Online Appendix: Brief introductions of the American communes mentioned

The Woman in the Wilderness was a religious commune established in 1694 on the northern shore of the Chesapeake Bay by 40 male immigrants from Germany. The commune’s life was centered around the expectant arrival of the kingdom of heaven. After the kingdom of heaven was repeatedly postponed, the commune began its disintegration and in 1741 the commune was dissolved.

Ephrata was a religious commune established in 1732 in near present-day Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The commune’s main defining features were celibacy and observance of many customs of Jewish origin, such as the Sabbath and circumcision. At its peak, the commune numbered around 100 members. The commune lasted through the 1790’s.

The Shakers are a protestant Christian sect that originated in England and initially immigrated to the American colonies in 1774 as a group of 9 members. By 1850, the sect consisted of close to 4,000 adherents. During a history of over 200 years, eighteen separate Shaker communities have been established from Kentucky to Maine (Pitzer, 1997), all under communal principles. Most Shaker communes were relatively prosperous through the 19th century until membership began to dwindle in the 20th century. Natural increase was not an option, as the Shakers lived according to the principle of celibacy.

Harmony Society was a Lutheran Christian sect that originated around Stuttgart in Germany, under the leadership of George Rapp. The first group of about 500 arrived in America in 1804 and within a year organized the Harmony Society in Pennsylvania (Oved, 1993). By 1810, the commune’s population reached 900. In 1818, the commune relocated to New Harmony in Indiana, and it 1825, they returned to Pennsylvania. The colony was mostly prosperous during its existence, even after George Rapp’s death in 1847. However, due to celibacy and limited member recruiting, its numbers diminished significantly until it dissolved in 1916 (Pitzer, 1997).

Zoar was a communal society established by German religious dissenters called the Society of Separatists of Zoar in 1817 in Ohio. Their immigration to the US was a result of religious oppression from the Lutheran church in Germany. Their leader, Joseph Bimeler, was known to be charismatic, but his death in the 1850’s lead to a disintegration in the cohesion of the commune and eventually in 1898, the members voted to dissolve the communal society.

Amana was a group of colonies in Iowa established by a religious sect originating from the Community of True Inspiration in Germany. After the sect’s existence since the early 1700’s, several hundred members immigrated to the United States in the early 1840’s in the hopes of establishing independent communal settlements. They initially established settlements near Buffalo, New York, but as the city expanded, they decided to relocate further west to Iowa, where the Amana
colonies were established. By 1865, the transfer was complete and the sect numbered 1,200 members. The communities were prosperous and dealt mostly with agriculture and farming. Amana’s decline was a result of a both its young generation call for revision of the strict religious rules and communal system and the economic impact of the Depression. In 1931, members voted to reorganize the commune and abolish the it as an economic entity.

Bishop Hill was a Swedish religious commune, whose leader was Eric Jansen, established in Illinois in 1846. Nearly all of Eric Janssen’s followers, numbering approximately 1,400, immigrated from Sweden to the United States between 1846 and 1854 (Pitzer, 1997). In 1850, Jansen was murdered in a dispute with one of the commune’s new members. In 1854, the commune’s new leader forced the commune to adopt celibacy, and those who objected were forced to leave the commune. In 1857 a recession hit agriculture and industry. The younger members used this financial undermining to rebel against the spiritual stagnation of the trustees and in 1859 came a demand to dissolve the commune. In 1862, the commune was dissolved (Oved, 1993).

New Harmony in Indiana was purchased by Robert Owen from the Harmony Society under George Rapp in 1825, when the Harmonites relocated to Pennsylvania. Robert Owen used the existing infrastructure to construct a socialist commune. The commune accepted members without a selective criteria, and therefore expanded quite rapidly to a population of nearly 1,000. Members’ heterogeneity caused many schisms and many groups departed to establish their own communes. In addition, the commune was burdened by debt to George Rapp, and the social experiment came to an end in 1827 (Oved, 1993).

Fourierism is a utopian socialist doctrine, which influenced the establishment of twenty-one secular communes throughout the United States primarily in the 1840’s. Its originator is Charles Fourier, a French utopian visionary who spread his ideas during the early 19th century. In Fourierist communes, there was no common ownership, only common use thereof and members earned according to the work they invested. However, housing, food, health services, and education were promised to everyone (Oved, 1993). The most prominent Fiourierist commune was Brook Farm in Massachusetts. Life on Brook Farm centered around its local educational institution, which attracted students from all over New England. With the exception of one last attempt of Fourierist commune in Kansas in 1869, By 1859, all Fourier communes had dissolved, mostly due to their economic struggles.

Oneida was a religious commune in upstate New York which was established in 1847, under the leadership of John Humphrey Noyes. Prior to settling in Oneida, members of the group were residing for approximately 10 years in Putney, Vermont. The group practiced a complex marriage system, with the goal of moving beyond the “egotism for two” implicit in monogamous family life and to create an “enlarged family” in which all loyalties, including sexual loyalties,
would eventually be raised to the level of the entire community (Pitzer, 1997). In order to prevent unwanted births, male continence was promoted and expected as a measure of birth control. The commune was successful in its agricultural and manufacturing activities, and at its peak reached 250 members. In 1879, the complex marriage system was abandoned, due to surmounting public pressure, which threatened the commune’s existence. With the retreat from the complex marriage and the return to the monogamous family, commune members began to lose their conviction and in 1880, members agreed to organize and divide their property.

**Icaria** was a socialist movement led by Etienne Cabet and originally established in France. In 1848, Cabet led a group of emigrants to found a new society in the United States. Icaria movement members settled in several locations throughout the United States (Illinois, Missouri, Iowa, and California), generally establishing a new commune following internal strife within an existing commune and a breakoff of some members to form their own commune. All communes ended up dissolving, due to limited membership as a result of language barriers and economic struggles.

**The Christian Commonwealth** was a commune established in 1896 in Georgia. Its founders had come from among Christian Socialist circles and they intended to create an open, nonselective communitarian society (Oved, 1993). In its first years, the colony was characterized by optimistic enthusiasm. However, this receded in 1899 when a number of social, personal, and economic calamities struck. Extreme weather patterns in 1898 and 1899 and demolished their crops and a former member wrote a book presenting the colony as a free love colony, for the purpose of discrediting them. In 1899, it was decided to dissolve the colony and sell its assets.

**Sunrise** was a Jewish Anarchist commune established in 1933 in Michigan. Their main source of income was the farm on which the commune was established. Several months after its establishment, the commune had 216 inhabitants and most of them were Jews from various states in the East and Midwest. The founders were mainly anarchists, but those who joined later came from a more heterogeneous background, including union activists, communists, or members of Poalei Zion, a Jewish religious socialist movement (Oved, 1993). This heterogeneity caused internal strife and when the 1934 crops failed due to a drought, many members started to leave the commune. As the financial instability and the frictions continued, more members left until the summer of 1939, when the community was dissolved.

**The Kaweah Cooperative Colony** was a socialist communal settlement established on the western slopes of the Sierra Nevada in central California in 1887. Its members were mostly socialist activists from the San Francisco Bay Area. During the colony’s five years of existence, its members were primarily laboring on the construction of a road, which would provide access to their colony. In 1890,
congress passed a law to establish the Sequoia National Park, which was to include the Kaweah settlement. As a result, the colony’s land claims were withdrawn. Although the members of Kaweah fought the legislation in court, by January 1892, the settlement was legally dissolved. (Oved, 1993)

Llano del Rio was a socialist commune established in 1914 outside of Los Angeles. The colony lasted for fours years, and at its height – three years after its establishment - its population approached 900 (Pitzer, 1997). In 1917, it was realized that Llano del Rio won’t have appropriate water resources for its growing population. As a result, the colony decided to relocate to Louisiana to establish New Llano. A few remained in Llano del Rio, but in 1918 Llano del Rio filed for bankruptcy (Wikipedia). Less than 200 members from Llano del Rio migrated to New Llano. During the great depression, membership soared, but most were individuals seeking shelter, rather than ideologically motivated. Poverty became evident in the colony (Oved, 1993), and by 1937, the colony and all its industries had closed down.