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A German Communistic Society In Missouri

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The beautiful and abundant walnut timber of the North Valley furnished the cabinet maker and the joiner splendid material with which to work. For these frugal people not only built their houses but also made their own furniture. From their flax fields they obtained linen, and from their flocks of sheep they gained wool for their clothes. At first the spinning wheel and hand loom performed this labor but later machinery, run by steam, took their places. The colony hatter made felt hats from the fleece of lambs and the fur of rabbits. In brief, they made everything they needed, excepting drugs and medicines, all in a small way, but sufficient for their own use. At Hebron, which was once a cluster of colony houses but which is now represented by two lone farm houses, is located the old colony cemetery. Here the resting places of the honest toilers are marked by humble limestone tombs, made by the colonists themselves. It seems to me, that of all the manifestations of skill in the colony, these materials to the departed show least care and ability. Perhaps the concern for the living absorbed their time and energy so completely that the dead could not claim much attention.

Sharing things in common, it was but natural that common places should be provided for the protection of their livestock. For their horses, a huge barn one hundred and twenty by forty-eight feet was constructed at Bethel. In style it was what is commonly known as a Pennsylvania bank-barn, with a basement-like arrangement where the animals were kept and a tremendous loft for the hay and grain. There was also a separate barn for the protection of the work cattle, also a tremendous pigsty, and at Hebron, a large barn for the cows and stock cattle. Thus they took the most excellent care of their animals, and in this respect they should have been an illustrious example to the early Shelby County farmer, who left his stock in the open the year round.

For Dr. Keil, their leader, the colonists erected a large dwelling in Elim which is one and a fourth miles from Bethel. This house is still standing and seems to be in a perfect state of preservation. In the days when this structure was erected, it must have been a veritable palace among the houses of that region. It is constructed of brick and stone, fifty-two by thirty-six feet in size and two and a half stories high. Its hardwood finish would be the pride of a New York millionaire, but of course in those days it was the only timber obtainable. It is said that Keil protested against this tremendous expenditure of time and labor. But his followers who truly idolized him would not suffer him to dwell in a house as humble as their own. It is further stated that Keil, whether for effect or some other reason, lived in this palatial residence only for a short time. Against the protest of his followers, he moved into a simple brick house, and at one time even left Bethel to dwell in a humble wooden shack in Nineveh. Keil was ever a roving, restless man who always liked to play to the galleries.

Another large building at Bethel which deserves to be mentioned here is the one which the colonists called "Das grosse Haus"--the large house. In one part of it the colony store was kept. Another part represented the hotel, famed for its excellent meals. The rest of the building was designated as a dwelling place for those of the colony who had no kin with whom to reside. Most of the inhabitants of this house were unmarried men.

There remains still another form of building to be mentioned here. It is the old German bake oven, which stood out in the yard. One of them is still standing. It is a rude structure of stone and brick. To bake the bread a huge fire was built in this oven. When the brick and stone had become thoroughly heated, the fire and ashes were withdrawn and the fireplace thoroughly swept. Then the dough which

was contained in small baskets about a foot in diameter made of hickory shavings, was placed into the space where the fire had been, and allowed to bake in the heat which radiated from the superheated brick.

All the manufacturing at Bethel and Nineveh was carried on in a small way only. The intent was to supply the colony with everything it needed. However, of some things there was a surplus, and this was sold to outsiders. The chief support of the society was agriculture, for which the surrounding land afforded ample opportunity. At the time of dissolution the society owned 3,536 acres of land in Shelby County and 731 acres in Adair County. The land in Adair county was not as valuable as that in Shelby. Parts of it were subject to inundation. But the chief cause why this land was bought in Adair County was the presence of coal in this region. Then too it was believed that the Chariton River would furnish much needed water power.

There was apparently but little in the Bethel community to break the monotony of everyday life. An occasional dance, a picnic, a festival occasion, as described in another place, and weekly band concerts seem to have been about all the diversions for the weary workers. To be sure, in their band they had a source of pleasure which their neighbors had to do without. To judge from reports, the work of this band was excellent. Under the able management and direction of Henry Finck, this organization gained an enviable reputation. Their instruments are said to have been very fine. Among the curios which are shown to the inquisitive visitor is an old bass drum which was made by the colonists themselves and which is still in perfect condition. Of course we expect more from a settlement of this nature, but when it is considered how little diversion other settlements of that day had, it will be agreed that Bethel lived in pretty gay style.

In matters educational, the colonists did not have very great advantages. A common school was of course established, and for years was under the management of Moses Miller. In later years, Karl Ruge—a college bred man—took charge and conducted the work till he moved to Oregon with Keil. After this some women taught, much in the manner in which the work had been begun, that is, all the work was in the English language, altho all the members were Germans. Beyond the most elementary training but few aspired. Keil himself was opposed to higher education, holding that it was non-essential in making good workers for the society. His position is made clear in the interview which Nordhoff quotes in the work above cited. (13) There it appears that a young man would be permitted to go to college, at the expense of the colony, provided he acquired some knowledge which would bring immediate benefit to the colony. If he simply chose to acquire a broader view of things by means of a liberal course of training, he was not permitted to go. On the whole, Keil's attitude toward the intellectual life of his charge leave much to be wished for. In fact his severity and his autocratic rule had a stultifying and dwarfing effect on the minds of his people. As some outsiders have told me, he did not wish his members to know too much, nor to mingle with the world too freely, for then they would have lost some of their docility. Men with considerable learning came into the society, as was shown above, but in the colony the young people did not get beyond the training in the three Rs.

The German language was neglected in the school because there seemed to be no immediate pecuniary return arising from the use of this tongue. The most natural result was that the German language lost its hold on the younger generation. When I speak of German here, I mean the classical High German. The people at Bethel still speak German and even delight in doing so when they meet among themselves. But in a great many instances, it is the rather perverted speech of the Pennsylvania German. Some of the people at Bethel are descendants of Germans who came to Pennsylvania in the 18th century. To this lack of interest in German education is to be attributed the abandonment of the German Methodist Church in Bethel. In an effort to become Americanized some of the names were distinctly anglicized. Possibly the most flagrant cases of such changing are found in the cases of John Knight, whose German name was Johann Knecht, and the Mileys whose German name was Maile.

Politically most of the Bethel Germans are Republicans. Bethel Township is the only Republican township in Shelby County. During the Civil War these Germans maintained a strict

neutrality. This was done upon the advice and strict order of Dr. Keil who, knowing that the entire adjoining country was on the side of the Confederacy, feared a devastation of their property and an annihilation of his charge. An interesting story is told in "History of Monroe and Shelby Counties." (14) A body of Confederate sympathizers under Porter and Greene came down on Bethel. The colony, being apprised of their coming, hid many of their things. Nevertheless the troops foraged some, but they did no personal injury. When later on a body of Union soldiers came through that region, they asked that the colonists should name to them their neighbors who were Confederate sympathizers, in order that they might forage among them and leave their friends unmolested. No, said they, these men are our neighbors and our friends with whom we live in harmony and peace, you shall not molest them. If you need food, we have plenty, help yourselves. If you need food for your animals, we have enough of that also, take it, but leave our friends undisturbed. It is said that neither Union or Confederate soldiers, coming near Bethel after this incident, would disturb a people so generous and peace loving.

One of the most embarrassing things in the preparation of this study is the fact that it is absolutely impossible to obtain an accurate account of their business transactions. The fact is that only very few accounts were kept, and these few have been carelessly dealt with and have apparently been lost. Nordhoff seems to have had the same experience. He says concerning the Oregon branch of the society the following: (15) "I asked the purchasing agent about the bookkeeping of the place; he replied, 'As there is no trading, few accounts are needed. Much of what we raise is consumed on the place, and of what the people use no account is kept. Thus if a family needs flour, it goes to the store and gets what is required. If butter, it goes to the store in the same way. We need only to keep account of what we sell of our own products, and what we buy from abroad, and these accounts check each other. When we make money, we invest it in land.'" For the reasons thus given, it is impossible to arrive even at a comparative estimate of the financial condition and the extent of the business transactions of the society. If the statement is true that they invested their savings in land, we shall yet have a chance of seeing something of their financial condition, when we discuss the settlement of the business affairs at the time of the dissolution of the community.

All the transactions of the society were based on confidence. The land was deeded to individuals who held it in trust for the society; the foremen of the various industries made no reports, and even after the removal of Keil to Oregon, the Trustees at Bethel did not have to render him an account of their transactions. The most perfect confidence and trust existed among the members of the colony.

In some accounts of the Bethel society it is stated that the members were not allowed to marry outside of the colony. Upon an interrogation as to the truth of this statement it was most emphatically denied by the surviving members, and incidents quoted where such marriages had been contracted without any interference on the part of the superiors whatever.

At various times I have alluded to the Aurora, Oregon colony as a branch of the Bethel Society. For the sake of understanding the concluding part of the Bethel account, it will be necessary to speak a word of the Oregon Colony also. It was already stated that Keil was a very restless man. The region around Bethel soon became too thickly settled. He feared that his people would become contaminated by contact with the "World" as he called it. As is well known, the California gold fever made known the far distant West to all the world. Keil became very much interested in the West, and resolved to send a delegation of his men out there to investigate the Oregon country in particular, to see in how far it would suit the conditions of his colony. He entertained the hope that out there he could take his people and that there, uncontaminated by outsiders, he could continue to rule them. Accordingly, some time in 1854 the following men were sent to the Pacific coast to look up a favorable location for the colony: Christian Giesy (who also took his wife with him,) Adam Schuele, Joseph Knight, John Stauffer, Sr., John Stauffer, Jr., Michael Schaefer, and John Genger. A majority of these men reported favorably on a region, not in Oregon, but in the Willapa Valley, in Washington Territory.

In the spring of 1855 serious preparations were begun for the transcontinental journey.

Fortunately I am in possession of the complete account of the tedious trip across the plains. Being dictated by Keil himself, it must be taken for its full value. It teems with interesting and thrilling incidents. I shall publish it in another study which shall deal with both the Bethel and the Aurora communities. About the last part of May or the first part of June, the train of seventy-five wagons left Bethel for the western coast. Other trains followed later on. One in 1863 was made up of forty wagons. Smaller groups of men went by water, crossing the continent at Panama. After five months of travel, amid the greatest difficulties, the first train of immigrants reached the region in Washington Territory which had been designated by the deputies. It was found that the place was wholly unsuited to the purpose for which it had been selected. It was mountainous, only small tracts of land could be purchased in a body and communication with the outside world was almost entirely barred. They spent a miserable winter there. The temperature was very low and the temporary houses were very bad. The suffering was wholly beyond description. Keil, who had cursed Missouri, and who in a letter from Fort Kearney, Nebraska, had congratulated himself that the boundary of the State of Missouri was at last passed, now wished that his charge had never left the flesh pots of Bethel. Missouri now seemed to all a veritable Eden, and Keil charged the members at Bethel not to dispose of a single foot of land they owned there. The following spring many of the colonists went to Portland, Oregon. The first letter of Keil which bears the stamp of Portland is dated March 28th, 1856. Here Keil took up his medical practice again, and continued to be thus employed until June, 1857. He had purchased a tract of land in the Willamette Valley in Marion County, Oregon, and had named the site where the new town was to be erected Aurora. Thither he recalled all the members whom he could summon. The first letter written by him from Aurora Mills, as it was then called, was dated June 16th, 1857. All those who were not bound by agreement with some employer, for the able bodied men and women had to get out and earn some money, responded to his call. And now began once more the awful task of establishing new homes, and that in a thickly wooded country. Some of the members deserted the cause and began to shift for themselves.

After establishing the colony in Aurora, Keil wrote the most contradictory letters to his old members in Bethel. Now he urged them to sell out at once and join him in the west, while in the very next letter he pleads with them not to dispose of their belongings. In the later years of his life his letters had a uniform tone, however, namely an earnest appeal to rejoin their brethren on the Pacific coast. It seems, however, that the Missouri branch had lost confidence in Keil. They remained passive to his pleading. Despite the fact that representatives were called from Missouri to Oregon, and committees from Oregon were sent to Bethel, the transfer could not be made. Whether an attempt was made to sell the land at Bethel prior to the general division, I am not able to say. In 1877, December 30th, Dr. William [Wilhelm] Keil died. Soon the steps were taken to effect the division of the property.

Before I discuss the matter of the separation, however, I wish to refer to a strange fulfillment of a promise on the part of Keil. The latter had promised his favorite son, William, that he should go to the region which had been visited by the deputies who looked for a location. Before this trip could be made, the boy took sick and died. The father wished to make good his promise. He also wished to show his people how sacred a promise should be to every one and how one should fulfill a promise even toward the dead. He decided that this boy's body should lead the train of immigrants across the plains. He therefore sent to St. Louis and a metal casket was procured. Into this the boy's body was placed. Since the art of embalming was not practiced in that region at that time, the remaining space in the casket was filled with alcohol. This casket was placed in a specially prepared wagon which was drawn by four mules, and this solemn conveyance headed the train and lead the way across the plains. Thus there took place a funeral procession the like of which has perhaps never been seen a second time in this country. After a five month's journey, the young body was interred at Willapa in Washington Territory.

After his departure, Keil left the affairs of Bethel in the hands of deputy presidents, appointed by himself, and who scarcely dared to act contrary to his wishes. And here was a serious source of

discontent. The people wished to have a voice in the selection of their superiors. These deputy presidents were really not responsible to anyone, as Keil did not trouble himself with regular reports. They performed all the functions which Keil had performed. They ruled and they preached, but the members could not appeal from their decision. The first deputy president was Dr. Wolf. This man had been prepared as a Lutheran minister in Germany, and was indeed in the service of the ministry in Marietta, Ohio, when he came under the influence of Keil. Wolf was a well educated and very able man. Under his rule the people were contented, at least they were satisfied that he was doing the best that could be done for them under the circumstances. Even while Keil was yet in Bethel, Wolf counseled for the real interests of the people against the opinion of Keil himself. Some of the old men in Bethel told me that Keil did not like Wolf on this account and tried to suppress him, but that he could not find a man more fitted to take charge of things when he left for the west. Wolf remained in charge at Bethel until 1863 when he led a train of forty wagons across the plains. Most of the men were young men. Keil did not wish them to take part in the war which was then raging. To escape being drafted into service, they left the country.

The drawing of such large bodies of men, and especially young men, together with large numbers of the best horses, mules, and cattle, and the complete equipment for the transcontinental trip was a serious drain on the Bethel Society. It was a handicap which they never entirely overcame, and which prevented them from bringing their colony to that state of perfection which they no doubt would have attained, if they had remained unhampered. Nor were they called upon only at the time of the exodus to assist their brethren, but even after they had gotten out to Washington, calls came in for shoes and clothing. Nor is there any record that the immigrants had given anything in return for the contributions thus received.

But to return to the subject of the deputy presidents. After Wolf's departure, Andrew Giesy, who will be remembered as one of the young men whom Keil sent out to preach in German settlements, prior to the founding of the Colony. After Giesy's term the reins went into the hands of Jacob G. Miller, who still is living in Aurora, Oregon, and to whom I am indebted for many a kindness in the preparation of this account. These deputy presidents not only cared for the temporal welfare of the colonists but also for the spiritual, in so far at least that they preached once every two weeks. Besides these three persons, a fourth, namely Jacob Findling, a paper maker by occupation, preached occasionally. Keil's defamers declare that Keil had Findling preach at times, in order to amuse himself at the poor man's ridiculous attempts to perform a task for which he was unfitted.

As there was no constitution, the organization was a very loose one. There was no contract between the members except an understanding that all should labor for the common cause and all should receive their livelihood from the general supply. Everything went harmoniously until one Henry L. Hoffman sued to recover wages. Hoffman knew very well that the society did not pay any wages to its members, but he decided to sever his connection with the society, and at this juncture resolved to extort some money from the colony. Pay being refused him, he brought suit in the courts of Shelby County. The society having no legal existence, he brought suit against several members of this unincorporated body. In all he brought five suits. All of these cases were taken to Marion County, and in none of them did he recover damages. The history of the connection of the Hoffman family with the Bethel Colony is the following: (16) Hoffman's father joined the society in 1846. In 1848 he severed his connection with the society and went to Hannibal. It was a strict principle of the Bethel Society to reimburse the seceding parties with the amount they had contributed to the common stock. Hoffman having contributed nothing to the stock was paid \$25, the amount which was paid to all those retiring who had brought nothing to the general funds. In 1857 Hoffman, Sr., died, leaving a widow and several dependent children, one of whom was the said Henry L. Hoffman, then aged fourteen. After the death of her husband, Mrs. Hoffman returned with her children and begged for readmission in the colony. She contributed nothing to the stock but was taken in. She and her children worked in the society, receiving therefrom the benefits of food, clothing, shelter, and schooling. According to the principles of the

organization no one was entitled to wages, and so Hoffman's claims were unfounded, he himself having once declared himself a member of the colony. However, in order to avoid hard feelings and to get rid of Hoffman entirely, the following settlement was effected. Mrs. Maerk, who was Hoffman's mother-in-law, had contributed some money and it was estimated that her share in the colony was worth about \$1200. Hoffman had a child who was the lawful heir to this money. So this amount was paid Hoffman to be held in trust by him for his child. This was precisely the amount which would have been paid these parties at the time of the final settlement. It was paid, however, previous to the time of the final settlement, and so far was a concession which the colony made to adjust the Hoffman affair. It was done more to deal squarely with the little girl than to appease Hoffman.

During the latter part of the colony's existence, Keil sent his son, August, to Bethel as physician and as a sort of overseer. He was in no wise fitted for these tasks. In the first place, he was not well trained in medicine, in the second place he possessed no business ability, and finally he was such an inveterate drunkard that no one would entrust life or property into his hands. At first the colonists rejoiced that a Keil was again in their midst. They hoped that some of his father's ability might have been transmitted to the son. In disgrace and unattended the poor man died in a barn at Bethel. Of the large family of Dr. Keil, only one son is now living, Emanuel Keil, who resides at Aurora, Oregon. None of the children of Keil seem to have had that ability to deal with men in the manner which made him such a distinguished person.

When in 1877 Dr. William [Wilhelm] Keil died, the knell of the colony was sounded. There appeared no one who could rule with the iron hand of Keil. Even he had found difficulty in doing so toward the last, as is easily seen from his letters. The young people began to see that they, individually, did not possess as much property as their non-communistic neighbors. Here and there arose a longing for individualism. The older generation was not so eager for the new order of things. They were very conscious, that left alone, they, many of them at any rate, would have remained day laborers all their lives. However, since the former conditions no longer obtained, and since no leader appeared capable to manage and control affairs, it was deemed prudent and necessary by all to effect a speedy division of the property—first between the two branches in Missouri and Oregon and finally among the respective members of each colony.

In the Recorder's office in Shelby County, Record Volume No. 28, appears the following record under the caption "Bethel Colony to J. G. Miller et al request to sell:" "Whereas there are now resident in said County of Shelby, State of Missouri many persons who are members of a community or colony known as 'Bethel Community' and whereas there are many persons, citizens, and residents of the Counties of Marion and Clackamas, State of Oregon, members of and belonging to a colony known as the 'Aurora Community' and whereas both of said communities own and have an interest in said states of Missouri and Oregon and whereas both of said colonies or communities were during the lifetime of Dr. William Keil under his direction, superintendence and control, who during his said lifetime held property in trust for both the said communities and whereas by reason of the great distance between the said states of Missouri and Oregon and the many difficulties encountered by both said communities in owning, managing, and enjoying jointly and in common real and personal estates in different states," etc., therefore it was decided to effect a division of said estates at an early date. According to this same record the following attorneys in fact and agents for the Missouri society were appointed: Philip Miller, Philip Steinbach, Josh Schaefer, John G. Bauer, and Henry Will; while the Oregon society sent the following attorneys in fact and agents: Samuel Miller, Henry Will, (a cousin to the Henry Will from Missouri), and Stephen Smith.

The Bethel colony issued its instructions under seven headings:

1. That the attorneys from both colonists should meet as soon as possible.
2. That they should effect peaceful settlement if possible.
3. That the agents should have absolute power to determine manner and mode of division. "We hereby ratify and confirm in advance all the acts of our said

attorneys in fact, or a majority of them touching and concerning the real estate and property aforesaid.”

4. That they should reduce their conclusions to writing.
5. That they should have full power to incur expense legal and otherwise in performing this task.
6. That they should have full power and authority to bring to court any members of the Bethel Community, either in the Federal or State Courts to assist in effecting the separation.
7. “After our aforesaid attorneys in fact shall have agreed upon and perfected the division between the two communities of property now in common held, they our said attorneys in fact are authorized and empowered to divide and partition between us according to our respective rights and interests as the same may be found and ascertained by them or a majority of them, all the property real, personal, and mixed belonging to the said 'Bethel community.'”

In testimony whereof we hereunto subscribe our names and affix our seals this the (blank) day of (blank) 1879.

Bachert, Catherina her X mark

Bauer, Louisa

Bronson, D.

Bronson, Susan

Ebner, Elizabeth

Erich, Emma her X mark

Erich, Hermann

Erich, Peter

Erich, Wilhelmine

Gehrken, Henry

Gehrken, Adelheide

Grossman, Ausgang

Grossman, Elizabeth her X mark

Grossman, Elizabeth her X mark

Grossman, Susana her X mark

Helfenbein, Henry

Jenny, Annie

Jenny, G.

Keller, Christina

Keller, Daniel

Schreiver, Henry

Schreiver, Lena

Schreiver, Samuel

Stark, Christina

Stark, Joshua

Steinbach, Elizabeth her X mark

Steinbach, George

Steinbach, Pauline E.

Steinbach, Philip

Steinbach, William

Will, Catharina

Will, Catharina

Keller, Mary her X mark

Keller, Susanah

Mangold, Henry

Mangold, Margaret

Mangold, Christine

Moffett, George

Moffett, Louisa

Miller, Moses

Noll, Emily

Noll, Melchior

Pflum, Fredrick

Pflum, Rose

Pflum, Sarah

Roser, Dorothy her X mark

Schadle, Matilda

Schadle, Thomas

Schreiver, Christiana

Schreiver, Hanna

Will, Elizabeth

Will, Julius E.

Will, Lorenz

Will, Nicholas

Woerther, Jacob

Ziegler, Clearreally

Ziegler, Emma

Ziegler, George

Ziegler, Henry

Ziegler, Julia

Ziegler, Mary

Ziegler, Sophia

Ziegler, W. A.

Thus there appear in Bethel 65 signatures. The men appointed as attorneys did not sign this

document.

Then follows the part that pertains to the Aurora Community. From the very outset the Aurora people assumed that the Bethel Community should pay them a certain compensation. Similar to the Bethel people they gave their representatives or in case of death or disagreement to two of them power to do the following:

1. To ascertain what if anything should be paid the Bethel Community in the division.
2. To see how the Bethel Community would pay its compensation, if any.
3. Whether payment should be made in cash or in property, when and how paid.
4. To make written, signed report of their agreement. They too agreed to confirm and ratify in advance all the acts of their agents. "We especially desire the same to be conducted and consummated upon the strictest principles of equity, good conscience, and fair dealing," they continued, "Now then trusting wholly in our said agents and attorneys to settle for us with our former friends and relations upon the principles aforesaid, whether the result to us as a community be large or small, or such in amount as we now expect and look for, we do hereby expressly covenant that in so far as we are able, we will and shall accept, agree to and abide by the same whatsoever it may be."

In witness whereof we have hereunto affixed our names and seal this 31 December 1878 and this 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 15, and 16th days of January 1879.

Signed and sealed in the presence of:

Urban Will

and

Henry E. Giesy

*Bachert, Maria her X mark	Miller, Mathilda
*Bachert, Michael	*Miller, Salamon
Beck, Charles, Jr	*Miller, William
*Beck, Henry his X mark	Miller, William H.
Beck, Louisa	*Mohler, Elizabeth her X mark
Beck, Sarah	*Mohler, Mary her X mark
*Beeke, Charles	Preutz, Louisa
Beeke, Henry	*Rapps, Catharine her X mark
*Beeke, Johanna	*Rapps, Maragaret her X mark
Behrens, Anna her X mark	*Rapps, Michael
Behrens, Dorothy	*Remport, Catharine her X mark
Bergman, Elizabeth	*Ruge, Karl
Boehringer, Catharina	*Schaefer, Michael
*Brady, Adelhelde	*Schaeffer, Michael, Jr.
*Brady, Thomas	*Scharmann, Sophia
*Burkholder, Adam	Schmidt, Martha
Burkholder, Catharina	Schneider, Catharine
Burkholder, Catharina	*Scholl, A. D.
*Burkholder, Elias	*Scholl, David
Burkholder, Elias	*Scholl, G. F.
Burkholder, Jacob	Scholl, Fredrick
Burkholder, Nancy her X mark	*Scholl, John
Burkholder, Samuel	*Scholl, Louis
*Ehlen, Catharine	*Schreiver, John his X mark
Ehlen, Clara	*Schuele, Christina
*Ehlen, Claus H.	*Schuele, Mary

*Ehlen, Elizabeth	Schuette, Mary
Ehlen, Henry	*Schwader, Gottlob
*Ehlen, J. D. his X mark	Schwader, Jacob
Ehlen, Lorenz	*Schwader, John
*Ehlen, Maria	Schwader, Louisa
*Ehlen, Mary	*Schwader, William
*Ehlen, William	Smith, George
*Findling, Barbara	Smith, Rosina her X mark
*Forstner, Elizabeth	*Snyder, Charles
Fry, Anny	Snyder, Christian
Fry, Caroline	*Snyder, Daniel
*Fry, George M.	*Snyder, Elizabeth her X mark
Fry, Henry	*Snyder, Henry
Fry, Mary her X mark	*Snyder, Henry
*Fry, William	*Snyder, Israel
*Fuchs, Catharine	Staps, Adam
*Gerken, Deborah	*Stauffer, Benedikt
*Gerken, Peter	*Stauffer, Caroline
*Giesy, Anna Barbara	*Stauffer, Catherine her X mark
Giesy, A. J.	*Stauffer, Elizabeth
Giesy, Andrew	Stauffer, Jacob
Giesy, August	*Stauffer, Jacob his X mark
*Giesy, Barbara	*Stauffer, John
Giesy, Barbara A.	Stauffer, John
Giesy, Catharina	*Stauffer, Maria
Giesy, Catharina	*Stauffer, Mary
Giesy, Catharina A.	*Stauffer, Rosina
Giesy, Elizabeth	Stauffer, Theodore his X mark
Giesy, Elizabeth	*Steinbach, Catherine her X mark
Giesy, Emily	*Steinbach, Daniel
*Giesy, Emma M.	*Steinbach, David
*Giesy, Frederick	Steinbach, George his X mark
*Giesy, Helena	Steinbach, Hannah
*Giesy, Jacob	*Steinbach, Jacob
*Giesy, John	*Steinbach, J. Adam
Giesy, M.	Steinbach, Margareta
Giesy, Martha	Ulbrand, Diedrich
Giesy, Martha	*Voght, Henry
Giesy, Mary	Voght, Louisa
Giesy, Mathilda	Voght, Mary her X mark
*Giesy, Michael	*Vogt, Andy
*Giesy, Rudolph	*Wagner, Catharina
Giesy, Sarah	Werner, Fredrick, Sr.
*Giesy, Samuel	*Werner, John
Giesy, William	Werner, Joseph
*Giesy, William his X mark	*Webber, Mariana
Gruenbaum, Aaron	*Weyman, Maria her X mark
*Jost, Conrad	*Will, Christina
*Jost, Johanna	Will, Christina

Keil, Elizabeth	*Will, Dorothea her X mark
Keil, Emanuel	Will, Elizabeth
*Keil, Fredrick	Will, Elizabeth P.
*Keil, Louisa	Will, Emma
*Knight, Anna her X mark	Will, Fredrick
Kocher, Christian	Will, George
Kocher, Christina	Will, Henrietta
*Kocher, George	*Will, John
*Kocher, Mary	Will, Louisa
*Kocher, Sophia	Will, Mary her X mark
Kraus, Christina	Will, Matilda
*Kraus, Elizabeth	Will, Sarah
*Kraus, Elizabeth	Will, Susana
Kraus, George	*Will, Susana her X mark
*Kraus, Henry	Will, Thriphine
Kraus, William	*Will, Urban
*Kraus, Wilhelmina	*Will, Wolfgang
Link, David	*Woerner, Fredrick
*Link, John	Wolf, W. C.
*Link, Lavina	Wolfer, Adelia
Link, Rose	*Wolfer, Benjamin
Link, William	Wolfer, Catharine her X mark
Maile, Fredrick	Wolfer, Christian
*Meyer, Henry	Wolfer, Christina
Miley, Cathrina	*Wolfer, Davis his X mark
Miley, Henry	*Wolfer, George
Miley, Jacob	*Wolfer, John
Miley, William	*Wolfer, Margaret
Miller, Amelia	*Wolfer, Marie
*Miller, Catharina	*Wolfer, Rudolph
*Miller, Catharina	Wolfer, Sarah
*Miller, Catharine	*Wolfer, Samuel
Miller, Elizabeth	Wolfer, William
Miller, Gertrude	Ziegler, George
Miller, George	Zimmerman, Catharine
Miller, Isaac	Zimmerman, Christine
Miller, Jerdith	*Zimmerman, David his X mark
*Miller, John his X mark	Zimmerman, Elizabeth her X mark
*Miller, Joseph	*Zimmerman, Elizabeth her X mark
Miller, Louisa	*Zimmerman, Mary her X mark
Miller, Louisa	Zimmerman, Mary, her X mark

From these official signatures, it appears that Aurora had 236 members at the time of dissolution. As is the case of the Bethel Community, the agents sent to bring about the settlement did not sign the paper. According to the statement of some of the old members at Bethel, the names indicated with an asterisk were personally known to them as former members of the Bethel Society. I make no claim as to the accuracy of this marking, having no data by which to check it myself. Most probably it is nearly correct, and in such a case we would have at least a partial list of those who once lived in Missouri. In twenty-four years a great many of the older generation must have passed away,

and a great number of the younger generation must have come into the society.

The joint committee, whose powers are officially attested in the above record, at once proceeded to business. In the Recorder's office of Shelby County, Record Vol. 31, at pp.1 to 19 is found the extremely lengthy record of the agreement concerning the division of property between the two communities. This agreement is dated June 20th, 1879. The document is very detailed in the description of the real estate. It is shown that the society owned 3536 acres of land in Shelby County, Missouri, valued at \$42,447.50 Also town property in Bethel, Missouri, valued at \$10,728.00. Smaller tracts of land near Bethel, a corn crib, a grist mill with machinery in Bethel, valued together at \$7,475.00. Furthermore 731 acres of land in Adair County, Missouri, valued at \$2,790.00. also the following personal property in Adair County, Missouri: Cash from the sale of lands \$683.85, Promissory notes due \$204.00, together \$887.85. The estimate of the property in Oregon as to its value was \$45,478.00. (It should be remarked here that the Oregonians did make as careful an appraisalment of their property as the Missourians had made a bold guess at what their property was worth.)

To recapitulate then, it is found that the society owned the following estates:

Real estate in Shelby County, Missouri.....	\$ 42447.50
Town lots in Bethel, Missouri.....	10728.00
Other lots and improvements in Bethel, Missouri.....	7475.00
Property in Oregon.....	45478.00
Real estate in Adair County, Missouri.....	2790.00
Cash and Notes in Adair County, Missouri.....	<u>887.85</u>

Total Valuation..... \$109806.35

The writ continues thus: “And we the said attorneys and agents acting further in pursuance of the said power and authority, find that the total valuation of said property is \$109,806.35, and having fully examined the question as to the rights and interests of the two communities therein, find that the “Bethel Community” is entitled to \$47,214.25 part thereof and that the “Aurora Community: is entitled to \$62,592.10 the residue thereof. And we the said attorneys and agents do hereby allot and set apart to the “Bethel Community” the following described property, (here follows the description of the property), valued as hereinafter set forth, amounting in the aggregate to the sum of \$47,028.00 (?) (Here manifestly an error has occurred. The correct sum of \$47,214.25 which has been quoted before, appears on a line that was manifestly erased. The erasure and corresponding correction was, by oversight, no doubt, not made in the second instance when the sum was recorded.

The Bethel Community was allowed the following property:

Land valued at.....	\$ 36425.00
Lots valued at.....	10603.00
Fractions of land near Bethel, Mo, valued at.....	<u>186.25</u>

\$ 47214.25

The share which the Aurora Community was allowed was made up in the following manner:

Property in Marion and Clackamas Counties in Oregon, valued at.....	\$ 4578.00
Lots in Bethel, Missouri, valued at.....	500.00
One corn crib, valued at.....	100.00
One grist mill and machinery, valued at.....	7000.00
530 acres of land in Adair County, Missouri, valued at.....	2790.00

508 acres of land in Shelby County, Missouri, valued at....	5836.25
Cash and promissory notes.....	<u>887.85</u>
Total paid to Aurora.....	\$ 62592.10

The agents subjoined the following note: “In making the division and partitions the said attorneys and agents of said communities found certain fraction lots, adjoining and near the city of Bethel which for want of proper survey and description they were not able to inventory which said fractional parcels of land they have valued together at \$186.25 and allotted the same to the Bethel Community.

Then follow the signatures of the five agents of Bethel and the three from Aurora. Moses Miller as notary public and William Haeffner and Julius E. Will, as the two witnesses, attested the signatures. The document was filed with Recorder John J. Bragg, on June 23rd, 1879.

According to the foregoing stipulations the Bethel Community was obliged to pay to the Aurora Community the sum of \$17114.10 in cash, endorsement of old notes, and real estate and personal property. When I asked one of the ex-members of the Bethel Society whether they did not regard this sum excessive, they said that they did think it exorbitant, in view of the fact that they had contributed so largely to the equipment of the trains that crossed the plains, and since they had to suffer the drain of the best workmen from the society. But since the Oregonians came determined to receive certain emoluments, and everybody being weary of the affair, they acquiesced in what they at that time regarded a rather presumptuous demand.

Altho the agents had some very stormy meetings, and sometimes had to adjourn for several days to “cool off,” all ended harmoniously. The entire settlement was made without a sign of a lawsuit. There being no written compact, no provision was made for a possible dissolution. Hence the problem before these men was a unique one. The Bethelites consulted an attorney at law at Shelbyville, who charged them \$50 for—as one of the old men put it—telling them that he knew nothing about that sort of thing. Finally they consulted the noted counselor D. P. Dyer of St. Louis, who evolved the scheme by which the division of the property among the members was made, for the trifling sum of \$170; the Oregon Society took their affair to the courts of Equity and spent \$6000 in effecting their final settlement.

To show in what a detailed and painstaking manner the invoice was taken at the appraisalment of Bethel, I subjoin one account, it being that of Philip Steinbach, Sr. It appears under the heading Phil. Steinbach, Sr. and Company. By the term Company is meant those persons who are immediately connected with, related to or dependent upon the larger stockholder whose name leads the account.

1 Cultivator.....	\$ 6.75
3 Horses and 1 Mare.....	320.00
6 Cows.....	124.00
1 two year old heifer.....	23.00
1 Grain cradle.....	2.25
5 Plows.....	9.75
1 Corn planter.....	30.00
1 Wagon and water cart.....	50.00
2 Wagon sheets.....	3.00
1 Grind stone.....	2.50
1 Crosscut saw.....	2.25
Blacksmith shop and tools.....	94.90
Saddler shop and tools.....	150.00
1 Harrow.....	1.50

1 Sled.....	4.00
Shoe tools.....	6.50
1 Hand corn planter.....	.45
1 Trunk.....	1.00
1 Cane mill.....	10.00
1 Drawing knife.....	.65
1 Wooden vice.....	1.00
1 Mare.....	15.00
5 Mules.....	203.00
1 Mare.....	30.00
1 Buck sheep.....	8.00
24 Wethers @ \$2.75.....	66.60
15 Wethers @ \$2.21.....	33.15
17 Wethers @ \$2.00.....	34.00
15 Wethers @ \$1.75.....	26.25
14 Ewes @ \$4.00.....	56.00
13 Ewes @ \$3.50.....	45.50
11 Ewes @ \$2.50.....	27.50
11 Ewes @ \$2.75.....	31.25
1 Two year old heifer.....	17.00
1 Two year old heifer.....	15.00
1 Post auger.....	1.00
1 Two year old heifer.....	15.00
	<hr/>
	\$ 1466.15
	<u>1413.99</u>
	\$ 52.16
Steinbach, Phil. Sr. & co.	Cr.
Steinbach, Phil. Sr.	575.03
Steinbach, Phil. Jr.	283.24
Steinbach, William—wife	125.64
Gerkin, H	355.08
Credit on mare	<u>75.00</u>
	\$ 1413.99

After the general appraisalment had been made and the detailed invoice of each man's holdings had been found, the problem was simplified to its lowest terms. When all items were in the form of cash the solution was simple. The first thing that was done was the setting aside of the amount each man or woman had conducted to the general stock. Then the land was divided. To determine what share each should have of the personal property, the whole number of years that all had labored for the society, after they had reached maturity was divided into the sum representing the total of person property. Thus it was found that of this sum each man was entitled to \$7.76 per year for his services and each woman was allowed half this sum, \$3.88.

The following is a sample of the simple record that was kept of the account under the caption of "Sum total of Personal Property." The account which I chose again pertains to Philip Steinbach, Sr. et al.

Names	Years	Dollars
Steinbach, Phil. Sr.....	34.....	\$ 263.84

Steinbach, Phil. Wife.....	34.....	131.92
Steinbach, William.....	10.....	77.60
Steinbach, William, Wife.....	9.....	34.92
Steinbach, George.....	5.....	38.80
Steinbach, Henry.....	2.....	15.52
Credit on land.....		<u>12.43</u>
Total credit.....		\$ 575.03

The splendid colony church was sold to Jacob G. Miller for the sum of \$1500. Miller was the last leader and preacher and being interested in the good of the people and even hoping to reunite them into a colony, he purchased this building. At a subsequent sale he lost a good deal of money on his investment. This church had not been considered under the general appraisalment. But since all the colonists had had a share in its erection and preservation all shared in proportion to the number of years each person had been an active member in the society. It was determined that each male member was entitled to \$1.12 of the church money for each year of his membership, while each woman was entitled to 56 cents per year of her membership.

The final account is condensed by the committee in family groups. The following is a sample of the final total account:

Names of Persons	Years	Sum Total
Keller, Daniel.....	26.....	\$ 725.92
Keller, Daniel, Wife.....	21.....	293.16
Keller, Susan.....	24.....	335.04
Keller, Christina.....	18.....	251.28
Bachert, Widon.....	34.....	474.64
Keller, Widow.....		348.45
Conduced by A. Keller.....		804.50
Conduced by Widow Bachert.....		15.66
Church.....		<u>59.92</u>
		\$ 3308.57

A single glance at these figures suffices to convince one that the pecuniary gain, accruing from the society was not great. It must be remembered, however, that these people had all their wants supplied and lived without care. Moreover a great many of them, if left to themselves, would have eked out a bare existence as day laborers. Others, to be sure, were seriously handicapped. Being skilled artisans, they could have gained vastly more wealth if they had plied their trade in individualism.

Many of the old colonists still recall the community day with serene pleasure. "Das war das Paradies," that was paradise, one of them said to me after he had talked reminiscently. "In der Kolonie war es aber doch so shoen" was the concluding remark of an old lady who had spent thirty-four years in the society. The association of kindred spirits, the freedom, the ease they enjoyed, the absence of care and the responsibility, the fraternal feeling and the devotion to a common cause are topics which all of the old colonists like to speak about. One of the men assured me that the old bond of fellowship still existed among the former members. He said, "When the old people get together there is still the bond of a great love and this love we believe is God."

Community life seems not to have unfitted the members for the struggle in individualism. As far as I could learn, all of them are doing well at some trade or profession. In many instances they are pursuing the same trade which was theirs during their membership in the colony.

After the formal dissolution of the society, Jacob G. Miller tried to reorganize the society at Bethel. He had a small following. After a very short time, however, this scheme was abandoned and the

property of these persons divided among the members concerned.

Bethel was incorporated a town in 1883. It is a small place of about 300 inhabitants. It is located off the railroad. It differs little from the towns of its size in the State except that its building seem odd and unusually substantially constructed. There is a general air of uniqueness about the place which is the heirloom of the old community days.

William Godfrey Bek
Instructor in Germanic Languages,
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13. Page 317

14. Page 866

15. Page 315

16. The facts in this connection were obtained from the answer filed by Andrew Giesy to the petition of Henry L. Hoffman; Andrew Giesy being the party sued as deputy president of the society.