellis O. Jones, Jr. wrote Sinclair that his father was blind but mentally alert and interested in hearing from his old friend. There was no record of Sinclair's reply.¹²⁶

Henrietta (Marietta?) D. Kimball (Kimble?)*
Occupation: Illustrator

Identified as either Henrietta or Marietta in newspaper

¹²⁵"Accused of Libel on General M'Arthur [sic]," New York Times, 1 April 1942, p. 5; see coverage of the federal grand jury investigations in the New York Times, July 1942-January 1944; Henry Hoke, It's A Secret (New York: Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946); "Mass Sedition Case Dismissed By Court," New York Times, 23 November 1946, p. 1. Photographs of the Jones/Noble "impeachment" of Roosevelt appear in "U.S. Sends Fascist Noble to Prison for Five Years," Life 13 (3 August 1942): 32

¹²⁶Ellis O. Jones, Jr. to Upton Sinclair, 27 April 1967, Sinclair Papers.

articles, Kimball remains an elusive figure. Articles report she was treated for shock at the hospital but apparently she was not admitted to Englewood Hospital (no record of her stay was located). Colonist Ernest Eberlein reported that she had fallen naked to the ground after trying to escape by using her nightgown as a rope.¹²⁷

Helen Knoll (1871-?) *

Birthplace: Germany

Religion: Protestant

Occupation: Assistant Housekeeper

Knoll spent two days in Englewood Hospital after jumping from the third-floor balcony to the courtyard during the colony fire, her fall broken by the fig tree. According to one report, she was badly disfigured by burns to her face. No additional information could be located on Knoll.

[Harry] Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951)

Birthplace: Sauk Centre, Minnesota

Education: Sauk Centre Public Schools; Oberlin Academy;
Yale College, A.B.-1907

Religion: Congregational

Father's Occupation: Physician

Occupation: Handyman

Among the first colony residents, Lewis sought adventure rather than an outlet for his newfound socialism when he joined fellow Yale dropout Allan Updegraff in Englewood. Under Updegraff's influence, Lewis had replaced the religious zeal of his youth with a theoretical interest in ethics and socialism. Ostensibly hired as furnace

¹²⁷Ernest Eberlein to Undena Eberlein, 17 March 1907, quoted in Laurel Hessing, Free Acres Anthology, forthcoming.

keepers, the two quickly became all-purpose handymen: moving furniture and scrubbing clothes and dishes, in addition to keeping the furnace fired. Their distaste for hard work and low pay is evident in their satirical report on colony life, "Two Yale Men in Utopia."¹²⁸ The colony social life proved more satisfying, and the two became close friends with Edith Summers. Although Summers became engaged to Lewis at this time, she married Updegraff in January 1908.

In early December, after a six weeks' stay, Lewis and Updegraff left Helicon for bookstore jobs in New York City. Despite the disagreeable manual labor, the young authors concluded,

where else than at Helicon Hall could I have learned so many new things every minute; learned of how little worth I am in many ways; seen so many novel yet vital theories of life actually tried, and had met in daily intimacy and equality so many people thoroughly worthwhile?¹²⁹

Still looking for adventure, Lewis sought work on the Panama Canal, then under construction. Unsuccessful, he returned to Yale and crammed a full year's courses into one semester, completing his degree in spring 1908 (the faculty allowed his records to show he graduated with the class of 1907). At college Lewis pursued his literary interests,

¹²⁸Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff, "Two Yale Men in Utopia," New York Sun, 16 December 1906, sec. 3, p. 4.

¹²⁹Ibid. Although both Lewis and Updegraff are listed as authors, the article is written in the first-person singular. For additional insights on Lewis's stay at Helicon, see Mark Schorer, Sinclair Lewis: An American Life (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1961), 111-16.

contributing both to college publications and the local newspapers. Upon graduation he spent a brief stint on the Waterloo, Iowa Daily Courier, returning east to he became an investigator for the New York City Charity Organization Society.

In December 1908 Lewis moved to Carmel, California to join the MacGowan/Cooke family. They had grown fond of him at Helicon and invited him to work as their part-time secretary. Lewis--captivated by thirteen-year-old Helen Cooke--agreed, planning to collaborate with the sisters on Ecce Homo, a novel portraying Jesus as a modern radical. By all reports, Lewis never worked for the sisters, although he borrowed money regularly from them, and Cooke arranged for Lewis to publish short stories and a serial in the New Thought journal, Nautilus.

In August 1909 Lewis left Carmel to become a reporter for the San Francisco Evening Bulletin. For the next few years he held staff positions ranging from manuscript reader for Frederick A. Stokes to managing editor of Volta Review, a Washington, D.C. magazine for the deaf. With his successful short stories sales, he began a full-time freelance career in 1915.

Lewis never again pursued colony life, although he visited the European artist communities. He became a successful short story writer and novelist, publishing nineteen novels and countless short stories between 1917 and

his death in 1951. Most of his novels--such as the well-known Main Street (1920), Babbitt (1922), and Elmer Gantry (1927)--satirize the provincialism of small-town American life. In Money Writes! Upton Sinclair characterizes Lewis as a good author gone greedy and wonders why he disguises his radical roots. Although he considered himself more of a diagnostician than a reformer, Lewis was hurt and angered by these charges, especially since his fictional iconoclasts purposely did not display the doctrinal purity Sinclair desired.¹³⁰ His novels did not shy away from social themes: Ann Vickers (1933), for example, follows a young Midwestern girl trying to find herself through social work who becomes involved with feminism, prison reform, and sexual freedom.

In 1925 Lewis received the Pulitzer Prize for Arrowsmith, which combines satire and realism in its examination of one doctor's struggle between pure research and saving lives. He refused the award, disliking the criteria he claimed emphasized popularity over merit. Five years later, he became the first American awarded the Nobel Prize for literature; although he accepted the award, he criticized American academia's literary tastes for being divorced from vital and current writings.

Lewis remained in contact with Sinclair over the years,

¹³⁰See "The Ex-Furnaceman" in Upton Sinclair, Money Writes! (New York: Albert & Charles Boni, 1927) and Schorer, Sinclair Lewis, 496-98, 796.

exchanging friendly letters commenting on each other's writings. Sinclair had a grudging admiration for the one-time janitor, whom he believed learned more in his short stay at Helicon than in his three years at Yale, an observation repeated in The Goose-Step, Money Writes!, and his autobiography. Lewis also figures prominently in The Cup of Fury--Sinclair's diatribe against drinking--as a gifted writer destroyed by alcoholism.

As detailed by biographer Mark Schorer, Lewis's last twenty years were a period of "decline" and "fall." In the end he was once again friendless, and his alcoholism had ravaged both his mind and body. Schorer's portrait of Lewis at seventy-six faintly echoes Edith Summer's memory of him at twenty-one, when the "whimsical, puckish ways of this frivolous young man and his odd, wil-o'-the-wisp humor caused the more staid residents of the Hall to rather condescend to him and take him not so seriously." Helicon offered Lewis a temporary release from Yale but did not resolve the lifelong conflicts between "rebel and conservative, polemicist and escapist."¹³¹

Alice MacGowan (1858-1947)*

Birthplace: Perrysburg, Ohio

Father's Occupation: Lawyer; Editor, Chattanooga Times

Religion: Presbyterian

Education: At home and in Chattanooga, Tennessee public schools

Occupation: Magazine writer

¹³¹Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 34; see Schorer, 810.

Accompanying her younger sister Grace Cooke to Helicon, MacGowan also sought a congenial, inexpensive home in which to pursue her writing. Sinclair remembered her as a popular novelist who was charming, honest, and sisterly.¹³²

MacGowan wrote both short stories and novels, many focusing on the Cumberland region in which she had been raised. In 1890 she had gained further insights into the people and culture of the North Carolina Black Mountains by undertaking an eight-week, thousand-mile solo journey by horse to gather literary material.¹³³

MacGowan had considered a newspaper career before concentrating on free-lance work. Arriving in New York as a young woman she visited Adolph S. Ochs, then publisher of the New York Times. She had known Ochs for many years as her father had served as his mentor when Ochs purchased the Chattanooga Times, which John MacGowan edited.¹³⁴ After arranging to write for the paper, MacGowan was surprised when Ochs pulled her onto his lap; she responded by hitting him and never returned. Sinclair recounts this story in The Brass Check to illustrate the hypocrisy of Ochs in

¹³²Sinclair, The Brass Check, 118-19.

¹³³Alice MacGowan, Judith of the Cumberlands (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1908), foreword; [Mary S.] Logan, The Part Taken By Women in American History (1912, reprint; New York: Arno Press, 1972), 847.

¹³⁴Gilbert E. Govan and James W. Livingood, The Chattanooga Country 1540-1962 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1963), 318-19.

criticizing the divorce and remarriage of socialist minister George Herron.¹³⁵

MacGowan apparently shared her sister's New Thought beliefs but was not actively involved in the movement. Her injuries in the colony fire were nearly identical to those of her sister, and she also stayed fifteen days in the hospital. In the fire she lost extensive notes for a Civil War novel based on her father's reminiscences and her own memories of his wartime service. After the fire she reconstructed her research and wrote The Sword in the Stone.¹³⁶

In spring 1908 MacGowan moved with Cooke to Carmel-By-the-Sea, where they spent their remaining years. She identified herself as a Republican in a biographical statement six years later. In 1919 she wrote Sinclair that she and Cooke were publishing mostly anonymous or pseudonymous pieces.¹³⁷ MacGowan and fellow Carmel resident Perry Newbery published five detective novels in the 1920s; reviews indicate that these stories, most featuring detective Jerry Boyne, were of uneven quality.

¹³⁵Sinclair, The Brass Check, 114-19. Although Sinclair does not mention MacGowan by name, a 1919 letter from her asks him not to use the story, as it was a personal offense against her alone and she would be recognized. Alice MacGowan to Upton Sinclair, 13 August 1919, Sinclair Papers.

¹³⁶Alice MacGowan, The Sword in the Stone (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1910), preface.

¹³⁷Alice MacGowan to Upton Sinclair, 13 August 1919, Sinclair Papers.

MacGowan's communal interests mirrored those of her sister. She viewed Helicon Home Colony not as an example for others but as a personal means to pursue economical working and living arrangements.

James McNiff (1848-?) *
 Birthplace: United States
 Religion: Catholic
 Occupation: Colony Engineer

McNiff, a bachelor, suffered smoke inhalation and burns on his face and hands when he escaped the burning Helicon Hall by running down the main staircase. Despite his severe injuries, nurses noted that he was in good spirits and did not complain.¹³⁸ Nothing else is known about this resident.

Michael Marvin¹³⁹ (1863-?) *
 Birthplace: Ireland
 Father's Occupation: Day Laborer
 Occupation: Colony Furnace Keeper

Marvin immigrated to the United States in 1870 and had been employed at Helicon Hall on and off for fourteen years. In their satirical look at colony life Sinclair Lewis and Allan Updegraff recalled that Marvin calmly returned to

¹³⁸Information on McNiff is from Englewood Hospital records and "Helicon Hall Burned Down," New York Sun, 17 March 1907, p. 5, among other newspaper reports.

¹³⁹The 1900 U.S. Census lists Michael Marvin and Michael Marvin, Jr. living in Englewood. Apparently father and son, both were born in Ireland. Because Marvin Senior had been unemployed for 12 months in 1900 and would have been 70 years old in 1906, Marvin Junior, age 43, was most likely the person employed by the colony. 1900 U.S. Census, New Jersey, vol. 3, e.d. 11, sheets 13 and 14.

Helicon to turn off a furnace switch when his inexperienced replacements accidentally flooded the basement. He was rehired after the young authors deserted the colony.¹⁴⁰ Colonist Edwin Potter had called Marvin's employment a compromise as no members had been found with his skills "whom we consider our social equal in every respect." At the same time, Potter speculated that "Michael himself may become cultured and co-operative, solving the problem [of hiring socially-inferior servants] in that way."¹⁴¹

William Pepperell and Helen Robinson Montague, William, Robin*

William (1873-1953)

Birthplace: Chelsea, Massachusetts

Religion: Episcopal

Education: private tutors; Chelsea High School; St. Paul's Cathedral School, Garden City, Long Island; Emerson Institute, Washington, D.C.; Harvard University, A.B.-1896, A.M.-1897, Ph.D.-1898¹⁴²

Occupation: Instructor, Columbia University

Helen (1876-1964)

Birthplace: Cambridge, Massachusetts

Education: University of California; Barnard College; Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania, M.D.-1911

Occupation: Medical Student

William Pepperell, Jr. (1899-1957)

Robinson Prescott Cary (1903-?)

Although William identified himself as a Fabian

¹⁴⁰Lewis and Updegraff, "Two Yale Men"; "Personal and Social," Englewood Press, 5 January 1907, p. 3.

¹⁴¹"Upton Sinclair's Colony to Live at Helicon Hall," New York Times, 7 October 1906, pt. 3, p. 2.

¹⁴²The biographical data on William Montague was obtained primarily from John W. Leonard, Who's Who in New York City and State (New York: L. R. Hamersly & Co., 1907), 945.

Socialist in the 1907 Who's Who in New York City and State, Sinclair claimed the professor had few political beliefs until he joined the colony. According to Sinclair, William was assailed in the Columbia University Faculty Club for his "red" beliefs and eyed suspiciously by the Barnard dean for his association with colony maid Minnie Campbell.¹⁴³

William later claimed that reading Edward Bellamy's Looking Backward had made him a socialist and taught him the necessity of institutional, as well as individual, action.¹⁴⁴ He began teaching at Columbia in 1903, after four years at the University of California. Edith Summers remembered William's "slow, quiet smile, the composed manner and the beautifully modulated voice, whose accent bespeaks him a son of old Boston."¹⁴⁵

William married Helen in 1896. During their stay at Helicon Hall, she was pursuing her medical studies and did not share in the care of the children as did the other colony mothers. According to John Dewey, the Montagues' maid had accompanied them to Helicon. At the time of the fire, the parents lived on the second floor, and the

¹⁴³Sinclair, Autobiography, 131. See entry on Minnie Campbell above.

¹⁴⁴William Pepperell Montague, "Confessions of an Animistic Materialist," in Contemporary American Philosophy: Personal Statements, ed. George P. Adams and William Pepperell Montague (1930; New York: Russell & Russell, 1962), vol. 2, 135-59.

¹⁴⁵Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 33.

children slept in the downstairs dormitory. William was reported to have injured his face and back jumping from the building but was not admitted to Englewood Hospital.¹⁴⁶

Along with Dewey, Felix Adler, and others, William contributed to the reputation of the Columbia University philosophy department as one of the best in the country. Calling himself an "animistic materialist," Montague became part of the new realist movement, which saw truth in relation to reality, a view that contrasted to the Deweyian view of truth through verification.¹⁴⁷ William wrote on his own philosophical views and authored several philosophical surveys.¹⁴⁸

William also took an active stance on issues of the day. For example, he spoke in favor of birth control, academic freedom of expression, and a stay of execution for Sacco and Vanzetti. Not surprisingly, William was critical of men who did not let their wives work outside the home. He predicted that birth control would lead to marriages

¹⁴⁶"Death in Flames at Helicon Hall," Newark Advertiser, 16 March 1907, p. 1.

¹⁴⁷George Dykhuizen, The Life and Mind of John Dewey (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University, 1973), 119, 122.

¹⁴⁸William was president of the American Philosophical Association in 1933. Following his death, the Journal of Philosophy devoted an issue to his memory, publishing articles on his beliefs and devotion to teaching. See Journal of Philosophy, vol. 51, no. 21 (14 October 1954).

based on friendship and love rather than strict fidelity.¹⁴⁹ In the early 1930s he advocated fascist communes within a capitalist economy to ease the problems of the Depression. Unemployed citizens could band together in cooperative, nonprofit communities, producing and bartering necessary products.¹⁵⁰

Helen, who identified herself as a Democrat, also became an active participant in current issues. Most of her activities related to her work as chief of psychiatric services for the New York Children's Court, a position she held from 1917 to 1952. At the time of her retirement, colleagues credited her with transforming the court from a system that frightened children into one that dealt constructively and sympathetically with the causes of juvenile delinquency.¹⁵¹ She established a court-related psychiatric treatment clinic and served as a psychiatrist and fund raiser for a home for unwed mothers.

The Montagues' older son William graduated from the

¹⁴⁹William Pepperell Montague, "Edgell Case: May a Married Woman Be a Teacher?" Independent 74 (8 May 1913): 1030-33; "End of Marriage Seen in Feminism," New York Times, 7 February 1927, p. 12.

¹⁵⁰See, for example, "Philosopher Urges 'Fascist Communes,'" New York Times, 7 September 1934, p. 18; "Capitalism Held Forcing a Revolt," New York Times, 29 December 1934, p. 6. Montague believed only a dictatorship would allow the president to implement the socialism necessary to combat starvation. His voluntary communes were similar to Sinclair's EPIC colonies.

¹⁵¹"Delinquents Lose a Friend in Court," New York Times, 1 November 1952, p. 21.

Columbia University School of Journalism in 1922. He worked as a newsreel editor for Paramount News and Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and was overseas head of the U.S. Office of War Information's Newsreel Division in World War II.¹⁵² Nothing is known about the Montagues' son Robinson, who apparently died before his father's death in 1953.

B. H. Nadal (1850-1929)*

Birthplace: Indiana

Father's Occupation: Methodist Clergyman, Seminary Professor

Religion: Methodist

Occupation: Poet

Son of a prominent Methodist clergyman, Nadal did not achieve as much renown as his father. Rev. Bernard H. Nadal, Sr. was acting president of Drew Theological Seminary in Madison, New Jersey when he died at age 55 in 1870. He became well-known writing for Methodist publications and serving as chaplain for the U.S. House of Representatives.¹⁵³

According to his sister, Nadal acted as father to the family after Rev. Nadal's death.¹⁵⁴ Identified by the

¹⁵²"William Montague, Newsreel Editor, 58," New York Times, 6 October 1957, p. 85.

¹⁵³"Death of Rev. Dr. Nadal of Drew Theological Seminary," New York Times, 21 June 1870, p. 3; "Obituary. Rev. Bernard H. Nadal, D.D. of Drew Theological Seminary," New York Times, 21 June 1870, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴Rebecca M. Nadal, note in The Woodmites; a Play in 4 Acts by Bernard Harrison Nadal (New York, 1930), no page number.

Dictionary of North American Authors as a playwright, Nadal had one play published posthumously, "The Woodmites." As with several of his poems and his children's book, The Fairy Court; or Judge Weeks and her friends (1928), the underlying theme of "The Woodmites" was the destruction of the Hudson River area by industry.

Nadal supported Henry George's single-tax theories. In a poem celebrating the twenty-fifth anniversary of George's Progress and Poverty, Nadal wrote "Your genius like a glowing star shines in its firm fixed place . . . justice might reign through all the Earth because you led the way. . . we guard the flame his spirit set alight."¹⁵⁵

After escaping the burning colony building, Nadal helped Upton Sinclair and Edith Summers hold a blanket to catch residents jumping from second-and third-story windows. Nothing else is known about Nadal's later activities.

William Horace and Anna Bogert Gausmann Noyes*

William (1862-1928)

Birthplace: Mandura, India

Father's Occupation: Missionary

Religion: Congregationalist

Education: New Haven, Conn. public schools; St. Johnsbury Academy, St. Johnsbury, Vermont; Amherst College, B.A.-1884, M.A.-1905; Andover Theological Seminary, graduated 1887; Teachers College, Columbia University, diploma-1902

Occupation: Instructor in Manual Training, Teachers College

Anna (1873-1971)

¹⁵⁵Bernard Harrison Nadal, Friendship, and Other Poems (New York: R. J. Shores, 1916), 24.

Birthplace: Brooklyn, New York
 Father's Occupation: General Manager, Luggage Store
 Religion: Presbyterian
 Education: Brooklyn Girls High School, Brooklyn, New York;
 Teachers College, 1896-1901, 1906-B.S., 1930-
 A.M.
 Occupation: Colony housekeeper

William's teaching career represented a change of direction for this "kindly-faced older man," who had married Anna in 1904.¹⁵⁶ In 1887 he had begun serving as assistant pastor to the Boston Berkeley Street Congregational Church when he felt a call to missionary work in Japan. The American Board of Missionaries rejected his application because he believed in probation after death for those who had not heard the gospel while alive. With support from his own church William and his first wife Inez Curl and their two children went to Japan in 1888; five years later the board approved his appointment.¹⁵⁷ Recalled in 1897 when he again questioned church doctrine, he left the ministry and his wife to become head resident at the Ethical Culture Settlement in Chicago. John Dewey encouraged him to work with his hands as a means to overcome his personal problems.¹⁵⁸ After teaching in New Jersey and Georgia high

¹⁵⁶Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 33.

¹⁵⁷"Mr. Noyes Again Rejected," New York Times, 12 November 1888, p. 1; "Farewell to Mr. Noyes," New York Times, 8 December 1888, p. 1; "Probation After Death," New York Times, 13 October 1893, p. 5.

¹⁵⁸William T. Bawden, "Some Leaders In Industrial Education: William Horace Noyes," Industrial Arts and Vocational Education, December 1950, p. 383-85.

schools, William accepted a position at Teachers College, becoming an assistant professor in 1910.

In a series of teaching manuals for wordworking, William covers everything from American trees and wood properties to the care and use of power tools. He believed the evils of child labor had destroyed the positive relationship between work and education and stressed the value of manual training and an understanding of industrial processes.¹⁵⁹ His books demonstrate his abilities and interest in arts and crafts design. Anna shared this avocation, writing articles on inexpensively furnishing a home with well-constructed handmade furniture and sewing simple, comfortable clothes.¹⁶⁰

Both Noyeses were active in colony activities from the time of the initial planning meetings. Anna witnessed the incorporation of the colony and company, purchased five hundred dollars worth of stock, and served as housekeeper. William chaired the planning committee meetings and was a member of the colony board of trustees. Colonist Grace Seymour claimed that William, backed by Charles Hilliker and

¹⁵⁹See, for example, William Noyes, Handwork in Wood (Peoria: Manual Arts Press, 1910); Design and Construction in Wood (Peoria: Manual Arts Press, 1913); and "Idle Boy," Independent 61 (9 August 1906): 330-32.

¹⁶⁰Anna G. Noyes, "A Home-Making Experiment in a City Flat," Independent 62 (16 May 1907): 1124-30; idem, "A Practical Protest Against Fashion," Independent 63 (29 August 1907): 503-09.

William Grinnell, was the colony leader.¹⁶¹ Whatever their exact roles, the Noyeses were intrinsically involved with the colony. Sinclair considered Anna his "right hand" at Helicon and William "the very incarnation of insignificance," until one asked intelligent questions and he offered his views. To Meta Sinclair, Anna was "capable and charming" and William "pleasant and gentle."¹⁶² As detailed in chapter 3, both Sinclairs record Upton's affair with Anna in their autobiographies. The 1908 deed recording the sale of the Helicon Hall property lists Anna and William as secretary and president, respectively, of the Home Colony Company.¹⁶³

After the fire, the Noyeses did not participate in any other communal experiments. They moved to New York City, then briefly to Duluth, Minnesota where William supervised the high school industrial arts program. William accepted a position with the Federal Board for Vocational Education and was assigned to soldier rehabilitation in New York City. From 1921 to 1928, when he died, he held a similar position in Albany with the New York State Department of Education.

¹⁶¹"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

¹⁶²Upton Sinclair, Love's Progress--Early Draft, p. 328 and 271, Sinclair Papers and Meta Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, p. 15, Stone Papers.

¹⁶³Home Colony Company to Amey Mowry Reinmund, 6 August 1908, Grantee Index, Individuals, 1714-1962, Book 700, p. 413-15, Bergen County Courthouse, Hackensack, N.J.

According to one biographer, William was "identified" with the Consumer's League, single tax, cooperative movement, women's suffrage, and socialism.¹⁶⁴

After Helicon, Anna worked as a manual arts teacher and opened her own school in Leonia, New Jersey.¹⁶⁵ In 1913 she published How I Kept My Baby Well, a detailed study of her five-year-old son's first twenty-five months.¹⁶⁶ Crediting John Dewey as the inspiration for a scientific study of her own child, Anna meticulously documented Leonard's diet, bowel movements, and activities to ascertain how best to avoid illness. She also was active in founding a cooperative grocery store in Leonia.

Edwin Stanton and Cora Louise Lightbown Potter, Lloyd, Amy*¹⁶⁷

Ed (1865-1951)

Birthplace: Washington, D.C.

Father's Occupation: County Sheriff

Religion: Methodist, later Unitarian

Education: Cornell University, Bachelor of Letters, 1888

Occupation: Editor, Universal News Bureau

Cora (1877-1968)

Birthplace: Troy, New York

Father's Occupation: Carpenter

¹⁶⁴Bawden, "Some Leaders," 8.

¹⁶⁵According to Noyes's daughter-in-law, the school was Anna's attempt to provide siblings for Leonard but only served to alienate him. Margaret Noyes Andrews to the author, 12 November 1990.

¹⁶⁶Anna G. Noyes, How I Kept My Baby Well (Baltimore: Warwick & York, Inc., 1913).

¹⁶⁷Information on the Potter family was provided by Amy Cook, daughter of Edwin and Cora Potter. Amy Potter Cook, interview with the author, 22 February 1992, and personal papers in private collection of Amy Potter Cook, Arden, Del.

Education: High School graduate
 Occupation: Head of Colony Children's Department
 Lloyd (1903-1983)
 Amy [Smolens Cook] (1904-)

Born in Washington, D.C. while his father worked for the U.S. Treasury Department, Ed spent most of his childhood in Wellsboro, Pennsylvania, where his father served as county sheriff. In his unpublished autobiography, he recalled an idyllic childhood in a large family. At age nineteen he went to Cornell to study literature. He pursued a newspaper career, often writing and editing for publications concerned with social issues. From 1894 to 1900 Ed helped found and edit The Pathfinder, a Washington-based weekly aimed at preparing young men and women for a "intelligent and patriotic kind of citizenship."¹⁶⁸

At age thirty-six, Ed married Cora, whom he had met at Straight Edge Industrial Settlement. The Potters became good friends with the Eberleins, who also belonged to Straight Edge, and Undena Eberlein helped deliver their daughter Amy in 1904. Both Potters were socialists who made a joint decision to join Helicon Home Colony.

An active participant in the colony planning meetings, Ed became a trustee of both the Home Colony Company and the colony.¹⁶⁹ His comments indicate that he clearly saw a distinction between the servants and the middle-class

¹⁶⁸Pathfinder, no. 1 (6 January 1894), no page number.

¹⁶⁹"Sinclair Explains His Colony," New York Times, 18 July 1906, p. 7.

colonists. (See comments re Michael Marvin above.)

Before joining the colony as head of the children's department, Cora had taken care of children at home, including several who boarded with the Potters while they attended Farm School, a precursor of the Ferrer Colony's Modern School.¹⁷⁰ According to Amy Potter Cook, her mother was interested in experimental schools but disavowed the complete freedom some advocated. Cora's natural affinity for understanding children and helping them learn how to behave brought welcome income to supplement Ed's salary.

Cora may have been the "Mrs. P.," whom Edith Summers called "ultraradical in matters pertaining to nutrition," remembering that she was

a strict vegetarian, an abhorer of tea and coffee, and one who belligerently refused to put one grain of salt in any article of food, stoutly maintaining that nature had put in all that was required. When she held sway in the kitchen, we drank water or milk; we ate unsalted mush for breakfast, and lentil loaf, flanked by many unsalted vegetables, for dinner; and gnawed at hard crackers a good deal like dog biscuit, for the good of our teeth.¹⁷¹

The night of the fire, the Potter family escaped safely from the building with a ninety-cent rope Ed had purchased the day before. Prior to the fire, he had been ridiculed

¹⁷⁰"Household Experiment on the Palisades," Charities and the Commons 17 (3 November 1906): 185.

¹⁷¹Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 36. The Potters were the only known Helicon family whose last name began with the letter P, although Amy Potter Cook remembers her mother's later fondness for raw meat. It is possible that her vegetarianism was a passing interest.

for his concern over the lack of fire escapes (most likely the same discussion that had sent Emma Hahn to New York City to purchase rope ladders).¹⁷² Cora injured her hands sliding down the rope and both she and Lloyd suffered from exposure in the frigid temperature (Amy had been rescued earlier with the infants in the nursery).

Labeling the fire "that most effective of all spring housecleaners," the Potters recalled that their loss gave new meaning to the phrase "the simple life." They found a farmer who was leasing lots to interested families and set up a tent, furnishing it with easy-to-build and clean furniture. Cora cared for two neighborhood children, thus providing playmates for Amy and Lloyd. Declaring their tent experiment a success, they claimed they had "taken a long step toward the solution of our home problem--at least for half the year."¹⁷³ During 1908 and 1909, Cora cared for the Montague boys in the Potters' New York City apartment and at summer camp while Helen Montague continued her medical education.

Ed continued to work as a journalist. From 1914 to 1918 he served as associate editor of Equity, a quarterly "devoted to improved methods of self-government." His articles ran in the journal's initiative, referendum, and

¹⁷²"Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1.

¹⁷³Edwin S. Potter and Cora L. Potter, "Making a Tent Home Livable," Independent 66 (3 June 1909): 1232-37.

recall department. From 1919 to his retirement in 1939 he handled publicity for the National Anti-Tuberculosis Association in Washington, D.C. A 1936 news release on the National Capital Service Bureau, a clearinghouse on legislative and employment news, identified Potter as its director, citing his experience as Washington correspondent for the New York Sun and associate editor of the Farmers Open Forum.¹⁷⁴

The Potters continued their search for the perfect domestic arrangement, following Sinclair to the single-tax colony in Arden, Delaware, where they rented a house. Cora's parents had moved to Arden in 1908, and her father built many of the homes there. During the winters of 1912 and 1913, Cora took the children to the single-tax community in Fairhope, Alabama so that they could attend Marietta Johnson's Organic School. In 1917 the Potters built a home in Arden, although Ed rented an apartment in Washington, D.C. where he worked. In 1932 they moved to the Llano Cooperative Colony in Louisiana at the instigation of their son Lloyd, who found life there "closer in harmony with his ideals."¹⁷⁵ Lloyd worked as a woodcutting teacher at

¹⁷⁴National Capital Service Bureau news release, 2 September 1936, with personal note from Edwin S. Potter to Upton Sinclair, Sinclair Papers; "Private Rites for E. S. Potter," [September ? 1951], unidentified obituary in personal collection of Amy Potter Cook.

¹⁷⁵Edwin S. Potter to Upton Sinclair, 7 December 1932, Sinclair Papers. Cora urged Sinclair to join "our little experiment in better living" (Cora Potter to Upton Sinclair,

Llano's Kid Kolony while Cora combined her interests in child care and nutrition, teaching children how to prepare their own meals.¹⁷⁶

Cora and Ed shared their socialist convictions with their children. Amy Potter Cook, a painter, calls herself a socialist and now lives in Arden. She attended Philadelphia Museum School of Industrial Art and The Academy in Philadelphia and, like her mother, took care of preschool children. One year she worked at Rose Valley School, so that her children could attend a school taught by a woman who had studied with Marietta Johnson.

For many years Lloyd taught shop classes in the Philadelphia public schools. According to his sister, he was always searching for his Shangri-la, which led him to join Llano and become a Quaker. Active in civil rights protests, he later became interested in the anti-nuclear movement. In 1981, at age 78, he joined the Caravan for Human Survival, which visited college campuses to protest nuclear arms. Wearing colonial garb and riding his horse, he carried a sign identifying himself as "Paul Revere

1 February 1934, Sinclair Papers).

¹⁷⁶Bob Brown, Can We Co-Operate? (Pleasant Plains, N.Y.: Roving Eye Press, 1940), 197, 200. Although the Potters' letters to Sinclair demonstrate commitment to Llano's goals, Amy Potter Cook recalls her brother's personal problems as also instrumental in the family's decision to move to Llano.

II."¹⁷⁷

The Potters--much like their close friends the Eberleins--wanted to put their beliefs in action by living in a community that reflected their socialist views. At the same time, their financial problems reflected the difficulties faced by writers, especially those who wanted to remain true to their convictions. According to Amy Potter Cook, her parents would not have moved to Helicon if the costs had been beyond the family budget, despite their strong support of the colony. The happy-go-lucky Ed remained enthusiastic about the experience, believing Helicon Hall had been "good while it lasted." Amy Potter Cook concludes that her mother--the strength of the family--and her father--the optimist and joker--were ultimately idealists, seeking an economically-secure life that reflected their personal beliefs.

Stephen L. Randall¹⁷⁸

Occupation: Colony director, financial superintendent

Identified by Sinclair as a "faithful member," Randall held several positions at the colony, including director and

¹⁷⁷"Farewell," Arden 98 (August 1983) and "Paul Revere saw the Warning Lights in time. . ." brochure, personal collection of Amy Potter Cook.

¹⁷⁸The 1900 U.S. Census lists a Stephen L. Randall, born 1874, living in Providence, Rhode Island with his wife and four-year-old son. He was born in Rhode Island and worked as a dry goods dealer. Anecdotal information suggests that this is the same person. 1900 U.S. Census, Rhode Island, vol. 11, ED 130, sheet 7, line 66.

financial superintendent.¹⁷⁹ He also was a member and secretary of the Home Colony Company board of trustees and owned one hundred dollars worth of stock. Randall figured in an anecdote Sinclair recounted about psychic phenomena at the colony. A ouija board spelled out "Providence child has been carried to bed." When Randall, owner of a small business in Providence, called his wife, he learned his child had pneumonia.¹⁸⁰

At the coroner's inquest Sinclair claimed that bills had been late being paid because Randall had taken the accounting books with him to Havana while he recovered from an illness.¹⁸¹ Randall was apparently not at the colony at the time of the fire when Emma Hahn had taken over as financial manager.

Percy Russell

Although involved in colony administration, Russell may not have lived at Helicon. Identified as a Brooklyn resident, he witnessed the incorporation of both the Home Colony Company and Helicon Home Colony and had purchased two hundred dollars worth of stock. During an August 1906 planning meeting, he had urged the group to formulate a way

¹⁷⁹Sinclair, Autobiography, 133.

¹⁸⁰Ibid.

¹⁸¹"Helicon Hall's Morals Good," New York Sun, 23 March 1907, p. 3.

for nonmember residents to vote on colony affairs.¹⁸²

Grace Elizabeth Seymour*

Occupation: Secretary to Grace MacGowan Cooke

In a lengthy interview following the fire, Seymour claimed the colony was near financial ruin and that William Noyes, with the discreet backing of William Grinnell and Charles Hilliker, had taken over the management from Upton Sinclair.¹⁸³ Despite her bitter comments, which came after she was ejected from a post-fire colony meeting, Seymour spoke affectionately of the good times she had had at Helicon Hall. She divided the residents between the high brows and low brows, placing herself in the latter category and noting that Edwin Bjorkman had her dining room seat next to Cooke changed to another table when he learned she knew nothing about Nietzsche. She believed Bjorkman's hostilities stemmed from her "capitalistic tendencies." Although Seymour called herself Cooke's "protege and amanuensis," there is no evidence that she accompanied the novelist to Carmel. Nothing further is known about Seymour.

Upton Beall and Meta Fuller Sinclair, David*¹⁸⁴

Upton (1878-1968)

Birthplace: Baltimore, Maryland

¹⁸²"Get-together Meeting of Sinclair Colonists," New York Times, 13 August 1906, p. 7.

¹⁸³"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

¹⁸⁴See chapter 1 for a discussion of Sinclair's early years.

Religion: Episcopal
 Father's Occupation: Salesperson
 Education: City College of New York, Bachelor's degree,
 1897; graduate studies, Columbia University,
 1897-1900
 Occupation: Writer
 Meta (1880-1964)
 Birthplace: San Francisco, California
 Education: High school graduate
 Occupation: Not employed
 David (1901-1987)

For Upton Sinclair, a cooperative colony was the next logical step in his search for satisfactory domestic arrangements. His actions in the years immediately following Helicon's demise revealed a continuing desire to move beyond the traditional home.

Upton had been luckier than some colonists; the manuscript for The Industrial Republic, written at the colony, was already at the publisher. He needed only to add a postscript, explaining that the domestic experiment he had just described had been destroyed by fire. In the months that followed he wrote "The Millenium" to ease his pain. The four-act comedy follows the response of a dozen aristocrats whose resources protect them from the deadly radiumite that a mad scientist has used to kill all forms of human life. With no one to serve them, they must learn basic survival skills and ultimately choose a cooperative commonwealth as the only rational solution to their dilemma.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁵Sinclair wrote the novelized version of the play from memory after all copies of the script were lost. Upton Sinclair, The Millenium. A Comedy of the Year 2000 (London:

As detailed in chapter 4, the Sinclair and Williams families tried to recreate Helicon in miniature in Bermuda for six-and-a-half months in late 1907 and early 1908. The experiment was at least a temporary success, although ultimately marred by disagreements over the publishing of Good Health and How We Won It, which detailed their diet and regimen.

A year later Harry Kemp observed that Sinclair kept "jumping about like a restless grasshopper in summer, now here, now there."¹⁸⁶ In truth Upton did have difficulty settling down in one place for long, aggravated both by Meta's absences and her reappearances. After spending summer 1908 in an Adirondacks cabin, the couple separated, Meta to her own New York City apartment and Upton out west. Upton first visited Kemp, with whom he had been corresponding for several years, then moved on to Carmel, California, where the Williams and MacGowan/Cooke families had already settled. Carmel provided more peace and happiness than Upton had experienced in a long time, a result, he later concluded, of his solitude.¹⁸⁷ A raw vegetarian diet eased his stomach problems, although he admitted his relaxed schedule also soothed his usual pains.

T. Werner Laurie Ltd., 1929).

¹⁸⁶Harry Kemp to Upton Sinclair, 1909, Sinclair Papers.

¹⁸⁷Sinclair, Autobiography, 151; Upton Sinclair to Lady, 27 July 1911, Sinclair Papers.

Believing he had found a place to satisfy his "cravings for home," Sinclair asked Meta and David to join him.¹⁸⁸ Meta had not enjoyed her solo venture but was no longer willing to follow Upton's dictates. They agreed to meet in Florida but soon moved on to Cutchogue, New York. After a few months they traveled to Bernarr MacFadden's sanitarium in Battle Creek, Michigan to try his fasting cure. Also at the sanitarium was Mary Craig Kimbrough, who befriended Meta and became Upton's second wife in 1913.

Three Sinclair schemes from this period demonstrate his continuing quest to resolve his home situation. He proposed that wealthy socialist Gaylord Wilshire support him for the rest of his life with an annual stipend of six thousand dollars to be divided among various family members. In return, Wilshire would hold Sinclair's writings in trust, publishing them for the benefit of the socialist movement. Apparently nothing came of the proposal.¹⁸⁹

In September 1908 Sinclair distributed A Plan for a Co-Operative Group, marked "personal and confidential."¹⁹⁰ He first outlines the problems encountered at Helicon Home Colony: trying to do too much too soon; too many visitors and correspondents; the snooping press; and ignorance of

¹⁸⁸Quoted in Harris, Upton Sinclair, 114.

¹⁸⁹Howard Quint, "Upton Sinclair's Quest for Artistic Independence," American Literature 29 (May 1957): 194-202.

¹⁹⁰Upton Sinclair, A Plan for A Co-Operative Group (New York City: By the Author, 1908), Sinclair Collection.

administrative demands. He proposes a much simpler operation in the country, several hours away from the city. Here colonists would group simple homes and studies around a central building containing a kitchen, dining room, and living room. The meals would be strictly vegetarian, although nonvegetarians could rent bungalows with kitchens. There is no correspondence indicating any interest in this proposal.

A year later Upton revived the Helicon name for his proposed cooperative boarding school for boys eight to eleven. Students would prepare vegetarian meals, study nature and literature, and clean their own rooms. Sinclair freely admitted the benefits to his own family: companions for David; privacy for himself and Meta, who would live in a separate house on the grounds; and a chance for their son to learn democratic virtues away from the corrupt privileged class who resided at most boarding schools. Correspondence between Upton and Dell Munger, whom he chose to manage the school, indicates that she shared his enthusiasm but cautioned that she would need more than a few weeks to make proper arrangements. Sinclair abandoned the plan when a month passed and not enough boys had enrolled.¹⁹¹

By winter 1909 the family was on the move again, this

¹⁹¹Upton Sinclair, "A New Helicon Hall," Independent 67 (9 September 1909): 580-83; idem, "A Physical Culture School for Boys," Physical Culture 22 (October 1909): 357-60; and correspondence between Munger and Sinclair, Sinclair Papers.

time to the single-tax community of Fairhope, Alabama. "Since I could not have a colony of my own, I would try other people's," wrote Sinclair, who was attracted to Fairhope's emphasis on individual liberty as well as Marietta Johnson's nationally-known School of Organic Education. In 1910 the Sinclairs rented property at the single-tax colony of Arden, Delaware, where the Potters rented a home and the Eberleins spent their summers. Founder Frank Stephens worried that the colony's single-tax roots were ignored in press coverage of the socialist Sinclair, especially after his arrest with nine others for playing tennis on a Sunday.¹⁹² Although he never advocated single tax, Sinclair obviously found life at Arden satisfying, enjoying its rusticity, freedoms, and the companionship of like-minded neighbors. At Arden Sinclair erected several tents for his entourage, which included himself and David and, at times, various secretaries, Mary Craig Kimbrough, and Meta, whose affairs were no longer conducted in private. Love's Pilgrimage, Sinclair's autobiographical novel, sold well until Upton filed for divorce in 1911--his publisher complained it was cheaper to read about the Sinclairs in the newspaper than to buy the book.¹⁹³ While Upton had tried to understand Meta's infidelities--refusing only to support

¹⁹²Sinclair, Autobiography, 65; Harris, Upton Sinclair, 129.

¹⁹³Harris, Upton Sinclair, 122.

any illegitimate offspring--he had reached his breaking point when Meta bragged about her deceptions to his friends.¹⁹⁴ He had not filed for divorce earlier because he did not want to malign the reputation of socialism. Newspapers carried lengthy interviews with Meta and her lover Harry Kemp, the same poet for whom Upton had arranged a fellowship based on his literary promise and moral character.¹⁹⁵ After two unsuccessful attempts to obtain a divorce in New York, Upton took David to Holland, where he was granted a divorce in late 1912.

In 1913 Sinclair married Mary Craig Kimbrough, who had lived with him in Europe. While their marriage ended Upton's personal involvement with communal living, Helicon lived on in Meta's sporadic attempts to obtain custody of David. At first reluctant to separate a child from his mother, Upton later had become convinced of Meta's moral depravity and listed Mary Craig and Fredik Van Eeden, a Dutch friend, as David's guardians in his will.¹⁹⁶ Whenever Meta complained of David's absences, Upton threatened to make public the testimony he had gathered from friends and employees (including the Wilshires and Minnie

¹⁹⁴Upton Sinclair to Frances and Edwin Bjorkman, 2 September 1911, Bjorkman Papers.

¹⁹⁵Harris, Upton Sinclair, 128.

¹⁹⁶Upton Sinclair, June 11, 1913 Will, Sinclair Papers; Upton Sinclair to Mary Craig Kimbrough, 5 December 1911, M. C. K. Sinclair Papers, Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.

Campbell) detailing her erratic and critical behavior toward her son.¹⁹⁷

In 1915 Meta tried to blackmail Upton to obtain custody of David by claiming he had burned down Helicon for the insurance money.¹⁹⁸ Her father insisted that she was now a morally responsible woman, although at the time of the divorce she had become unbalanced due to the shock of the colony fire and Sinclair's free love teachings.¹⁹⁹ Even Meta's old friend John-Armistead Collier was disgusted by her actions and believed there was no truth to her allegations of Sinclair's wrongdoings.²⁰⁰ Meta's charges were never formally made, possibly because of pressure from Mary Craig's father, a Mississippi judge.

Despite her quest for guardianship, Meta had stated many times to many people that she did not enjoy being with David and believed she had sacrificed her own genius in becoming a mother.²⁰¹ Her dislike of David stemmed from

¹⁹⁷Affadavits in Possession of Upton Sinclair, 1912, Sinclair Papers.

¹⁹⁸Several years earlier in her fictionalized account of the colony, Meta had written that she and Thrysis were anguished by his enemies' efforts to blame him for the fire. Meta Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thrysis, p. 18-19, Stone Papers.

¹⁹⁹William Fuller to Upton Sinclair, 24 June 1915, Sinclair Papers.

²⁰⁰John-Armistead Collier to Lindsey, 12 July 1915, Collier Collection.

²⁰¹Meta Sinclair to John-Armistead Collier, 25 December 1907, Collier Collection.

Upton's influence on his personality; in a letter to Sinclair, she claimed she would stop taking lovers if she could have a daughter.²⁰² Correspondence between Helicon residents indicates that they pitied the former Mrs. Sinclair, as when Edwin Bjorkman assures his wife that her restlessness was not the same as the vague dissatisfactions that plagued "poor Meta."²⁰³

Although Meta never became involved in another colony, her life had been significantly altered. Naive and sheltered before meeting Upton, she spent the first six years of her marriage in the isolated world he had created for himself, where "instead of intellectual and spiritual achievement there had been poverty, sickness, confusion, and frustration."²⁰⁴ She loved the colony planning sessions where she met many different people for the first time. At Helicon she made new friends with whom she could discuss free love and feminism and explore her soul states.²⁰⁵

After her divorce from Upton, Meta entered into numerous relationships, causing even the ubiquitous Harry Kemp to feel abandoned.²⁰⁶ In 1916 she married Lester

²⁰²Meta Sinclair to Upton Sinclair, n.d., Stone Papers.

²⁰³Edwin Bjorkman to Frances Maule, 19 April 1917, Bjorkman Papers.

²⁰⁴Meta Sinclair, Synopsis--Corydon and Thyrsis, p. 15, Stone Papers.

²⁰⁵Ibid., 13.

²⁰⁶Harry Kemp to Upton Sinclair, n.d., Sinclair Papers.

Keene, with whom she had one son. Six months after Keene's death in 1947 she married John Stone. Meta became a poet, serving as president of two St. Petersburg, Florida poet groups. In 1961 a Florida reporter revealed Meta's sorrow in learning that Upton had married for the third time; Meta remembered when she was the "adoring young wife" who had become too independent for her self-centered husband.²⁰⁷

Three years later Upton turned down John Stone's request for assistance in paying Meta's medical bills. He denied harboring any bitterness toward her and admitted he seldom thought about her. After Meta's death, Upton encouraged Stone to place Meta's personal papers with his at the Lilly Library at Indiana University so that "others [might] learn from our mistakes."²⁰⁸

The ragged relations between Meta and Upton were not lost on their only son. Despite Upton's attempts to place him in schools or with other families, David believed his father kept him with him as much as he could while his mother simply abandoned him. Not knowing his mother well, David did not miss her. The father-son bond was broken abruptly when Upton married Mary Craig Kimbrough in 1913. Although Upton had named her David's guardian in the event of his death, she was acutely jealous of his son and banned

²⁰⁷Virginia Riley, "She Weeps . . . Remembering," St. Petersburg Times, 13 October 1961, p. 1-D.

²⁰⁸See correspondence between Upton Sinclair and John Stone, Stone Papers.

him from their home. David was seldom allowed to visit Upton and did not see him at all between 1935 and 1955. Biographer Leon Harris speculates that despite Upton's realization that he was a bad father, much as his own father had been, his estrangement from David was part of the unspoken agreement he had made with Mary Craig. In exchange for her relieving him of any domestic or social responsibilities, he cut off his son, emotionally and financially.²⁰⁹ Only after four years of psychoanalysis in the early 1940s was David able to resolve the hurt brought on by his parents' indifference.²¹⁰

Torn between becoming a musician or an engineer, David agonized over his career decisions without any input from his parents. He paid for ninety-five percent of his undergraduate education at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, later receiving some money from Upton to study physics at Columbia. During his school years he was an active socialist although a flirtation with communism embarrassed his father.

Secure in the well-organized home Mary Craig had created, Upton devoted himself to his socialist writings. They lived comfortably on his publications, despite his decline in popularity, and Craig's careful investments.

²⁰⁹See David Sinclair interviews with Leon Harris, Sinclair Papers and Harris, Upton Sinclair, 213-14 and others.

²¹⁰Harris, Upton Sinclair, 323.

While his current living arrangements bore no resemblance to those at Helicon, he did not forget his six-month stay "in the future." In articles and books--most prominently the six-volume "Dead Hand"--he recounted the colony experience and praised its success with children.

Throughout these years, Upton maintained an interest in cooperative operations--supporting a cooperative store, exploring the possibility of establishing a cooperative press, corresponding with cooperatives and communal groups. Retaining an interest in "cooperative distribution," he also championed cooperative production. His theories reached full fruition during the Depression, which Sinclair attributed to "the mass of the people . . . not get[ting] sufficient money to purchase what modern machinery is able to produce."²¹¹ The obvious solution in Sinclair's mind was "production for use," a system in which the jobless produced goods in idle factories and farms for their own use and to exchange for goods similarly produced by others.

Realizing most Americans' continued distrust of socialism, Sinclair accepted an invitation to run as a Democrat in the California gubernatorial primary, convinced he could promote his theories under this more acceptable guise. Although he had twice before run as a socialist candidate for governor, the 1934 race became the first in which he actively campaigned throughout the state. Upton

²¹¹Sinclair, Autobiography, 268.

quickly penned I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty to explain his views. Labeled a "utopian novel" by Samuel Eliot Morison, I, Governor depicts Upton successfully implementing his End Poverty In California (EPIC) Plan.²¹² With his goals accomplished in two years, the governor is able to go home and write a new novel!

"Production for use" formed EPIC's core. Around this center, Upton arranged a system of land colonies, consumer and producer cooperatives, graduated income tax, and pensions for the disabled and elderly. With the goal of becoming self-supporting, the unemployed would live and farm on land colonies or stay in the cities and work in cooperative factories. Both would provide nurseries and kindergartens so that mothers could work. Families would eat in cafeterias or in their own homes and enjoy a variety of recreational activities. Comparing these efforts to Helicon Home Colony, Upton wrote,

Most of the things I am talking about I tried out 27 years ago at Helicon Hall, which was simply a co-operative home. We found out that it was a most enjoyable way of life. You have privacy when you wanted it and social life when you wanted it.²¹³

²¹²Upton Sinclair, I, Governor of California and How I Ended Poverty; A True Story of the Future (New York: Farrar & Rinehart, Inc., 1933); Samuel Eliot Morison, The Oxford History of the American People (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 325.

²¹³"No 'Don'ts' In Epic Colonies, No Tired Nervous Mothers," Upton Sinclair's Paper End Poverty, April 1934, p. 7.

In the August 1934 primary, Upton received nearly a half-million votes, more than the combined total of the eight other Democratic candidates. I, Governor had sold two hundred fifty thousand copies; EPIC News boasted a circulation of two million; and supporters had established more than two thousand EPIC chapters across the state. The poor and unemployed, members of the state's numerous cooperatives, and affiliates of the Utopian Society of America, which promoted Edward Bellamy's ideals, had found Sinclair's message especially attractive.

As Sinclair became the official Democratic candidate for governor, attacks against him and his proposals increased. Sinclair's forty-seven books made "him an easy mark for a hatchet job," as opponents took quotations out of context, attributing the villains' remarks to Sinclair himself.²¹⁴ Arthur Schlesinger observed that the Republicans' anti-Sinclair campaign was "the first all-out public relations Blitzkrieg in American politics."²¹⁵ Prominent among the attackers was the Hollywood establishment, which feared efforts to bring cooperation to the film industry.

²¹⁴Greg Mitchell, "How Media Politics Was Born," American Heritage 39 (September/October 1988): 36-38. See also Greg Mitchell, The Campaign of the Century: Upton Sinclair's E.P.I.C. (New York: Random House, 1992).

²¹⁵Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., The Politics of Upheaval, vol. 3 of The Age of Roosevelt (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1960), 118.

Helicon Hall was an easy target. Using the kickline, "Out of His Own Mouth Shall He be Judged," one brochure reprinted paragraphs from The Industrial Republic, Love's Pilgrimage, The Book of Life, and The Goose-Step to reveal "Sinclair's personal doctrine in regard to free love, the morality of American womanhood, the sanctity of the home, and the removal of children from the care of their own mothers."²¹⁶ The Industrial Republic passage quotes Sinclair's colony proposal on arranging communal child care by professionals. In The Lie Factory Starts, Sinclair defended Helicon Hall against a San Rafael Independent editorial that claimed,

Once he tried to lead civilization out of the darkness by gathering up a flock of artists, writers, food-faddists and ordinary run of the mill nuts, placing them on a large farm and forcing them to eat nothing but vegetables. . . . What with violent quarrels among the enlightened and some rather distressing amatory monkeyshines, the scheme failed.²¹⁷

Upton explained that the colony had been "a residential community occupied by professional people," had never grown any vegetables, and had been destroyed by fire. He called the editor's attention to The Brass Check's discussion of the criminal libel charges against Tarrytown News for

²¹⁶"Upton Sinclair Discusses the Home, the Institution of Marriage and Advocates Free Love" (Los Angeles, Calif.: Bernice H. Johnson, n.d.), Sinclair Collection.

²¹⁷Editorial, San Rafael Independent, 2 July 1934, quoted in Upton Sinclair, The Lie Factory Starts (Los Angeles, Calif.: End Poverty League, n.d.), 29-31.

associating Helicon with free love.

In November 1934 Upton lost to Republican Governor Frank Merriam 879,537 to 1,138,620; it is likely that Sinclair would have won if Progressive candidate Raymond Haight had not run (Haight garnered 302,519 votes).²¹⁸ Pleased to have received such wide coverage of his views, Upton was not altogether disappointed in the outcome, especially after learning of death threats should he be elected. The year's campaign had depleted his savings, and he embarked on a cross-country lecture tour to make money and talk more about production for use.

Upton's campaign had brought him in touch with 175 self-help cooperatives, which became the basis of Co-Op; A Novel of Living Together (1936). The novel describes the internal dealings of the San Sebastian Self-Help Exchange, as well as its relation with external events, including the EPIC campaign. The account is engrossing as he deftly weaves the tales of eighty-five people from different walks of life into the co-op's story. Participants receive points for their contributions, which they exchange for other goods and services.²¹⁹

²¹⁸Harris, Upton Sinclair, 315-16.

²¹⁹Timothy Miller mistakenly identifies Helicon Hall as the inspiration for Co-Op. Despite the subtitle--"a novel of living together"--Co-Op deals with individuals who provide services through the exchange rather than live communally. The subtitle was actually proposed by the publishers and approved by Sinclair. Miller, American Communes, 1860-1960: A Bibliography (New York: Garland

Co-Op did not sell well, despite endorsements by Theodore Dreiser and John Dewey. Not until the 1940s did Sinclair's readership return when he began chronicling art dealer Lanny Budd's life between 1913 and 1946, creating a character who interacted with the important events and figures of the period. Each novel in the eleven-book series became a best seller, with Dragon's Teeth (1942) earning Sinclair the Pulitzer Prize he had long coveted.

Upton's triumph as a popular novelist was marred by Mary Craig's increasingly poor health. He writes painfully of her ordeal in his Autobiography, chronicling her heart and digestive problems and series of strokes. Craig's illness, combined with her self-pity and paranoia, greatly taxed Sinclair's energies. Her withdrawal from the outside world also had isolated Sinclair, who admitted he had not been in anyone else's home for twenty years, at the time of her death in April 1961, and knew only store and postal clerks in Pasadena. Through Mary Craig's brother, Upton met May Hard, an educated and cultured widow, and quickly proposed. They were married in late 1961. His happy, sociable, and outgoing new wife was a refreshing change from the introspective Meta and Mary Craig.

Upton never returned to the communal arrangements of

Publishing, 1990), 167; John Farrar to Upton Sinclair, 1 May 1936, and Upton Sinclair to John Farrar, 4 May 1936, Sinclair Papers.

his late twenties and thirties. To Leon Harris this clearly illustrates the self-serving nature of his earlier commitment. As detailed in chapter 5, however, Harris's view allows no possibility for growth in Sinclair's thinking and ignores the utopian elements evident in his EPIC campaign and Co-Op, as well as Helicon Hall and The Industrial Republic.

Dora Steinlein*

Steinlein, who lived on Helicon's third floor, may have been employed as a servant. After the fire she claimed that an enemy of the colony or Upton Sinclair was responsible for the building's destruction.²²⁰ Colonist Ernest Eberlein reported that the Potter family, Davida deGuibert, and he and his daughter stayed with the Steinlein family immediately after the fire.²²¹

Edith Summers [Updegraff Kelley] (1884-1956)*

Birthplace: Ontario, Canada

Education: University of Toronto, graduated 1903 with honors in modern languages

Occupation: Secretary to Upton Sinclair

Summers accompanied the Sinclairs to Helicon Home Colony, having spent the past year as Upton's secretary in Princeton. In college she had studied Italian, French, and

²²⁰"To Investigate Helicon Fire," New York Times, 18 March 1907, p. 16.

²²¹Ernest Eberlein to Undena Eberlein, 17 March 1907.

German, earning the high praises of her professors.²²²

Summers had answered a newspaper advertisement for an author's secretary and was surprised to get the job. Her previous work experience had been indexing Funk and Wagnall's Standard Dictionary, which had resulted in permanent eye damage. Sinclair remembered her as "a quiet, unpretentious little woman, red-haired and bespectacled, and glad of a refuge from the maulings of fate."²²³

In 1934 Summers fondly described her months at Helicon Home Colony with joy and exuberance. She became engaged to colonist Sinclair Lewis. With few responsibilities they had time "to read and talk, to walk and dream, to flirt and fall in love."²²⁴

After the fire Summers continued to live and work for the Sinclairs. In 1908 she married Allan Updegraff, Lewis's college chum and a fellow Helicon resident. They moved to Greenwich Village where she supported them by teaching night school and selling her short stories while Updegraff struggled to become a poet. Of her writing at this time, she commented, "as long as I knew very little about anything and was hence content to say nothing in a pert and diverting

²²²See letters of recommendations from various faculty members at the University of Toronto. Edith Summers Kelley Papers, Special Collections, Morris Library, Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Ill.

²²³Sinclair, Money Writes!, 208.

²²⁴Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 40.

way, I was . . . paid well for my trouble"; when she began writing realistic stories her work went unpublished.²²⁵

Summers and Updegraff had two children and were divorced after six years. Correspondence between Updegraff and Edwin Bjorkman reveal his lack of commitment and affection for Edith and the children.²²⁶ In two unpublished stories Edith wrote compellingly of a single mother's struggles to raise her children alone.²²⁷

Summers began living with C. Fred Kelley, an artist and sculptor, with whom she spent the rest of her life, although they never married. Filled with wanderlust, they spent two years on a Kentucky tobacco farm, four years running a New Jersey boardinghouse, a year on an alfalfa farm in California, and four years on a chicken farm in San Diego.

In 1921 Summers began writing Weeds, which was published in 1923 by Harcourt, Brace at the encouragement of Sinclair Lewis.²²⁸ Weeds is a naturalistic novel drawn from Summers's experience as a tenant farmer in Kentucky. The unrelenting poverty of the farm quietly destroys the

²²⁵Edith Summers Kelley, "Can an Artist Exist in America?" quoted in Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 45.

²²⁶See, for example, Updegraff to Bjorkman, undated, begins "In response to a telegram from Edith . . . ," Bjorkman Papers. Bjorkman, a former colonist, became Updegraff's brother-in-law when Updegraff married Frances Maule's sister Florence in 1914.

²²⁷Kelley, "The Weaker Vessel," and "The Old House," Kelley Papers.

²²⁸Schorer, Sinclair Lewis, 372.

heroine's dreams. The novel received favorable reviews and was continuously championed for many years by both Lewis and Upton Sinclair.²²⁹ Disappointed by the poor sales of Weeds, Sinclair recommended Summers for a grant from the American Fund for Public Service to help her continue writing. She made slow progress on The Devil's Hand, which was published posthumously in 1974.²³⁰

Fred Kelley's successful bootlegging provided funds in the late 1920s, although the family suffered financial hardships in the 1930s, when Summers worked briefly as a charwoman. She and Kelley supported Sinclair's EPIC campaign, with the latter contributing illustrations to EPIC News.

Summers did not participate in any formal communal activities after Helicon Home Colony. She remained good friends with Sinclair, exchanging letters and praising his latest books. Although she came to Helicon because of her work for Sinclair, Summers sympathized with the struggling writers who sought financial relief at the colony. Her

²²⁹In 1972 Matthew J. Bruccoli rediscovered Weeds in a used bookstore and convinced Southern Illinois University to reprint it. A New York Times review labeled the novel "an unquestionably major work of American fiction." Alden Whitman, Review of Weeds, New York Times Book Review, 11 March 1973, p. 48.

²³⁰After Weeds was republished in 1973, Summers's son Patrick Kelley contacted Bruccoli and shared his mother's unpublished manuscripts. See Matthew J. Bruccoli, "Afterword," in The Devil's Hand by Edith Summers Kelley (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois University, 1974), 291-98.

later years demonstrated the choices she was forced to make between helping support her family and writing fiction on speculation--there was no time for both.

Emma Taber, Louis*

Not much is known about Taber and her young son. She may be the elderly housekeeper whom Sinclair claimed had begged to stay at the colony for the sake of her son.²³¹ The 1905 Helicon Hall school catalog lists a Louis N. Taber among its college preparatory students, raising the possibility that they had been connected with the school.

Two days after the colony fire Emma was admitted to the hospital for nervous exhaustion and back and neck pains. She was released four days later. Her hospital record is frustratingly incomplete, noting only that she was born in the United States.

Freeman Tilden (1883-1980)

Birthplace: Malden, Massachusetts

Education: Private tutoring, high school diploma

Father's Occupation: Newspaper Editor

Occupation: New York Evening Post reporter

Tilden began his newspaper career at age ten, writing book reviews for his father's newspaper, the Malden Mirror. He was a veteran of the Boston Herald and the Charleston, S.C. News and Courier by the time he reached Helicon. Tilden reminded Edith Summers of William Montague, as both had slow, quiet smiles and proper Boston accents. She

²³¹Sinclair, The Brass Check, 70.

called him a struggling young reporter who craved to write something of his own but had no time to do so.²³²

Tilden was apparently not involved in colony administration and had left the colony before its demise. In 1908 he moved to Brazil to write for the English-language Buenos Aires Standard. He married Mabel Martin in 1909 and went to work for the London Daily Sketch a year later.

At the same time Tilden began writing fiction, eventually contributing several hundred short stories to popular magazines and appearing regularly in the Saturday Evening Post and Ladies Home Journal. He also authored novels, plays, and radio scripts and contributed a monthly piece to World's Work from 1929 to 1931. Despite his success, his correspondence with fellow colonist Edwin Bjorkman reveals a dissatisfaction with his work. He complained that hackwork and real writing did not mix and detailed his bouts with neurasthenia, an ailment that left him lethargic and depressed.²³³

Tilden wrote that he was "not a reformer, or a pleader" but "merely a commentator, a referee."²³⁴ Few of his pieces focus on politics or current events, although two

²³²Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 33.

²³³Freeman Tilden to Edwin Bjorkman, no date; Tilden to Bjorkman, 29 March 1922; Tilden to Bjorkman, [1925?], Bjorkman Papers.

²³⁴Freeman Tilden to Edwin Bjorkman, [1925?], Bjorkman Papers.

novels may reveal that his beliefs were not in harmony with those of his fellow colonists. The moral of The Virtuous Husband (1925) is that woman's place is in the home. Mr. Podd (1923) satirizes "the nozzle king," an entrepreneur who takes a boatload of reformers on a worldwide mission to spread his gospel of cooperation. While the story owes much to Henry Ford's peace ship, the eventually marooned passengers could also be caricatures of Helicon Hall residents: the vegetarian, New Thought matron, syndicalist, anarchist poet, Episocopal minister who has rejected the trinity, emotionally unstable youth.²³⁵

In 1941 at age fifty-eight, Tilden launched a new career when he approached the National Park Service for a job. He became its literary consultant, a position that took him to national and state parks across the United States to write about their natural beauty. In addition to short informational pieces, Tilden wrote several classic books on the parks. Interpreting Our Heritage (1957), for example, defines the parks' educational responsibilities and illustrates how these can be accomplished in various settings.²³⁶ Tilden retired in 1971 but continued to write

²³⁵Freeman Tilden, The Virtuous Husband (New York: Macmillan Co., 1925); idem, Mr. Podd (New York: Macmillan Co., 1923).

²³⁶Freeman Tilden, Interpreting Our Heritage; Principles and Practices for Visitor Services in Parks, Museums and Historic Places (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1957). New editions were published in 1967 and 1977. Eulogies at the time of Tilden's death indicate that his

for the park service, his last work a Bicentennial piece on the parks' value.²³⁷

Like many of the Helicon colonists, Tilden shared the uncertain life of the freelance author. However, he did not promote any particular political or economic doctrine, nor is there any evidence that he participated in any other communal experiments.

Allan Updegraff (1883-1965)

Birthplace: Grinnell, Iowa

Education: Springfield, Missouri public schools; Drury College, 1900-01; Yale University, 1903-06

Occupation: Handyman

Updegraff left his senior year at Yale University for a janitorial position at Helicon Home Colony. "Desperately poor," he was accompanied by his close friend Sinclair Lewis, who had become bored by college life. Their friendship began two years earlier when their mutual literary interests brought them together.²³⁸ Updegraff, who won a freshman literary prize and edited the Yale Monthly Magazine, already had two years of newspaper experience when he arrived at Yale. After running away from home he worked as police reporter in Chicago, becoming city

approach to interpretation became standard training for park service personnel. See Freeman Tilden file, Harpers Ferry Center, National Park Service, Harpers Ferry, W.V.

²³⁷Freeman Tilden, Who Am I?: Reflections on the Meaning of Parks on the Occasion of the Nation's Bicentennial (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1975).

²³⁸Schorer, Sinclair Lewis, 69, 88, 110.

editor of the South Chicago Daily Calumet at age 19.²³⁹

At Helicon, Updegraff and Lewis handled varied assignments, including tending the furnace, moving furniture, and doing laundry.²⁴⁰ Updegraff, Lewis, and Edith Summers also enjoyed leisurely afternoon strolls along the Palisades and lazy evenings in front of the fireplace. In early December 1906 Updegraff and Lewis left the colony to live in New York City. Updegraff worked as a bookstore clerk while trying to become a freelance writer; he never returned to Yale. He married Edith Summers in January 1908, soon after she and Lewis broke off their engagement.

While Summers supported him, Updegraff pursued his own writing. During 1908 he edited Transatlantic Tales, employing Lewis and Summers as translators. During the next six years he published poems and short stories in such publications as Putnam's, Forum, and Collier's.

Correspondence with fellow colonist Edwin Bjorkman indicates family life was difficult for Updegraff. He complained that it was impossible to write with the children around but pledged not to desert them and Edith.²⁴¹ A year later he left Summers to marry Florence Maule, sister of Bjorkman's wife, Frances. The Maule family disliked

²³⁹Biographical Sketch of Allan Eugene Updegraff, Wilson Bulletin for Libraries 6 (October 1931): 100.

²⁴⁰See Lewis and Updegraff, "Two Yale Men in Utopia."

²⁴¹Allan Updegraff to Edwin Bjorkman, letters dated 1913, Bjorkman Papers.

Updegraff's treatment of Edith, and his new mother-in-law refused to accept him, labeling him a "third-rate author."²⁴² Updegraff appeared more comfortable in his second marriage, calling his new wife "an angel, house-broke, domestic, obedient, altogether most proper of wives--until she gets ready for another job!"²⁴³ Like her sister, Florence Maule was active in the suffrage movement, which may explain why Updegraff urged support for suffrage so men would not have to hear about it anymore.²⁴⁴

In 1916 the Updegraffs moved to Woodstock, New York. The community had proven attractive to writers and artists, beginning with the short-lived Byrdcliffe colony in 1901. In 1908 Hervey White formed a new colony in Woodstock, centered on the importance of the creative arts. Updegraff helped edit White's Plowshare--"a monthly pamphlet of the literature, arts and life evolving" in Woodstock--and served as its business manager from 1916 to 1919, when it ceased publication. He wrote a column on "things turned up around the town" and occasionally contributed a poem or short story.

²⁴²Edwin Bjorkman to Frances Maule, 26 October 1914; Frances Maule to Edwin Bjorkman, 2 November 1914, among others, Bjorkman Papers.

²⁴³Allan Updegraff to Edwin Bjorkman, 19 July 1916, Bjorkman Papers. Allan Updegraff to Edwin Bjorkman, undated, shows paternal pride in his and Florence's son. Bjorkman Papers.

²⁴⁴Allan Updegraff, "Woman Suffrage and 'Artistic' Suffrage," Plowshare, August 1917, no page number.

From 1918 to 1925 Updegraff wrote the Personal Glimpses column for the Literary Digest.²⁴⁵ Combining his creative and reportorial skills, Updegraff prepared in-depth pieces on current affairs, covering World War I, the labor movement, and national and international politics, among other topics. He continued to write fiction, publishing his first novel in 1917. Second Youth, a comedy about a New York City salesman, received good reviews but did not sell well. Updegraff complained that the reviews were too "gooey with praise," leading people to wonder what favors the journals owed the publisher.²⁴⁶ Although their friendship had broken over his pacifist opinions, Sinclair Lewis encouraged publishers to read Updegraff's manuscripts.²⁴⁷ Updegraff published six more novels and two poetry collections. His novels center on life in Woodstock or in France, where he moved in 1925 after divorcing Florence.

Updegraff lived in Paris with Dora Miller, often returning to Woodstock in the summers. In 1940 Newsweek identified him as one of its Paris correspondents. Although not structured colonies in the same sense as Helicon, the Woodstock and Paris communities provided Updegraff with the artistic stimulation and leisurely pace on which he thrived.

²⁴⁵Biographical Sketch of Allan Eugene Updegraff, 100. The column is unsigned.

²⁴⁶Allan Updegraff, "Some Confessions of a First-Novelist," Plowshare, October 1917, no page number.

²⁴⁷Schorer, Sinclair Lewis, 196, 406.

Mrs. H. J. Wheeler*

Occupation: Housekeeper

Little is known about Mrs. Wheeler. In a brief report on the colony fire, Nautilus editor Elizabeth Towne identified her as her "paragon housekeeper" whom she had sent to the colony to help out, as she herself expected to spend a week there in the summer.²⁴⁸ In the same issue, Wheeler reported that she had escaped with only the nightgown she wore and had been carried on a man's back to the home of one of the colony's wealthy neighbors. While unhurt, Wheeler felt unnerved and claimed the experience had restored her faith in human kindness.²⁴⁹

Bertha S. Wilkins [Starkweather?]*

Occupation: Chambermaid

Wilkins was one of the few colonists who engaged in manual labor and served on the colony board of directors. The Englewood Press reported that she had would be overseeing the colony laundry after gaining similar experience in a Chicago institution, although Edith Summers remembered her working as a chambermaid.²⁵⁰ According to Grace Seymour, Wilkins had accompanied Sinclair on his fact-

²⁴⁸"Editorials by Elizabeth," The Nautilus 5 (May 1907): 9-11.

²⁴⁹*Ibid.*, 10.

²⁵⁰"Upton Sinclair's Colony As It Really Is," Englewood Press, 3 November 1906, p. 3; Kelley, "Helicon Hall," 37.

finding foray in the Chicago stockyards.²⁵¹

Summers offered Wilkins as an example of one person for whom anarchy and immorality were incompatible. Describing her as a philosophical anarchist and strict vegetarian, Summers claimed that Miss W.--"a large, dark woman of commanding appearance"--constantly hid the unclothed reproduction Greek statues Allan Updegraff and Sinclair Lewis had discovered in the attic and placed in their rooms. Seymour similarly described Wilkins, blaming her for having evening singalongs banished to the barn.²⁵² Wilkins earlier had coauthored a book on teaching ethics to children.²⁵³

No record of Wilkins's further activities could be located. She may have become a settlement or ghetto worker, as Sinclair had written to James Phelps Stokes about her interest in such a position.²⁵⁴

Emma Williams (1859-?)*

Birthplace: Connecticut

Occupation: In charge of colony nursery

²⁵¹"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3; Sinclair never identifies any of his Chicago assistants by name. Wilkins reported on The Jungle's theatrical debut in Trenton, N.J. for The Appeal to Reason, 17 November 1906, p. 4.

²⁵²Ibid.

²⁵³Bertha S. Wilkins and Theoda Wilkins, Moral Culture as Science (San Francisco: Whitaker & Ray Co., 1900).

²⁵⁴Upton Sinclair to James Phelps Stokes, 21 January 1907, Butler Library, Columbia University, New York, N.Y.

Little is known about Williams, who is identified in one newspaper article as having helped save the children in her charge by passing them out the window to Anna Noyes.²⁵⁵ A close friend, although not a relative, of Mike and Peggy Williams, Williams accompanied them to Carmel (and may have been with them in Bermuda). In California she lived next door to them and operated a small elementary school attended by Margaret and Philip Williams.²⁵⁶

[Charles] Michael and Harriet Margaret "Peggy" Olmstead Williams, Margaret Anne, Philip Hale*²⁵⁷

Mike (1877-1950)

Birthplace: Halifax, Nova Scotia

Father's Occupation: Sea Captain

Religion: Catholic

Education: Attended St. Joseph's College, New Brunswick

Occupation: Writer

Peggy (1879-1964)

Birthplace: East Hartford, Connecticut

Father's Occupation: Tobacco Farmer

Religion: No formally professed religion

Education: East Hartford schools and one year of college

Occupation: Homemaker

Margaret Anne (1902-)

Philip Hale (1904-1989)

Six months after losing most of their possessions in

²⁵⁵"Fire Wipes Out Helicon Hall," New York Times, 17 March 1907, p. 1.

²⁵⁶Sister Margaret Williams to the author, 8 February 1992; information confirmed by the 1910 U.S. Census, California, vol. 63, ED12, family number 178, which identifies her as a private teacher. The 1920 U.S. Census lists her as principal of a private school (California, vol. 72, ED15, sheet 2, line 71).

²⁵⁷Information on the Williams family was provided by Sister Margaret Williams, who lived at the colony with her family. Sister Margaret Williams to the author, 8 February 1992.

the 1906 San Francisco earthquake, Mike and his wife of six years moved their two young children to Englewood, eager to embark on "a rare and rather wonderful adventure."²⁵⁸

Setbacks were not new for him. He had quit school at age fourteen after his father's death to work first in a warehouse and later a department store, pursuing his studies on his own. At age nineteen he had immigrated to the United States. He contributed pieces to the Boston Journal and Boston Post and became a reporter for the New York World and the Evening Telegram. By his mid-twenties he had twice moved his family to warmer climates for more than a year while he tried to recuperate from the bouts of tuberculosis that plagued him all his life.

Mike lost his job as city editor for the San Francisco Examiner six weeks after the 1906 earthquake when he argued with his employers. The family returned east so he could pursue his freelance writing, a vocation he would follow for the next seven years. Mike welcomed the congenial atmosphere, peace and quiet, and freedom from housekeeping offered at the colony by Sinclair, with whom he had corresponded for several years. Mike claimed that he had never been a socialist, although Sinclair took credit for enlightening him, "the highest service one man can render to

²⁵⁸Michael Williams, The Book of the High Romance; A Spiritual Autobiography (New York: Macmillan Company, 1918), 139.

another."²⁵⁹

Mike remembered Helicon as wondrous, noisy, and lively. Although never a board member, he was labeled as Sinclair's "man-Friday" by colonist Grace Seymour.²⁶⁰ He believed the colony experience had a significant impact on his later life; his association with spiritualists at the colony reawakened the religious longings that had lain dormant since his father's death. The fire left the family destitute; Mike lost his just-completed autobiographical novel, the draft of The High Romance, and numerous poems, plays, essays, and short stories.

As detailed in chapter 4, the Williams family joined the Sinclairs in Bermuda for a miniature home colony at Sinclair's expense in fall 1907. The adventure turned sour when Mike, according to Sinclair, pocketed the entire advance for Good Health and How We Won It, the book they wrote in Bermuda. Sinclair felt justified in recounting the story in his Autobiography--the only "mean" story in the volume--since Mike labeled him a "prophet for profits" in his review of The Profits of Religion (1918). Sinclair had earlier reported the book deal in Upton Sinclair's, writing

²⁵⁹Williams, Book of the High Romance, 138; Upton Sinclair, "How Sharper Than a Serpent's Tooth," Upton Sinclair's 1 (May/June 1918): 7. Williams's daughter Margaret believes their stay at Helicon was prompted by her parents' then socialistic beliefs, which they later abandoned.

²⁶⁰"Says Helicon Hall Fire Only Hurried Impending Crash," New York American, 20 March 1907, p. 3.

"The sanctioned gall of him--he quotes my appeal for financial help for my magazine and jeers at me--knowing all the time that if I had the money I gave to preserve his cringing life, I should be able to publish my magazine without asking help from man or devil!"²⁶¹

Despite the end of their friendship, Sinclair stayed several months in Carmel, where the Williams family and MacGowan sisters had moved in 1908. For the next six years Mike wrote short stories and nonfiction for McClure's, Everybody's, and Sunset, among others. His stories often dealt with social conditions and the innocent victims of capitalism, labor unrest, and alcohol.²⁶² During this period Mike battled financial problems, alcoholism, and tuberculosis but still impressed Van Wyck Brooks as "one of the most stimulating men he [had] met in Carmel."²⁶³

In 1913 Mike returned to the Roman Catholicism of his youth. Since Helicon he had continued to study spiritualism and modern mystics. After reading the autobiography of Saint Therese of Lisieux he had smelled flowers--her personal signature--and took it as a sign to rejoin the church. He became a correspondent for the International

²⁶¹Sinclair, "How Sharper," 7.

²⁶²Robert Brooke Clements, "The Commonweal, 1924-1938. The Williams-Shuster Years" (Ph.D. diss., University of Notre Dame, 1972), 17.

²⁶³George Sterling to Upton Sinclair, 25 August 1909, Sinclair Papers; Van Wyck Brooks to Edwin Bjorkman, 10 August 1912, Bjorkman Papers.

News Service in Mexico, then returned to California in 1915 where he wrote publicity for the Panama-Pacific Exposition.

In 1917 the family moved to New York City while Mike finished his autobiography. After working for several years for the National Catholic War (later Welfare) Council, he helped organize the Calvert Associates to share the "Catholic philosophy of living" with the American people.²⁶⁴ In 1924 they launched The Commonweal, a weekly journal of "literature, the arts, and public affairs," with Mike as editor.

The Commonweal emphasized American Catholicism's historical contribution to religious tolerance and freedom. By highlighting Catholic social and economic doctrine, Mike hoped to convert Protestants to his beliefs. During these years he authored several books on Catholic history and thought in the United States. In the 1930s he came under attack from conservative elements in the church for linking the New Deal with Catholic ideals and was forced to resign as editor in 1938.²⁶⁵ Mike continued to contribute to the journal and other publications.

After her marriage to Mike, Peggy, who had worked briefly as a teacher, spent the rest of her life as a

²⁶⁴Quoted in Rodger Van Allen, The Commonweal and American Catholicism: The Magazine, the Movement, and the Meaning (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 5.

²⁶⁵See Van Allen, The Commonweal and Martin J. Bredeck, Imperfect Apostles: The Commonweal and the American Catholic Laity, 1924-1976 (New York: Garland Publishing, 1988).

homemaker. She was a friend of the MacGowan sisters and had invited them to California. James Hopper claimed she was contemptuous of motherhood and had left the children in Carmel while she accompanied Mike to his job with the San Francisco Examiner.²⁶⁶ Her daughter Margaret sharply disputes this view, describing her mother as "an independent thinker, wise, loving, and humorous, utterly devoted to her family, and supportive of their religious aspirations," although she had no formally professed religion. Mike praised her "impetuous energy" and claimed she was the first white woman to visit the Tiburon Islands.²⁶⁷

The Williams' daughter Margaret became a sister of the Society of the Sacred Heart after receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from Manhattanville College and attending Oxford University. James Hopper called her an intelligent child, although he worried that she had suffered physically--and Philip mentally--from the "dietary tampering" of their early years.²⁶⁸ Sister Margaret taught Middle and Old English literature at her alma mater and in Tokyo. She translated several Old English ballads and authored books on the

²⁶⁶James Hopper to Edwin Bjorkman, 13 February 1914, Bjorkman Papers.

²⁶⁷Michael Williams, The Book of the High Romance, rev. ed. (New York: Macmillan Company, 1924), dedication; Michael Williams, "Tenderfoot on Tiburon," Outing 59 (October 1911): 101.

²⁶⁸James Hopper to Edwin Bjorkman, 13 February 1914, Bjorkman Papers. Good Health by Williams and Upton Sinclair describes their families' vegetarian diet.

Society of the Sacred Heart and its prominent members.²⁶⁹

The Williams' son Philip graduated from Carlton Academy and was employed in the hotel business.

For the Williams family, Helicon Home Colony served as a retreat from their troubled life. Mike traced his return to Catholicism to his time at Helicon; this, in turn, affected Margaret, who joined the Church with her father in 1913. While Mike welcomed Catholicism as the answer for which he had been searching, his autobiography reveals the restless energy and self-importance shared by many of the colony's young writers.

No information could be located on the following people identified by various newspaper articles as having survived the colony fire: Joseph Burke, Robert Duncker, Florence [Frances?] Eddy, Mrs. Jennings and child, Herbert Kinney, Albert O'Grady, Mrs. William Norris, and Emma Raskin [Ruskin?] and child.

²⁶⁹Matthew Hoehn, ed., Catholic Authors: Contemporary Biographical Sketches 1930-1947 (Newark, N.J.: St. Mary's Abbey, 1948).

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Because Helicon Home Colony's own records were destroyed by the fire that ended the experiment, its history must be compiled from newspaper and journal articles, government records, letters and memoirs of colonists and visitors, and brochures and prospectuses sent out to potential members. Basic information on the colonists' later experiences and writings can be traced through standard biographical dictionaries, Poole's Index, Reader's Guide to Periodical Literature, National Union Catalog of Manuscript Collections, and Library of Congress collections.

Archival Sources

The following collections provide useful primary documents on Helicon Home Colony, in addition to personal letters and writings that offer insights into the colony experience. See footnotes for references to other collections which contain pieces relevant to an understanding of the colony and its members.

Upton Sinclair Papers and Collection. Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

These collections include more than eight tons of materials dating from Sinclair's early childhood and throughout his lifetime, with a gap during the colony period. Of special interest to a study of Helicon Home

Colony are a small collection of primary documents; correspondence with stockholders and colonists after the fire; his unpublished autobiographical novel, Love's Progress, which covers the colony period; and a complete set of his essays, articles, and books. In general, the Sinclair Collection refers to printed works, while the Sinclair Papers contain unpublished letters and manuscripts.

Meta Fuller Stone Papers. Lilly Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

Meta Fuller, Sinclair's first wife, was married to him from 1900 to 1912. Her papers complement Sinclair's and include many of his letters to her. They include other related correspondence and her unpublished autobiographical novel, Corydon and Thrysis.

John and Phyllis Collier Collection. Archives of Labor and Urban Affairs, Wayne State University, Detroit, Michigan.

John Collier was a member and resident of Helicon Home Colony and most likely Meta's lover either at the colony or soon after. His papers include correspondence; research notes; and an unpublished autobiography, The Search. The latter is composed primarily of retyped letters and newspaper articles, with some transitional sentences added.

Oneida Community Records. Special Collections Department, Syracuse University, Syracuse, New York.

This collection is comprised of the research materials gathered by William A. Hinds for his reference book on communal groups, American Communities and Co-Operative Colonies; an article on Helicon Home Colony appeared in the third edition in 1908. The collection includes a number of primary materials on the colony not available elsewhere.

Edwin A. Bjorkman Papers. Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Library, Chapel Hill, North Carolina.

Edwin Bjorkman was a colony stockholder and corresponded with Upton Sinclair throughout their lives. This collection includes the unpublished third volume of his autobiography; correspondence between Bjorkman and various colony members; his research notes; and his newspaper clippings and unpublished writings. The collection also includes extensive correspondence between Edwin Bjorkman and Frances Maule, his wife at the time of Helicon Home Colony.

Newspapers, 1906-1907

Newspaper reporters documented many aspects of Helicon Home Colony, from its initial planning meetings to the coroner's inquest following the fire. More than one hundred articles were located. The following papers are especially useful.

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