

1-1-1998

The great change : the reorganization of the Amana Society, 1931-1933

Peter Andrew Hoehnle
Iowa State University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd>

 Part of the [History Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Hoehnle, Peter Andrew, "The great change : the reorganization of the Amana Society, 1931-1933" (1998). *Retrospective Theses and Dissertations*. 17873.
<https://lib.dr.iastate.edu/rtd/17873>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by the Iowa State University Capstones, Theses and Dissertations at Iowa State University Digital Repository. It has been accepted for inclusion in Retrospective Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Iowa State University Digital Repository. For more information, please contact digirep@iastate.edu.

**The great change:
The reorganization of the Amana Society, 1931 - 1933**

by

Peter Andrew Hoehnle

A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
MASTER OF ARTS

Major: History

Major Professor: Dorothy A. Schwieder

Iowa State University

Ames, Iowa

1998

Graduate College
Iowa State University

This is to certify that the Master's thesis of
Peter Andrew Hoehnle
has met the thesis requirements of Iowa State University

Signatures have been redacted for privacy

Dedication:

For Grandpa, who saved the records and with whom I share more than a name.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER 2: CREATING THE MECHANISMS OF CHANGE	16
CHAPTER 3: PRODUCING A PLAN FOR REORGANIZATION	42
CHAPTER 4: FINALIZING THE PLAN	83
CHAPTER 5: UNITED IN DOING OUR BEST	103
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION	148
APPENDIX A: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF FORTY-SEVEN	155
APPENDIX B: JUNE 1931 LETTER TO SOCIETY MEMBERS	166
APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE OF JUNE 1931	173
APPENDIX D: <i>ZUM NACHDENKEN</i>	175
SOURCES CONSULTED	176
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	182

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This is the story of how one of the longest-lived communal societies in the United States, if not the world, ceased to be communal during one of the darkest economic epochs in American history. This is the story of how the Amana Society of Iowa recreated itself as a business corporation and religious group, fought its way back from the edge of bankruptcy, and maintained itself as a vibrant, thriving community which later became a leading manufacturer of home appliances and a major tourist attraction.

Communal societies have existed in America since the colonial period. The first such organization, the Women in the Wilderness, was founded in the 1670s. Although groups such as the Shakers, Oneida, the Hutterites, Ephrata, and the Harmony Society are known to the general public, hundreds of other groups are not. The vast majority of the communal societies founded in the United States before this century typically lasted only a few years. Early idealism often gave way to squabbling and dissension, resulting in the early demise of hundreds of societies founded along principles expounded by such utopian visionaries as Robert Dale Owen, Etienne Cabet, and Charles Fourier. Those societies which lasted for more than a decade tended to have a religious basis. As a whole, communitarian societies, with their common emphasis on reform, have made indelible, if sometimes unknown, impressions upon the American landscape.

Almost alone of America's communal utopias, the Amana Society was able to develop beyond its communal phase, illustrating a trend that historian Donald

Pitzer has termed “developmental communalism.”¹ While similar communal groups such as the Society of Separatists at Zoar, Ohio, the Jansonists of Bishop Hill, Illinois, and the Harmony Society of Economy, Pennsylvania, simply divided their assets when continued communitarian persistence was impossible, Amana’s members adjusted themselves and traveled a path only slightly removed from their former existence.² Today it is still possible to worship in an Amana church, buy woolen blankets from the Society’s woolen mills, eat a meal in one of its former kitchen houses, or speak with any one of the hundreds of people still living who remember communal life. Amana did not fail; it did not cease to exist; it merely changed.

For over sixty years Amana residents have spoken of the “Great Change” that occurred in 1932, meaning the fundamental reorganization of their economic, spiritual and social lives caused by the abandonment of communal living. Change is something entirely different than ending, or termination, as it implies a continuation. The present study illustrates how several progressive individuals within the Amana Society realized the need to abandon communal living, and found a successful way to do so while retaining key elements of their community in a new capitalistic arrangement.

The reorganization of the Amana Society is unique in the annals of American communitarian movements, and therefore worthy of minute analysis. The vast majority of the over 250 communal societies established in the United States

¹ Donald E. Pitzer, “Developmental Communalism: An Alternative Approach to Communal Studies,” in *Utopian Thought and Communal Experience*, ed. Dennis Hardy and Lorna Davidson (Enfield, England: Middlesex Polytechnic, 1989), 68-76. This article is the first synthesis of Pitzer’s ideas. The idea of studying communal societies as developmental structures rather than on a failure or success basis was actually suggested to Pitzer by experience of the Amana Society.

² The Zoar Society (1817-1898), Harmony Society (1805-1906), and Bishop Hill (1846-1862) are among the best known of the few hundred communal organization to exist in the United States prior to the 1960s.

before 1965 eventually disbanded and divided their resources.³ Often, as in the case of Bishop Hill and the Harmony Society, these divisions were accompanied by bitter wrangling. In the case of most utopian movements with a religious basis dissolution meant not only the end of communal living but of a particular church or sect. In Amana the end of communal life meant neither of these things.

Accomplished in an orderly fashion with careful attention to the rights of individuals, the Amana reorganization was relatively free from bitterness, and, because the Society acted quickly to deal with its financial and social problems both its business and religious aspects survived the end of communal life.

Other former communal groups, such as the Moravians of North Carolina and the Oneida community of New York accomplished similarly successful reorganizations. The Amana reorganization, however, is unique in several ways. With over nine hundred members, the Amana Society was, and still is, the largest communitarian Society to reorganize. While groups such as Oneida held public meetings and formed committees to plan for reorganization, no Society ever initiated as elaborate a reorganization as Amana. Furthermore, the subsequent success of both the Amana Society and Amana Church Society in the years following reorganization indicate the high level of success which this plan attained. In order to appreciate fully the complexities of the Amana reorganization, the present work offers a minute analysis of the events which led to reorganization, the activities of the committee which planned the reorganization, and the ways in which the plan was finally implemented.

³ The most complete listing of communal societies established in the United States before 1965 can be found in an appendix to Donald Pitzer's excellent anthology, *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

Several fine studies have devoted attention to the reorganization of the Amana Society. The first of these, Bertha Shambaugh's *Amana That Is and Amana That Was*, appeared only a few months after the reorganization had been completed. The author's previous work, *Amana : The Community of True Inspiration* was expanded with what the author herself termed, a descriptive account of the reorganization. Since Shambaugh wrote with little chronological distance from the events which she described, her writing lacks historical perspective. Shambaugh recognized this, and labeled her work "frankly interpretive," rather than historical.⁴ Still her work is characterized by the fine insight into the character and nature of the Amana Society that is to be found in all of her many writings on the community.

Three additional works dealt with the reorganization. In 1960, former Amana resident Barbara Yambura published her autobiographical novel, *A Change and a Parting: My Story of Amana*. In her work, Yambura provided a unique glimpse of life in Amana in the years leading up to and including the Reorganization. Lawrence Rettig, in 1975 produced a work called *Amana Today: A History of the Amana Society ---*. Rettig had been commissioned by the Amana Society to write a brief account of the reorganization and the events following, and to paint a brief picture of Amana some forty years after the reorganization. Jonathan Andelson's fine 1974 doctoral dissertation, "Communalism and Change," also focused some attention on the reorganization period as have some other thesis, dissertations, books and articles. None, however, has devoted more than a few pages to the reorganization process.

⁴ Bertha M. H. Shambaugh, *Amana That Was and Amana That Is* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1932), 335.

The current work is the first full-length study of the Amana reorganization. It is also the first study that makes use of the recently discovered voting records from the Society-wide election to determine the willingness of the members to support a reorganization plan, the first to use the personal papers of Society secretary Peter Stuck, and one of the few studies that has employed the official records of the Amana Society.

The story of the Amana reorganization actually was but one of many “great changes” endured by the religious group now known as the Amana Church Society, in its almost three hundred year history. The roots of the Amana Society extend back well into the period of Reformation and religious upheaval in the states which now comprise modern Germany. During the early eighteenth century two men, Eberhard Ludwig Gruber (a former Lutheran minister and noted religious dissenter) and Johann Friedrich Rock (the son of a Lutheran minister but a saddler by trade) became acquainted. Gruber and Rock were both active Pietists, adherents to beliefs most effectively stated by Philip Jakob Spener. They believed in a simple form of worship, devoid of the liturgy, ceremony and corruption then prevalent in the established church. The more extreme adherents of Pietism, including Rock and Gruber, ultimately believed that it was impossible to function within the established church; they then became Separatists.⁵

In the fall of 1714 Gruber and Rock became aware of a small band of Pietists, the “Inspirationists,” who professed to have the gift of divine revelation, individuals possessing this gift were known as *Werkzeuge*, or “instruments.” At first the two men rejected the activities of this sect, but after members of the Inspired group visited Gruber in November 1714 he became firmly convinced of the validity

⁵ William Rufus Perkins and Barthinius L. Wick, *History of the Amana Society or Community of True Inspiration* (Iowa City, Iowa: State University of Iowa, 1891), 5-11.

of their inspiration. On 16 November 1714 Gruber and Rock, together with a small group of the Inspirationists and neighbors formally organized as a religious group.

Soon referred to as the "Community of True Inspiration" the group quickly grew in size and influence. In December 1714 Rock himself became inspired and over the course of the next thirty-five years took countless missionary trips throughout Germany and surrounding nations, preaching, delivering testimonies when under inspiration, and establishing scattered congregations of the faithful, each under the direction of appointed elders. Gruber, acknowledged as the overall head of the group, died in 1728, after which Rock became the acknowledged leader.

Following Rock's death in 1749 the group was left without an inspired leader. For many years Rock's scribe, Paul Nagel, who had formally traveled with Rock to record his testimonies as they were spoken, continued the trips and kept the sect functional. After Nagel's death in 1779, the sect was kept together mainly through the efforts of a few elders.

In 1817 the sect experienced a revival when a journeyman tailor from Strassburg, Michael Kraussert, announced that he possessed the gift of inspiration and began to deliver testimonies as Rock had done nearly a century before. Soon a young house maid, Barbara Heinemann also came forward and began issuing testimonies as did a young carpenter, Christian Metz. Unable to endure the constant scrutiny and persecution to which he was subjected by authorities, Kraussert soon lost his calling and left the group. Heinemann also lost her special status as a *Werkzeug*, after marrying Georg Landmann in 1823, an action viewed as a spiritual fall from grace, leaving Christian Metz as the undisputed leader of the sect.

Metz began to take missionary journeys much as Rock had done, and managed to reinvigorate the surviving Inspirationist congregations. He also established new ones. Beginning in the late 1820s, as Inspirationists were increasingly faced with persecution by unsympathetic officials, Metz and his elders began to lease large estates in the area around Buedingen in south central Germany as a haven for the sect. Members of the sect moved to these estates from many German provinces and Switzerland. On the estates, life assumed a semi-communal state, as wealthier members of the Society organized factories to provide jobs for their co-religionists, while others, skilled in crafts and farming, plied their trades. Although property was not held in common on the estates, "greater cooperation and a fuller sense of shared destiny began to develop," and these conditions later allowed the Inspirationists to adopt a full communal structure.⁶

By the summer of 1842 the revocation of certain religious protections earlier given to the Inspirationists, as well as steadily increasing rental rates for the estates and poor farming conditions, led the group to consider emigration to America. In October of that year Metz and three other elders journeyed to New York state where they ultimately purchased an eight thousand acre tract on the former Seneca Indian Reservation near Buffalo. The members of the sect in Germany were then encouraged to emigrate to the new location.

Since many of the members were unable to afford the cost of relocating, a plan was instituted in which wealthier members of the Society pooled their resources to fund the emigration. The original intent was that these funds would be repaid to the contributors once the community had become established in America.

⁶ Jonathan Gary Andelson, "The Community of True Inspiration From Germany to the Amana Colonies," in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. by Donald E. Pitzer (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 187. Andelson's account is, perhaps, the best recent brief synthesis of Inspirationist history.

A provisional constitution, drafted by Metz and elder Wilhelm Noe provided that, until that time, all the assets of the community would be held in common with interest paid to contributors after a two-year trial period.⁷ The communal arrangement thus proposed would insure a working body of capital with which to pay for land and the cost of passage for all the members from Germany. Although a few Inspirationists were fairly wealthy, the majority were not, and a pooling of resources was seen as the only way of ensuring that all would be able to come to America. Clearly, the adoption of communalism at this stage was done primarily out of economic necessity. Because few Inspirationists spoke English, it was also practical for them to live together, and living in an insular setting allowed them to avoid unnecessary contact with the, to them, corrupt outside world.⁸ Approximately 800 members of the sect immigrated to the New York site which they named Ebenezer, a Biblical reference meaning "hitherto the Lord has helped us."

Even before the members began to arrive at Ebenezer, Metz made a visitational journey to the communal Society of Zoar in Ohio. There, Metz observed how an American communal organization functioned; he also made the acquaintance of Carl Mayer, the business agent of that Society. Mayer was dissatisfied with Zoar, and he soon left it to join Metz at Ebenezer. Mayer probably made helpful suggestions, based on his Zoar experience, regarding the formation of the Society at Ebenezer.

After a short time, Metz and several other leaders realized that it would be impractical to distribute the community's assets as they had planned. Furthermore, the benefits of communal living soon became evident. For one thing, it meant that a

⁷ Jonathan Gary Andelson, "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society, 1855-1932" (Ph.D diss., University of Michigan, 1974), 49.

⁸ Andelson, "The Community of True Inspiration From Germany to the Amana Colonies," 187.

close control could be placed upon the younger members of the Society who might eventually drift away from the group. It also allowed for an efficient use of funds and labor.

After much discussion, Metz and the elders proposed a constitution formally adopting a communal way of life to replace the earlier provisional constitution with its two year trial basis. In proposing a permanent state of communalism Metz and the elders indicated the Biblical passage from Acts 3:44-45 "And all that believed were together, and had all things in common. . . .and parted [their possessions] as every man needed."⁹ This passage, which referred to the communal establishment of the first Christian church, was used by groups similar to the Inspirationists (such as the Harmony Society of Pennsylvania) to justify a communal way of life.

The constitution including communalism was approved by the members in January of 1846, although an extended debate ensued before its adoption. During the debate Metz delivered several inspired testimonies which promised that by adopting a communal way of life members would be providing a "blessing...for their descendants."¹⁰ Several years later, when the constitution was again being amended, debate resurfaced about communal life. On this occasion Metz testified that "the Lord says: as truly as I live, it will never be my intention to sever those close bonds of our community in such a manner, through the ingenuity or skillfulness, dexterity or power of man. . . .shame and disgrace shall come over those who work against it. Their children shall go hungry and have no blessing, their belongings shall become less."¹¹ Metz' pronouncement of divine retribution

⁹ Andelson, "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society," 50-51.

¹⁰ Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations Historie, 1817-1850*, trans. by Janet W. Zuber (Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, 1987), 235.

¹¹ Christian Metz, Testimony, 19 March 1854, trans. by Magdalena Schuerer, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

against those who opposed a communal way was enough to force its critics into submission. Almost three quarters of a century later this powerful endorsement of communalism would be used to argue against reorganizing the Society.

The Ebenezer Society quickly prospered as members cleared the land, built two woolen mills, and engaged in other small industries and craft works.¹² By 1854, however, the city of Buffalo had expanded to such an extent that it was threatening the isolation of the community. At the same time area land prices had skyrocketed. The elders decided to look for a new home for the Society in the west, and dispatched a series of committees first to Kansas and then, in the fall of 1854, to Iowa. They selected a tract of land along the Iowa River, twenty miles west of Iowa City, in Iowa county. Over a period of almost ten years the Ebenezer villages were sold and the members moved to the new site, named "Amana," a Biblical term meaning "remain true."¹³ Here communal life resumed much the same pattern it had held in Ebenezer. Farming was the main occupation of the people. Members lived as family units in houses often shared with members of the extended family. Everyone ate at one of several communal kitchen houses, and attended eleven church services each week.

By 1881 the Society boasted an estate of 26,000 acres and a population of 1,813 members.¹⁴ Two years later, in 1883, Barbara Heinemann Landmann, the last of the inspired leaders, died. Following her death, the Society was entirely under the control of the elders and the governing board of trustees, a thirteen-member body that consisted of seven elders (one elected from each village with an

¹² The most authoritative source on the Ebenezer Society is Frank Lankes, *The Ebenezer Community of True Inspiration* (Gardenville, New York: Published by the author, 1949). Half a century after its publication, Lankes' work remains the only monographic study on the Ebenezer Community.

¹³ The name "Amana" occurs in Song of Solomon, 4:8.

¹⁴ Gottlieb Scheuner, *Inspirations Historie, 1877-1883* (Amana, Iowa: Amana Society, 1916), 323.

additional six elders elected at large). Under the leadership of the trustees the Society enjoyed great economic prosperity.

Increasingly, however, dissension occurred within the Society as young people began to chaff under the restrictions imposed by the communal and religious way of life. All members were expected to attend eleven church services every week, to work at the jobs assigned to them by the trustees, and to avoid such frivolities as baseball, photography and other recreational activities. Members also resented what they deemed inequalities in the supposedly egalitarian structure of Amana, pointing to special privileges granted to certain Society officials and the fact that positions of authority tended to be transferred within certain families. As a result of their discontent, many individuals, usually young people, left the Society. This contributed to a steady decline in the Society's population that reached a low point of 1,365 by 1932.¹⁵

Further strain upon the communal way of life came from outside. During World War I members of the pacifistic Society were accused by neighboring communities of being disloyal and in league with the Kaiser. Although the Society ultimately contributed over \$100,000 to the Red Cross and over thirty members served as non-combatants, the charges still stung. To compound matters, the Governor of Iowa, William Harding, issued a proclamation limiting the use of foreign languages, especially German, in public.¹⁶

Despite the rabid anti German sentiment expressed during the war, Amana remained a popular destination for an increasingly large tide of tourists, who

¹⁵ Andelson, "The Community of True Inspiration," 194-195.

¹⁶ For the Amana experience in World War I see Nancy Ruth Derr, "Iowans During World War I: A Study of Change Under Stress," (Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1979): 245-253 and Barnett Richling, "The Amana Society: A History of Change, *Palimpsest* 58 (March/April 1977): 42-46.

stayed in the Society's four hotels and shopped in its general stores.¹⁷ These outsiders presented members of the Society with information about life outside the community. Members became aware of radio, bobbed hair, short skirts and the automobile.

Tension also existed within the religious life of the colony. By the 1920s the Society had been without an inspired leader for over forty years. The absence of a charismatic leader led to a lessening of religious fervor. Fewer and fewer people attended all eleven church services every week. As memories of the efforts and sacrifice involved in building the Society faded, and the generation that remembered charismatic authority aged, religious enthusiasm in Amana plummeted. The long shadow of Christian Metz began to fade and, with it, the fundamental fabric of the communal organization he had founded.¹⁸

Without a *Werkzeug* to reinforce their decrees, the elders and trustees of the Society desperately sought to inhibit the outflow of young people from the Society by removing many of the restrictions which had once governed social activity within the Society. With the support of progressive-minded Society leaders the ban on bobbed hair and baseball were removed, and the young people of the Society began to dress and act like their counterparts on the outside. Amana was fast losing its distinctiveness and its religious fervor.

Social tensions continued within the Society, but these alone were not enough to break the powerful communal structure established by the early leaders; economic problems beginning after the war were, however. After the World War I

¹⁷ Robert Edwin Clark, "A Cultural and Historical Geography of the Amana Colony, Iowa," (Ph.D. diss. University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1975), 158. Shambaugh, *Amana That Is and Amana That Was*, 345, notes that over 3,000 tourists visited the Amana Woolen Mill in August 1931.

¹⁸ Shambaugh, *Amana That Is and Amana That Was*, 348. Shambaugh identified the dimming influence of Metz memory and the religious enthusiasm that is occasioned as a highly significant factor in the Society's downfall.

boom ended, Amana, like the rest of Iowa and the Midwest, was suddenly plunged into an economic recession as farm prices plummeted from their war-time high. Despite this slide in prices, the Society still presented an economically sound picture in 1922 with a net profit of \$6,700. However, in 1923, the bottom fell out of the woolen market, and the Society suddenly showed a loss of \$73,000. The profits of the woolen mill slipped from \$80,000 in 1922 to only \$36,000 in 1923, and other Society business, such as the lumber yard, showed similar declines. The year 1923 was "the worst year financially in Amana's history," and although losses were never again as large, the Society did not show a profit again until after reorganization in 1932, by which time their debt had approached half a million dollars.¹⁹

To make matters worse, a disastrous fire in August 1923 destroyed the Society's flour mill in Main Amana and almost completely destroyed the woolen mill, a loss made all the more severe because the Society did not carry insurance. Although Amana residents rebuilt the woolen mill, the financial strain the reconstruction imposed on the Society was severe. The loss in capital caused by the woolen mill reconstruction and the continued business losses the Society faced, forced it to look to bank loans in order to finance basic operations.²⁰ To make matters even worse, the increasing trend of Society members to feign illness in order to avoid work necessitated the hiring of additional hired hands, further draining Society resources.

The tensions within the Society were severe enough, by 1925, to lead one concerned community leader to draft a set of proposals for modifying certain community practices while instituting some new programs to revive the flagging

¹⁹ Andelson, "Communalism and Change," 360

²⁰ Andelson, "Communalism and Change," 364.

communal way of life. Dr. Henry G. Moershel, the author of these proposals, would later play an important part in the reorganization of the Amana Society. Moershel's proposals were set forth in a letter to his cousin, William F. Moershel, then secretary of the Amana Society. Dr. Moershel identified the future of the Society with its youth. He urged the trustees to recognize the need for change and to implement it. Although one proposal dealt with altering the inadequate accounting system then in use, most of his proposals were directed at improving relations with young people. Moershel advocated the establishment of an athletic association, and encouraged the elders to remove restrictions on marriage and to extend full voting rights to all members. Moershel also urged the solicitation of ideas for changes or reforms through a questionnaire. His attempt to instigate reform, however, was not fruitful.²¹ Although one of the few to actually provide constructive solutions to the problems facing the Society, Moershel was far from alone in his concerns.

In October 1929 the Society's financial situation worsened as the stock market crashed. Suddenly, there was no market for the grain and woolen goods the society needed to sell in order to raise the capital to continue. Increasingly leaders began to worry about the future of the organization. In 1930, at the suggestion of their attorney, Martin J. Wade, the trustees approved an amendment to the Society constitution that provided for the dissolution and division of the Society's property.²² Although no connection appears to have been openly drawn

²¹ Henry G. Moershel, to William F. Moershel, 28 August 1925, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author. Many of Moershel's suggestions had to do with curbing the illegal traffic in alcohol going on in the community. Her urged the elders to crack down on local bootleggers and to pay youth not to drink. His idea for an athletic association was motivated, at least in part, by the idea that it would keep young people away from alcohol.

²² Lawrence Rettig, *Amana Today*, 12 .

at the time between the amendment and the Society's financial condition, the timing of the move appears to have been more than just a revision.

Although life in the Society continued much as before, with most members unaware of the dire straits their organization was in, it became increasingly apparent that a change of some sort had to be made. While some argued that a few simpler revisions in the constitution and the improvement of business conditions would allow the Society to continue, others saw the need for more radical change. In March 1931 the leaders of the Amana Society initiated a process to reform or perhaps reorganize the Society. The following chapters tell the story of that process, and how it ultimately led to the reorganization of the Amana Society.

CHAPTER 2: CREATING THE MECHANISMS OF CHANGE

As time went on and the old leaders passed away . . . enthusiasm for the religious sacrifice which is necessary in successful communism waned [in Amana] . . . so the leaders saw that it would eventually lead to serious consequences and found a way to reorganize before those serious consequences would come.

-- Dr. Charles F. Noe, Leader of the Amana Society Reorganization, 1946¹

The first generation has an idea and lives for that idea. The second generation perpetuates that idea for the sake of their fathers, but their hearts are not in it. The third generation openly rebels against the task of mere perpetuation of institutions founded by their grandfathers -- it is always the same with people.

-- F. William Miller, Main Amana pharmacist, 1932²

By the beginning of 1931 the tensions which were threatening to disrupt the Amana Society were in full force. The economic depression gripping the country as a whole was having an adverse impact on the sale of Amana products, emigration of young Society members continued, and dissatisfaction was rampant among the members of the Society. It became increasingly clear to several Society leaders that a plan of action would have to be developed to insure the continued survival, at the least, of the church and some of the business interests. Few in the community realized, as 1931 began, the tremendous changes which they would be confronting within a year's time.

On 16 March 1931 the *Bruderath*, or "Board of Trustees," the governing body of the Amana Society, convened for their monthly meeting in Main Amana, but this meeting was far from ordinary. The trustees selected three men to serve as church elders, the largest number of elders called in over a decade. This sudden bestowing of elderships reflected a tendency, which anthropologist Jonathan

¹ Dr. Charles F. Noe, interview by Herbert Hake, 13 May 1946, for radio program "Seeing the State," KXEL radio, typed transcript in F. A. and Louise DuVal Papers, box 2, folder 11, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

² Lawrence L. Rettig, *Amana Today: A History of the Amana Colonies from 1932 to the Present* (Amana: Amana Society, 1975), 5.

Andelson and others have observed, for the Society to attempt to strengthen its leadership base in times of crisis. During earlier critical periods, such as the immigration from Germany (1842-1845), the immigration to Iowa (1855-64), and the Civil War, the Society's leadership had appointed unusually high numbers of elders.³

The three men called to the eldership on this occasion were all relatively young. The oldest, William Graesser, was 47, while Henry G. Moershel and Friedrich Moershel were 39 and 40, respectively. The appointment of Graesser (the West Amana farm manager) and Friedrich Moershel, a prominent merchant in Homestead, were not out of the ordinary; such men had always been elevated to the eldership. The appointment of Henry Moershel, a doctor, was also not unusual as several of the Society's doctors had served in this capacity. What made his selection uncommon was that at the very moment that he was appointed an elder of the old society Dr. Moershel was agitating for its reorganization.

Henry Moershel had lived outside the Society while a student at Iowa City High School and the University of Iowa, followed by a brief stint of military service in World War I.⁴ He also kept close contact with area farm families through his medical practice. Moershel was essentially a conservative man who for over a decade had struggled to reform aspects of the Society which he felt were harsh towards the members in general and the young people particularly. In 1919 he initiated his most striking reform to date: helping to lead the formation of the Homestead Welfare Club, one of the first non-church-related social organizations in the Colony. This group, dedicated to the moral and social uplift of the village,

³ Jonathan Gary Andelson, "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society, 1855-1932" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1974), 165-169.

⁴ The Amana Society members were pacifists, so Moershel served as a noncombatant medical officer at Camp Pike in Arkansas.

sponsored movies, picnics, and holiday programs. Barbara Selzer Yambura, a Homestead resident, later recalled “[t]he Welfare Club seemed very important to me for it represented all the social activity not associated with the church.”⁵ In the 1920s he convinced the board to allow Society members to play baseball. He and his wife also successfully argued against the practice of demoting members in the church hierarchy upon the birth of a child, a move intended as punishment for the “sin” inherent in producing a child.⁶ Members were also demoted, or forced to sit in the front row at services, for getting married, since this, also, was viewed as a spiritual fall from grace. Although Moershel fought this practice as well, it remained in place until after the Amana Reorganization.

Henry Moershel sought to save the Society from within, and, although the trustees made the changes he desired, he found that much more substantive change was needed. Moershel was joined in this belief by a small but very vocal number of professional men in the Society, including Dr. Carl Noe, Sr.; Peter Stuck; and F. William Miller of Main Amana, and William Ehrle, Moershel’s Homestead neighbor.⁷ Local tradition traces the roots of this small agitator group to a chance encounter between four of the men on the steps of the Main Amana church in 1930.⁸ How often this group met together is unknown, although, as shall

⁵ Barbara Selzer Yambura, *A Change and A Parting: My Story of Amana* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1960), 109.

⁶ Henrietta Jeck Moershel, interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 19 April 1932, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁷ Lawrence L. Rettig, *Amana Today: A History of the Amana Colonies from 1932 to the Present* (Amana: Amana Society, 1975), 12. Other individuals were also active in promoting reorganization or some type of reform, but these five are generally accepted to have been at the forefront of these plans. Noe, in particular, is often identified as the “brains” behind the subsequent activity, although, once committee work was begun, his role appears to have been largely that of an advisor and not that of an active participant.

⁸ Andelson, “Communalism and Change,” 367; Nelson Antrim Crawford, “Communism Goes Broke in Iowa,” *American Magazine*, November 1946, 105.

be demonstrated, the close proximity in which they lived and the familial ties which bound them suggest that their meetings were frequent and informal. Moershel's widow, Henrietta, recalled late-night gatherings in their home, discussions which probably witnessed the laying of the ground work for the reorganization of the Society.⁹

Several of the men in the group had been active supporters of Moershel in his earlier reform efforts, and all five realized the need for substantive change. They were buoyed in their agitation by the economic difficulties brought on after 1929 by the Depression, the ongoing youth rebellion against church restrictions (represented by participation in such forbidden activities as baseball, bobbed hairstyles for women, and modern clothing styles), the lack of religious enthusiasm, and the desire for outside goods. Simply stated, they needed an excuse to change the Society, and its worsening financial condition provided it.

In suggesting possible radical changes for the Society, including, perhaps, abandoning the communal lifestyle, members of the agitator group flaunted eighty years of tradition, and, to some, they also opposed the religious doctrines of the Amana forefathers. Early in the reorganization process, Peter Stuck, a member of the agitator group, was confronted by his father-in-law, William F. Moershel, secretary of the Amana Society and a leading church elder. Moershel pointed to the inspired testimony issued by the *Werkzeug* Christian Metz during the time in which the Amana communal system was instituted, which proclaimed that it was never the will of God to dissolve the bands which bound the community, and that a curse would rest upon anyone who attempted to do so. Stuck, convinced that the financial and social troubles of the Society would soon force it into receivership,

⁹ Henrietta Jeck Moershel, interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 19 April 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

countered his father-in-law by suggesting that the curse was upon those individuals who made it impossible for the Society to continue by maintaining the rigid system of former years. Stuck argued it would be better to change the system and preserve some form of the Society than to do nothing and lose all.¹⁰

The small contingent of men who began the final quest for reorganization comprised a closely knit group with many common ties. Four of the five men held college degrees. All five were what could be termed white collar professionals: two doctors, a teacher, a pharmacist, and a storekeeper. Each man had strong ties to friends outside of the Society and four of the five had also lived outside the Society. Each had been identified with “progressive” attitudes in the past. Dr. Henry G. Moershel and William Ehrle were both active in the formation and support of the Homestead Welfare Club, and all five men can be identified as having supported such reforms as allowing baseball to be played in the Society, allowing young women to “bob” their hair, and numerous other issues.

Like Moershel, Dr. Carl Noe had created an image of himself as being a “progressive” thinker in the Society. When women began to bob their hair during the 1920s, which met with the hostility of the more senior elders, Noe successfully argued that shorter hairstyles were healthier and more sanitary for women who worked in the kitchen houses. Noe had spent a year in Germany studying medicine, receiving a medical degree from the University of Berlin. Like Dr. Moershel, he had also graduated from the University of Iowa and tended to the needs of patients living on farms in the Amana area. Furthermore, like Dr.

¹⁰ This anecdote is one of the best known relating to the Amana Reorganization. First told by Bertha Shambaugh in 1932, the story has been reprinted in many treatments of Amana history. The principles in the story have never been publicly identified, although Richard Roberts identified Stuck in his 1934 research notes done while a graduate student at the University of Iowa, and Stuck told the story, identifying himself, to Jonathan Andelson in 1972 (Peter Stuck, Interview with Jonathan Andelson, 18 September 1972, photocopied notes, collection of the author). Stuck appears to have relished this example of oneupmanship against his father-in-law.

Moershel, Noe came from one of the first families of Amana, a select group of linkages in which power had been vested throughout the course of the Society's history. Noe's grandfather, Wilhelm, had been a member of the "Committee of Four," the delegation which the Inspirationists sent from Germany to buy their first land in the United States. His father, Abraham, had been the long-time secretary of the Society before his death in 1917. Noe's brother, John, was then serving as a trustee in the Society. Noe himself, in addition to holding the prestigious position of doctor, was a church elder, a rank which his grandfather, father, and brother also held. Noe was an historian and the author of a booklet entitled *A Brief History of the Amana Society*, published in 1900. He was also an antiquarian, and his large collection of native American relics earned him a statewide reputation.

Another well-educated agitator was Peter Stuck of Main Amana, who had received degrees in education from both Highland Park College in Des Moines and Iowa State Teacher's College in Cedar Falls before returning to Amana to work as a teacher. Although illness forced him to retire from active teaching in 1925, Stuck published articles on educational techniques and topics in various journals. He shared a residence with his father-in-law, William F. Moershel, the Society's secretary, treasurer, and the head elder for the village of Main Amana. Stuck, both of whose parents had died when he was young and whose wife died little over a year after their marriage, was extremely close to his father-in-law, a familiarity which permitted him to be privy, perhaps more than any other member of the agitator group, to the financial difficulties facing the Society. Stuck acted as the unofficial assistant secretary of the Society, a duty his father-in-law appears to have bestowed on him because of the younger man's clear Palmer Method script and ability to use a typewriter. Thus Stuck not only learned the status of the Society

through conversations with Moershel but by actually reading and transcribing the older man's notes of trustee meetings.¹¹

F. William Miller had perhaps the most distinguished lineage of the agitator group: he was the great-grandson of the Society's founder, Christian Metz. Like Noe and Moershel, Miller was also a church elder, and had been educated outside the Society, receiving his degree in pharmacy at the University of Iowa in 1900. Miller's ties to the world outside the community were particularly strong. As a young man he had run away from the Society for a time, and he had made and long since maintained many friendships outside the Society, particularly friendships made while a student at the University of Iowa.¹²

William Ehrle stands out as an exception among the agitator group. He was, through his wife, a nephew of Stuck's father-in-law, William Moershel, and the grandson of both William Noe and Friedrich Moershel, all important early leaders of the Society. Unlike his fellow agitators, however, Ehrle was not in a position of special distinction within the Society and, in fact, held only a minor post in the local store. His status in the community was dictated not from a lack of ability or inclination but from a childhood accident: a train severed his leg while he was playing by the railroad tracks. As a result, he was not educated beyond the eighth grade. Ehrle proved, however, to be a brilliant business man, and later became a leader in the post-communal Amana Society.

Considering their individual backgrounds, several broad generalizations can be made about the agitator group as a whole. All of the members came from

¹¹ It is an ironic, if superficial, note to the history of the Reorganization that the same typewriter (Peter Stuck's) which typed the minutes of the old Board of Trustees also typed the minutes of the Committee of Forty-Seven and many other vital documents of the Reorganization process.

¹² Louise Miller DuVal, personal conversation with author, 6 May 1997, notes in the collection of the author.

what can be termed the “first families of Amana,” although Ehrle was connected by marriage and Stuck was connected by marriage and his virtual adoption by the family of his deceased wife. The five men were all closely related: Miller and Noe were brothers-in-law; Stuck and Ehrle were first cousins by marriage; and Stuck, Ehrle, and Moershel were first cousins once removed, by marriage.

In addition to kinship ties between members of the agitator group, strong inter-familial relationships existed: Miller had lived with Moershel’s family while working as the druggist in Homestead. He knew Moershel, and presumably Ehrle, from the time they were young boys.¹³ Noe, Stuck, and Miller were virtually next door neighbors, and all either ate or received their food from the kitchen which Noe’s wife, Louise, ran. The fact that all were fathers provides some insight into the importance these men placed on planning for the future and on education.¹⁴

Finally, the men’s positions within the Society lent a degree of respect and sanction to their actions. Three of the men, Miller, Noe, and Moershel, were medical professionals, among the most respected positions within the community. As physicians, Noe and Moershel had a considerable understanding of the feelings and beliefs of their patients. As one resident later said of Noe, “he knew more about the Amana people than anyone. He knew our hopes, dreams, and what we were made of.”¹⁵ Stuck, a former schoolteacher, and Ehrle, a store clerk, also held positions of responsibility.

¹³ Moershel’s childhood diary (in the possession of his daughter, Cornelia Zuber), bears on the fly leaf an inscription identifying it as a 1907 gift from Miller. Living in Homestead until 1915, he would have been familiar with Ehrle’s family as village neighbors.

¹⁴ It should be noted that of the ten children of the agitator group, all but one received a high school education and eight later went to college.

¹⁵ Emilie Zuber Hoppe, “A Story Recalled,” unpublished paper, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, 1981, 15. The resident quoted is Adolph T. Berger of South Amana.

In short, the agitator group in no way represented anything approaching a typical cross-section of the communal era population. They were an extremely homogeneous group of men, indeed, as virtually all were members of the same family. More significantly, each had assisted the others in various progressive reforms in the past. They represented only two of the seven villages of the Society, and were all white-collar professionals (no craft-workers were represented). Ehrle was the only member of the group with a less-than-advanced education and who had not lived outside of the Society (two qualities shared by the majority of the Society members, but not by the members of the agitator group).

A slightly broader representation of the Society could be found in the *Bruderath* (Board of Trustees). The thirteen men who constituted this council were the senior elders of the Amana Society, men who controlled the largest privately-owned farm in Iowa, the largest woolen mill in Iowa, the lives of over 1,300 members and an estate valued at over two million dollars.

All thirteen trustees had been members of the Society while it was under the leadership of the *Werkzeuge*, the nineteenth-century spiritual leaders of the community who were believed to have been inspired by God. The youngest member of the trustees, John Noe, was ten years old when Barbara Landmann, the last such inspired leader, died. Although each of the trustees had probably witnessed the charismatic authority of Landmann, only five members would have been old enough to have had memories of the other influential *Werkzeug*, Christian Metz, who had died almost 65 years before. Of the five who may have remembered Metz, four had been under the age of ten at the time of his death in 1867.¹⁶

¹⁶ The average age of the council members was 68, and the average length of time each had served as an elder was 29 years.

Although the trustees had witnessed this early charismatic authority and had lived through the Society's most successful years, both spiritually and financially, they were far removed from those days. A gulf of time separated them from the early days of the Society when religious enthusiasm, under the guidance of the *Werkzeuge*, ran high and when the members were unified in their approach toward communal living. The trustees, along with the other elders of the Society, were custodians of a tradition which seemed, even to them, far removed and increasingly out of place in the troubled times of the 1930s.

The most senior member of the trustees, Georg Heinemann represented the old Amana: the period when the communal ethic was strongest, and when religious idealism welded the community together.¹⁷ By virtue of a remarkable physical constitution, Heinemann lived to see the entire history of the Amana communal epic, beginning with his birth in Germany in 1844, just as the Society was leaving to settle in America, forming the Ebenezer Society near Buffalo, New York. Heinemann retained distinct childhood memories of lying awake in Canada Ebenezer and listening to the sound of Niagara Falls some miles distant.¹⁸ When still a young man he came to Iowa where he participated in the early settlement of Amana, later regaling associates with tales of prairie grass so high that a man on horseback was entirely hidden at several yards. His religious piety led to his appointment as a church elder in 1872 at the extremely young age of 28. His aptitude for business led to his rise within the Society's bureaucracy until he was elected president of the Society in 1915.

¹⁷ It should be noted that Georg Heinemann was in no way related to Barbara Heinemann Landmann, the last *Werkzeug* of the Amana Society.

¹⁸ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 19 March 1942.

By 1931 Heinemann was the last living elder to have been appointed by an inspired *Werkzeug*, was one of only six elders (two of whom would die during the year), appointed in the nineteenth century, and was one of a small handful of people who could remember Christian Metz and the move to Iowa. As president of the trustees, Heinemann had inherited Metz's mantle, which now rested heavily upon his 87-year-old shoulders. Although respected, Heinemann's strict religious views tended to distance him from his people. Heinemann, by the accident of age, lived beyond his time. Like the Society over which he presided, he had become a relic.

With the youthful spirit of the agitator group as an impetus, Heinemann and his colleagues on the board voted on 16 March 1931 to explain the financial situation of the Society to the members in the various villages. The resolution, introduced by John Noe, the brother of Dr. Carl Noe, stated that since the financial status of the Society continued to suffer and that members were now more interested in their own welfare it was incumbent upon the trustees to make changes. It was suggested that members should be asked to work harder for the Society, while at the same time the trustees would ask for assistance in generating plans for the future of the Society. This motion was "taken under advisement," and seemed to mark the start of the formal reorganization process.¹⁹

Before the end of the meeting, a committee was formed to present the financial status of the Society to the members. The men appointed to this duty were Peter Zimmerman, the manager of the woolen mill at Main Amana; Gustav Miller, the West Amana store manager; Adolph Heinemann, a bookkeeper at the Middle Amana store; and Dr. Carl Noe. All four men were elders, and Zimmerman and Miller were also trustees. The selection of Heinemann, then only an elder and a

¹⁹*Bruderath's Minutes*, 16 March 1931, Amana Society Archives, Amana, Iowa, 370.

man who never seems to have been directly involved with the push for reorganization or with the process, is puzzling. It is likely Heinemann's selection was due to his position as bookkeeper for the village of Middle Amana, and the fact that both his father and uncle were members of the Board of Trustees.

The first of the meetings with the villagers was scheduled for 11 April 1931 in West Amana. The four-man committee held meetings open to all Society members over the age of 21 in each of the other villages, usually in the large meetings houses or churches, on successive days.²⁰ At these meetings the committee members presumably spoke of the difficult financial situation facing the Society and apparently informed the members that a decision would have to be made by them "whether to go back to the old austere way of true communal living or to go to a sort of capitalist society."²¹

To one young woman, the April meetings signified the beginning of the Reorganization since, for the first time, the members themselves were involved in a discussion of the Society's problems. Like many younger members, Barbara Selzer Yambura, then fourteen, was aware of the conflicts inherent in the old system and was anxious for a resolution. It was with a mixture of trepidation and some excitement that Selzer and her brother watched their mother leave home in order to attend the meeting:

Without further conversation, we hurried to join the other young people whose fate was likewise being decided at the noon meeting. They had gathered outside the meeting house door as though they could not wait for the answer. . . . We waited and watched for signs that the meeting was over, and thought that it would never end. At last the doors opened and the people came out, solemnly. . . . We all hurried to our homes where the news could be told us.²²

²⁰ Yambura, *A Change and a Parting*, 276.

²¹ Paul Kellenberger to the author, 27 May 1997.

²² Yambura, *A Change and a Parting*, 276-277.

At this point it appears that the term “reorganization” was not used, presumably in deference to middle-aged and older members who would have been horrified with the prospect and, therefore, uncooperative, although members left with a sense that something must be done. It was shortly after these committee meetings, on April 25, that an election was held to select members for local committees who were to take the matter up for further consideration. Precisely when the idea arose for forming committees is unclear, although the fact that such a move would have required the approval of the trustees suggests that such a committee was authorized at their March 16 meeting.

It appears that formal nominations were submitted by members for candidates for the committees, although the recollections of the only surviving committee member and the enormous number of names recorded as having received votes in the surviving poll books, suggest that write-in votes were common and not discouraged.²³ Ostensibly, a candidate for the committee had to be at least 21 years of age and a resident of the village to whose committee he or she was selected. Committee members could not be trustees of the Society, although they could be elders. Each village was allowed to elect one member to its local committee for every 25 residents in that village. Thus, Main Amana, the largest village, was to elect a twelve-member local committee, while East Amana, the smallest village, was allowed to select a four-member local committee. A total of 47 delegates to the local committees were to be selected; these delegates, in turn, were to constitute a “general committee” which was to meet to discuss the

²³ The West Amana poll book records votes for 26 individuals, twelve of whom received less than three votes, cast by 87 voters. The Main Amana poll book records votes for 80 different individuals, which were cast by 256 voters. Of these individuals, 30 received five or fewer votes, reflecting their status as write-ins. *West Amana and Main Amana Poll Books*, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author; Paul Kellenberger, to the author, 16 June 1997.

future of the Society. This committee came to be known, within the Amana community, as the “Committee of Forty-Seven.”

The elections for the Committee of Forty-Seven appear to have been largely organized and managed by local leaders. In Main Amana a special meeting was called for the purpose of establishing guidelines for the election. At this meeting resolutions were passed which suggest the informality of the process. It was decided that voters would fill out ballots at home and take them to the polling place for counting. No age limit was set for the candidates although “it was suggested that middle-aged persons should [sic] be preferred.”²⁴ Finally, the Main Amana group decided merely that the individuals receiving the highest number of votes would be elected, making no provision for a nomination process although there is evidence that nominations were made in other villages.²⁵

Before the election it appears that a few individuals may have actively campaigned for the position of committee delegate. In one village at least an active proponent of change campaigned heavily for individuals he felt would advance his own progressive ideals.²⁶ Despite this example, it appears that due to the brief period of time between the announcement of the election and the election itself, coupled with the recollections of committee members, such campaigning was not extensive.²⁷ An unusual by-product of the write-in system of the election in Main

²⁴ *Minutes of Main Amana Local Committee*, 20 April 1931, Amana Heritage Society Library

²⁵ *Main Amana and West Amana Poll Books*, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of author. The slightly informal nature of the election, so far as the Main Amana election was concerned, is reflected in that the planning meeting authorized the appointed election judges to “decide by lot” in the event of a tie between the candidates.

²⁶ Paul Kellenberger, to the author, 16 June 1997

²⁷ Fred Blechschmidt, interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 20 March 1981, Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa; Paul E. Kellenberger, to the author, 19 May 1997. Kellenberger, the last surviving member of the committee, noted the campaigning discussed here, although he was quick to suggest that he, himself, did not engage in any such activity.

Amana was that six women received votes. Their names were recorded along with the names of the males who received votes, suggesting that gender restrictions, whether formally stated or not, were not observed in the election. No woman had served in an elected capacity in the Society's history, although several had served as spiritual leaders within the church, both in Germany and America, the most notable being Barbara Landmann. The six women who received votes may well have been voting for each other or themselves, since none of them received more than a single vote; still, the fact that their names were listed indicates the small but unlikely (given the patriarchal nature of the Society) possibility that a woman could have served on the committee.²⁸

The men who met to organize the Amana election may have come to rue their decision not to have formal nominations, as the write-in method of voting generated a list of 80 candidates. Of these, 30 received five or fewer votes, and only 26 received more than fifteen votes, while the twelve highest vote totals, those received by the men elected to the committee, ranged from 75 to 192. Those receiving the most votes in Main Amana are clearly identifiable as supporters of radical change. Peter Stuck, a member of the original agitator group, received the highest number of votes, 192 out of 256 cast. This fact alone, coupled with the totals received for other known supporters of reorganization, strongly suggests that, in electing delegates to their local committee, the voters of Main Amana were indicating strong support for radical reform or reorganization.

Some general characteristics of all of the men selected can be observed from the balloting. The forty-seven men selected in the seven villages, while

²⁸ *Main Amana Poll Book*, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author. For a more in-depth discussion of the role of women in the Amana Society, see Linda Pickle, *Contented Among Strangers: Rural German Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth Century Midwest* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996).

representing a far more diverse cross-section of the community than the initial group of agitators, did possess some common traits. In a community accustomed to seeking the guidance of its church elders it is not surprising that ten of the newly-elected committee members were church officials. On a village-by-village basis, Main Amana elected three elders to its twelve-member local committee, Homestead and Middle each elected two (out of five- and nine-member committees, respectively), and both High and West Amana elected one elder (out of five). It should be noted that three of these men had been appointed as elders only a month before at the 16 March meeting of the trustees and a fourth, William Heinze, had been appointed in 1930.

While showing some deference to the office of elder, the Society electorate favored the four most recent appointees to that position, who also happened to be the four youngest. In this respect, at least, the Society members were definitely indicating their support for progressive, younger individuals and rejecting the older, more conservative religious faction of the community. As one resident later noted, the election of the "Committee of Forty-Seven" was significant if for no other reason than it represented the first time in which non-elders were placed in positions of authority within the community.²⁹ Although people who were not elders served as managers of certain craft shops, a large number of the community's managers (and all of its officials) were elders in the church. It should be noted that of the forty-eight men who ultimately served on the committee, an additional six would become church elders in the years following the Reorganization. This is indicative of the men's continued standing as accepted leaders in the community following their part in shaping the Reorganization.

²⁹ Yambura. *A Change and a Parting*, 279.

The association with outsiders that the chosen individuals had, more than their positions within the community or any other criteria, appears to have been the defining characteristic of the men elected to the committee. Residents seemed to favor individuals who had been on the "outside," or who at least had some contact with the world beyond the Society so that they would be familiar with the "ways of the world." The Society members, with few exceptions, entrusted their future to individuals who they felt held the cosmopolitan view of the world which they deemed necessary for the future of the Society.

In terms of occupation, individuals who held positions associating with outsiders were overwhelming favored for the committee. Of the dozens of business managers in the Society, twelve were chosen to serve on the Committee of Forty-Seven.³⁰ Other positions within the Society which necessitated greater contact with outsiders were those which involved transportation. Voters elected two of the Society's railroad station agents to the committee, and also the manager of the only filling station, located in South Amana. Three of the four Society postmasters were elected to the committee, and, in the case of the fourth office, the assistant postmaster was elected.³¹

Other individuals within the Society who had a great deal of contact with outsiders were those who provided medical care. The doctors, pharmacists, and dentists of the Society served not only the Society members but also the farmers in the surrounding area. One of the dentists was elected and all the eligible doctors and pharmacists (with two exceptions) served on the committee at one time or

³⁰ This number may, in fact, be even higher, as it is difficult to determine precisely who was in charge of certain smaller craft shops in some of the villages. Based upon obituary records and the recollections of local residents, this number is as accurate an approximation as could be achieved.

³¹ In addition to these four postal officials, two additional committee members had served as postmasters of respective villages but were no longer in that position in 1931. Nine members of the committee eventually found employment with the postal service at some point in their lives.

another.³² In addition to their contact with outsiders through their work, four of the five medical practitioners had been educated on the outside.

Another group that possessed the unusual trait of an outside education, in most cases both high school and college, was the school teachers. Six of them, representing every village except Homestead and East Amana, were elected to the committee. Like the doctors they held a respected place in the Society hierarchy, a position bolstered, however, not only by their occupation but by the fact that they had been educated far beyond the level of the average Society member and had to live on the "outside" in order to obtain this education.

In total, if the number of teachers serving on the committee is combined with the medical professionals and other individuals who had received some outside education, twelve committee members can be said to have been educated outside the community. Of these, possibly ten had college degrees, an eleventh had attended school in Cedar Rapids while living with a brother, and a twelfth had been a student at the Iowa Sight Saving School in Vinton. This trend towards the selection of individuals with outside experiences is also reflected in the fact that five of the young men who had been drafted into service during World War I (serving in noncombatant status in deference to the Society's pacifistic beliefs) were elected to the committee.

In all, twenty members of the committee, or nearly half, had lived on the outside, whether for educational purposes or for having left the Society at some point. All but one member of the committee had been born in the Society, and that individual, Richard Schaeffer of East Amana, had been brought to the Society by

³² William August Moershel, the Homestead pharmacist, although not a member of the original committee, was appointed to replace his brother, Henry Moershel, in January 1932. August Koch, the pharmacist of Middle Amana, was ineligible to serve on the committee due to his position as a trustee. It is not clear why Dr. C.F. Noe chose not to run for the committee.

his parents as very young child. Five members of the committee, including the man who was ultimately chosen chair, had run away from the Society at some point, but had returned after periods ranging from a few months to a few years. Society members, therefore, when selecting delegates to serve on the committee, clearly favored those individuals who had spent time living outside the Society, who had frequent contact with "outsiders," or who held positions of authority. This conclusion is underscored by the fact that only ten of the committee members can be classified as having been common workers, and not managers or workers in business with a great deal of activity with outsiders.³³

Relatively few of the committee members did not fit into at least one of the categories noted above. In Main Amana, Henry Graichen, a wagon maker, probably had limited contact with outsiders before reorganization. In South Amana, Theodore Berger, also a wagon maker, is the only individual who may have been without extensive contact with outsiders. Both villages' position along major state highways tended to provide all the residents there with some exposure to outsiders. In West Amana Otto Schaedlich, a farm worker, most likely had limited outside contact, while in High Amana Carl Pitz, a carpenter, was probably also quite isolated from outside influences. In East Amana, Fred Blechschmidt, a wagon maker, and Walter Schuerer, manager of the local meat market, probably had little outside contact. Unlike the representatives from the other villages, all six of the men who ultimately served from Homestead had extensive outside contact.

It has been observed for many years by Amana residents that the village of Middle Amana was highly opposed to reorganization from the start. The reasons for Middle Amana's intransigence will be noted later, but the village's deviation

³³ These ten included three wagon makers, two millwrights, a machinist, a plumber, a broom maker, a carpenter, a printer, and a saddle maker.

from the normal trend to support those individuals with experience on the outside can be stated in stark relief. While in the other six villages only six individuals out of thirty-eight can be identified as possibly having had limited contact with outsiders, in Middle Amana this figure is four, or just under half of their committee membership of nine. Of the five other members two, William Heinze and Dr. Christian Hermann, had been educated on the outside, while two others, Adam Kippenhan and Jacob Ruedy, both worked in the store and the fifth, William Zuber, was the farm manager. However, the Middle Amana Store had very limited trade with the outside population and both of the store workers elected were known to have been bitter opponents of reorganization.³⁴ Thus, while not a startling statistic, Middle appears to have favored those individuals less likely to have a worldly view through outside contact, and focused, instead, on typical members of the Society. Of all the villages, Middle Amana can be said to have come closest to providing a cross-section of the community. Several of the committee members from Middle Amana were typical craft-workers. The majority of them had never lived outside of the colony, and a large number of them represented families who would not be considered "founding families" of the American branch of the Inspirationists.

Finally, when examining the men who were elected to the committee, it is also necessary to consider their age. At this time the average age of the church elders was sixty-two.³⁵ The range of ages represented on the committee was fairly broad with the oldest member, Jacob Ruedy of Middle, at 60, and the youngest member, Paul Kellenberger of West Amana, at 21. The average age of all forty-seven original committee members was 40 years, with a median age of 40 years and six months. A total of six members were over 50 years of age; twenty were

³⁴ Charles Kippenhan, to the author, 28 May 1997.

³⁵ Andelson, "Communalism and Change," 370.

between the ages of 40 and 49; fifteen were between the ages of 30 and 39; and six were under age 30.³⁶ Thus, in terms of age, the Society voters appeared to be following the suggestion made at the organizational meeting in Main Amana that no age limit would be set but that "men of middle years would be preferred."

Given the tendency to support men of "middle years," it is perhaps surprising how many delegates were under 30 years of age. Of the six men under 30, two came from West Amana, and one each from East Amana, Middle Amana, South Amana, and Main Amana. In the case of four of these men, the communities' preference for individuals who had been educated outside or had outside contact came into play. Two of them, Paul Kellenberger and Adolph T. Berger, had been trained as schoolteachers, while a third, Carl Flick, was a storekeeper.³⁷ A fourth man, Dave Krauss, had spent several summers living in Minnesota, an absence from the community which was approved by the elders because the cool climate there afforded Krauss relief from severe attacks of hay fever.³⁸ The other two men, however, do not fit these criteria. Neither appears to have spent any time outside of the Society, nor were they known to have had extensive outside contacts. The selection of these two individuals appears to have had more to do with individual considerations in each town than with the larger criteria established above. In later years one of these men became an elder and manager of the Middle Amana farm.

³⁶ The age of committee members was determined as of 2 May 1931, the date of the first official meeting. The date of birth of each member was obtained through an extensive search of the obituary and cemetery files at the Amana Heritage Society. The age of each member was determined to the nearest month, in order to provide the most accurate measure of age. The total number of months for all forty-seven members was then added together and the average determined by simple division. This figure is slightly older than the 39 year old average arrived at by Andelson.

³⁷ Berger and Kellenberger had been roommates while attending the Williamsburg, Iowa, high school in the late 1920s. They remained friends until Berger's death sixty years later.

³⁸ Helen Seifert Krauss, interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 6 January 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

It seems these were young men who were already exhibiting exceptional ability and, as such, were deemed worthy of committee status.

Of the younger members, Paul Kellenberger of West Amana provides an interesting study of a committee member. Only 21 at the time he was elected Kellenberger had been trained on the outside as a schoolteacher. It was due largely to his experience on the outside, as well as his educational background that he, at such a young age was elected to so responsible a position. Far from campaigning for the position, however, Kellenberger was, at best, a reluctant candidate, recalling years later "I didn't want to be [on the committee]. I didn't really want to do these things. I was sort of pushed into it."³⁹ Not only was Kellenberger elected to the Committee of Forty-Seven, but because he received the highest number of votes of any West Amana candidate, he automatically became the chairman of that village's local committee. The demonstration of support shown him by West Amana voters may also have been due to active campaigning on the part of a local resident, in favor of reorganization, who felt that Kellenberger would be a strong advocate for his views. Ironically, Kellenberger was not in favor of reorganization, a fact which his supporters learned only after the election. Later, after having been made aware of the financial state of affairs, he altered his position, but the fact that he was elected primarily on the basis of his "outside" experience and education indicates that the West Amana voters were clearly selecting men they thought would support reorganization.

The forty-seven men who were elected in April 1931 constituted seven local committees, and it was as local committees that they met during the final weeks of April. It soon became clear that three of the committees, South Amana, Main

³⁹ Paul Kellenberger, interview by Abigail M. Foerstner, 19 February 1998, typed transcript, collection of the author.

Amana, and Homestead, were to be the most active of the local groups. In both Main Amana and Homestead the committees were dominated by individuals who had become strongly identified with reorganization and reform. A business sense pervaded committee meetings which appears to have been lacking elsewhere. The Main Amana local committee, for example, kept minutes, a sign of formality which was not found in all of the other committees.⁴⁰ It would be based upon directives received from the Main Amana committee that the Reorganization would proceed, and committee members from Main Amana and Homestead dominated the leadership of the Committee of Forty-Seven. Both villages were, perhaps, the most integrated into mainstream American society. Both were located on the railroad, had hotels which accommodated outside visitors, and were on paved state highways. It should be noted that these conditions were also true of South Amana, a village whose enthusiasm for reorganization was equal to that of Homestead and Main Amana even if its leadership was not as prominent.

Because of the minutes kept by the Main Amana local committee, their actions can be examined in some depth. The first meeting of the local committee occurred on 27 April 1931 at the Main Amana school house; members selected officers, with Peter Stuck unanimously elected chairman and William Noe elected secretary. Aside from establishing basic policy, such as the necessary attendance for a quorum, the committee proceeded to discuss arrangements for a future meeting of the members of all the seven local committees.

On the evening of 2 May 1931, all forty-seven members of the local committees met together in Main Amana. While the place chosen for their meeting was one of several smaller church buildings normally used for evening prayer

⁴⁰ West Amana local committee chair, Paul Kellenberger, does not remember if his committee kept minutes, and suggests that "not much was accomplished" in their meetings, although they did meet frequently (Paul Kellenberger, to the author, 16 June 1997).

services, the meeting itself was purely a business gathering. It apparently had been informally decided already that a committee of forty-seven members was too unwieldy to consider any plan for the Society's future, so provisions were made at this meeting to establish a smaller committee, known variously as the "General Committee" and the "Committee of Twenty-Three" to handle the actual details of working out such a plan, with the advice of the various local committees. Members of this "General Committee" were allotted to each village based on the ratio of one delegate for every fifty residents, with the appropriate number of top vote recipients from the election for the Committee of Forty-Seven being automatically designated as delegates to the General Committee. Thus, Main Amana, the largest village, had six members on the general committee, while East and High Amana, the smallest communities, each had two. Apart from this action, Dr. Carl Noe, attending as a guest of the committee, spoke briefly at the meeting, suggesting some methods and plans which he believed the committee might well consider, and "stress[ing] the necessity of harmony and unity of action" by the committee.⁴¹

On May 11 the Main Amana local committee met again at the schoolhouse and discussed a "paper" some delegates had prepared as a tool to be used in educating the Society members about the state of the Society's finances. At this meeting two delegates, Peter Stuck and William Noe, were appointed to draw up a questionnaire. The larger group had already proposed such a questionnaire for a general vote regarding the Society members' opinions on the possibility of reorganization. On 16 May 1931 the General Committee met for the first time, and it was at this meeting in Main Amana that officers were chosen. Perhaps reflecting the influence of the villages of Main Amana and Homestead in starting the

⁴¹ *Minutes of the Committee of Forty-Seven*, 2 May 1931, photocopies, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

reorganization process, all of the officers came from these two villages. The chairman, John L. Eichacker, was from Homestead, while vice chairman F. William Miller and secretary Peter Stuck were both from Main Amana.

Eichacker appears not to have taken a large part in reform activity before his election to the committee. The son of the Homestead hotel keeper, he had been raised among visitors from the "outside." As postmaster for Homestead, he had fairly regular contact with area farmers who used the services of the Homestead post office. As a young man Eichacker had been rebellious and had left the Society on two occasions. The first was in 1902 when, at the age of 20 and in the company of several other young men from Homestead, he loaded a wagon with provisions and set off on an excursion to visit the sister of one of the young men in Illinois. The trip lasted several weeks and occasioned much concern among the Society's elders, although the young men had informed their families of their intentions. In 1907 Eichacker again left the Society, this time moving to Oregon with his wife and several members of his family (including his mother). The family returned to the Society after a few years, however. In 1919 Eichacker was a founder of the Homestead Welfare Club and later served as an officer in that organization.⁴²

Like John Eichacker, vice chairman F. William Miller had spent a considerable amount of time outside the Society and had run away for a short time as a youth. Both Miller and Peter Stuck, the committee's new secretary, had received college training and this, combined with their respective occupations of pharmacist and schoolmaster, gave them an aura of respectability. All three men were known supporters of reorganization (Miller and Stuck having been members

⁴² [Richard Seifert]. "By the Homestead Correspondent." *Amana Society Bulletin*, 7 November 1935; Georg Heinemann, *Inspirations Historie, 1898-1905* (Amana: Amana Society, 1923), 465. Eichacker's trip to Illinois was recorded in a manuscript diary, now in the possession of a descendant of another young man who participated in that escapade.

of the original agitator group), and, in their selection of these men as officers, the committee was perhaps indicating its leanings in that direction.

By the end of May 1931, therefore, the Amana people had created the machinery by which their community was to realize tremendous change. In the coming months, the members of the Committee of Forty-Seven would find themselves immersed in difficult discussions, facing the onerous responsibility of dismantling one of the largest communal organizations ever to exist in the United States. The success with which that dismantling was accomplished and in which a new corporation emerged from the dying embers of the old communal system is the subject of the remainder of this study.

CHAPTER 3: PRODUCING A PLAN FOR REORGANIZATION

The readjustment will be an interesting thing to watch. My feeling is that they will proceed cautiously. They must, for there are many old people to take into consideration.

-- Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, Housebook, 17 June 1931¹

In the early months of 1931 the leadership and members of the Amana Society initiated the first steps toward a massive reform effort of their organization by creating the Committee of Forty-Seven. In the year that followed the Committee established various sub-committees, which, together, would create and implement a plan to completely reorganize the Amana Society. The plan resulted in a business corporation which provided employment, as well as medical benefits, for all members of the old Society, and assured the preservation of the Amana church as a separate entity.

When discussing the reorganization today, most Amana residents and descendants speak of the "Committee of Forty Seven" -- a reference to the number of delegates elected by the members of the Society in April 1931. The full committee, however, rarely met, except for an initial organizational meeting and a few meetings held to finalize details of the reorganization plan. The Amana leadership quickly recognized that a committee of forty-seven members was far too unwieldy a body to operate effectively, so the number was cut in half to facilitate cooperation and discussion.

The new group, commonly known as the Committee of Twenty-Three, but referred to in the records as the General Committee, was composed of those members of the various local committees who had received the highest number of

¹ Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, Housebook, 17 June 1931, Shambaugh Family Papers, box 22, folder 2, University of Iowa Special Collections, University of Iowa Library, Iowa City, Iowa.

votes from their respective villages and was based on a ratio of one delegate for every fifty residents or fraction thereof in a given village. The ratio for selecting delegates to the local committees which, together, constituted the Committee of Forty-Seven was twenty-five to one. Thus, West Amana, with a population of approximately 125 had a local committee of five members and two delegates on the General Committee. The members not selected for the General Committee were to meet as local committees and to advise their delegates to the General Committee on courses of action.

One of the first issues which the General Committee confronted was a letter and ballot which the Main Amana Local Committee had written and proposed to send to all 917 adult members of the Society in order to gauge their opinion as to a possible course of action. The ballot and letter, composed by William Noe and Peter Stuck at the suggestion of the Main Amana Local Committee, was approved at that group's meeting of 18 May 1931. The ballot essentially asked respondents whether they would be willing to return to the old, stricter, ways of communal life in order to cut costs and preserve the Society, or whether they would rather pursue a plan of reorganization. Accompanying the ballot would be letter which would explain the financial conditions facing the Society as well as postulating some possible courses of action. Representatives of the Main Amana Local Committee presented the proposed letter and ballot at the General Committee meeting on 16 May 1931, held in Main Amana. Members attending gave the letter tentative approval, with the suggestion that the letter and ballot be distributed to the local committees for their perusal and suggestions.

Presumably the local committees met to discuss the proposed letter and ballot during the period between 16 May and 26 May, the date of the next meeting

of the General Committee. The edited copies of the East, South and West Amana, and Homestead committees survive, demonstrating that, aside from a few minor changes in wording, the local committees did not feel the need to alter the proposed documents to a large extent. Members of the Main Amana Local Committee postulated that at least 64 percent of the local members were “known to favor [reorganization].”² At the meeting of the General Committee on 26 May the proposed letter and ballot were amended and approved, and ordered printed. The letters and ballots were printed and distributed in early June. In Main Amana this distribution was assigned to members of the local committee, although the date on which the letters and questionnaires were handed out is unknown.³

The letter which accompanied the ballots consisted of a statement in German, printed on both sides of a ledger sized sheet of paper. The letter began by imploring the members of the Society to aid the work of the General Committee by voting on how they thought the Committee ought to proceed. As the letter rather plainly stated, “without harmony and close cooperation nothing can be achieved which will serve the welfare of all.” The letter urged its readers to give careful thought to the matter before filling out their ballot, and “not give an over-hasty, predetermined, and selfish answer.”⁴

The majority of the letter was devoted to a carefully prepared statement of the dire financial straits facing the Society. The “statements” made in this portion of the letter, if given the careful consideration which the introduction suggested, would

² Minutes of Main Amana Local Committee, 18 May 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

³ Minutes of Main Amana Local Committee, 29 May 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁴ Peter Stuck and William Noe, to Members of The Amana Society, June 1931. The translated full text of this letter, as well as the accompanying ballot, is printed in the appendix.

logically lead the average reader to vote in favor of pursuing a plan of reorganization. The letter informed members that, unless some sort of a change were made, the Society would be bankrupt within a short period of time. Two possible solutions to this problem were presented. The first proposed that members willingly give up many of the comforts to which they had become accustomed and “adopt a standard of life which will be lower than the average in the outside world.” The second proposal called for members to abandon the communal system and try their fortunes in a capitalist society.

In order to make absolutely certain that those voting for a return to the lifestyle of their ancestors knew what they would be sacrificing, the letter gave particular examples. No private earnings would be allowed (some members had begun the practice of selling craft items and garden produce to outside visitors). All money held by members in area banks would have to be surrendered to the common fund, an indirect criticism aimed at those who engaged in this practice, which was technically against the Society’s constitution. Other practices, such as paying members for overtime work in the factories and the use of hired hands would have to be ended. Items such as ready made clothes produced outside the Society, pleasure rides in Society cars, candy and tobacco would have to be abandoned. The letter also suggested that, after returning to a stricter way, members would be expected to work full-time, six days a week.

The letter’s authors realized these were drastic proposals to people who had become accustomed to a higher standard of living, but noted that any measures which were less drastic “would be of little use.” They assured readers that any plan of reorganization would need to be approved by 90 percent of the members, and that the elderly would receive larger amounts of stock in a corporation, in

proportion to their years of service. Members were assured that the church would continue in the event of a reorganization, and that the General Committee would do nothing until it was "certain that the members, at least the majority of them, are agreed upon the goals to be attained."⁵

The letter issued by the Committee of Forty-Seven can easily be interpreted as a work of propaganda. In many respects, however, the letter was a blunt statement of undeniable truths. The Society, as shown by recent analysis of 1931 records, was, indeed, headed for bankruptcy.⁶ Given the dire financial situation, a reorganization of the Society's business affairs was needed and quickly. The question remains, however, whether some form of compromise could have been effected. The Committee of Forty-Seven, in their letter, clearly did not believe that any form of compromise was possible. They saw things in black and white and offered two distinct, and completely opposite, potential courses of action. Jonathan Andelson, a leading scholar on Amana, has suggested, based on analysis of the results of the subsequent election on this issue, that Amana residents did not view the two choices presented on the ballot as opposites.⁷ However, it is difficult to read the letter distributed with the ballot and think that anyone could have seen a blurring of the distinctions between the two issues. Rather, the unusual voter trends which lead to this conclusion will be shown to have been the result of several other, unrelated factors. The ballot which came with the letter simply asked two questions, to be answered yes or no: 1) to return to the old way, the stricter lifestyle as outlined

⁵ Stuck and Noe, to Members of The Amana Society, 8.

⁶ Gary Carman, "The Amana Colonies' Change from Communalism to Capitalism in 1932," *Social Science Journal* 24 (1987): 157 - 67. The final assessment of indebtedness of the old Society, reached in May 1932, was almost half a million dollars.

⁷ Jonathan Gary Andelson, "The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies," in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. Donald Pitzer, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 199.

in the letter; and 2) whether or not they wished the committee to pursue reorganization. All members of the Society over the age of twenty-one were allowed to vote. Each ballot was filled out at home and signed by the respondent, a practice designed to prevent election fraud, and returned to the members of each local committee. One Homestead resident recalled the scene as her mother prepared to fill out her ballot: “[s]he, like many other members, scarcely looked at [the ballot and letter], knowing the contents from hearsay. ‘How will you vote,’ Henry [my brother] wanted to know. ‘Is there any way but for?’ mother responded immediately.”⁸

Each local committee tabulated the ballots it received, and all ballots were recounted and tabulated at the meeting of the General Committee on 17 June. The results of the vote, in most villages, were foregone conclusions. Those villages which were associated with railroads, public highways, and hotels, and had overall greater interaction with outsiders, naturally expressed the greatest support for reorganization. The results are presented in the table below (Table 1).

In the village of Homestead, where agitation for reorganization had always been strong, only four people, three of them members of the same family, opposed pursuing reorganization. In other villages the results were less decisive, but the Committee found, overall, that 74 percent of the total membership supported pursuing a plan of reorganization. In determining the percentage of support for reorganization, committee members divided the total number of affirmative responses by the number of ballots actually distributed (rather than the number returned). Thus an unreturned ballot counted, mathematically, against reorganization. In order for a ballot to be counted in favor of reorganization, the

⁸ Barbara Selzer Yambura, *A Change and a Parting: My Story of Amana* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1960), 283.

respondent had to answer “yes” to the second question. In some cases respondents ignored the first question all together, feeling that an affirmative answer to the second question implied how they felt about returning to the old way. Conversely, some residents, who answered yes to the first question, left the second question blank. This clearly demonstrates that respondents viewed the two choices as opposites. In a few cases, however, particularly in East Amana, respondents voted “yes” to both questions. This indicates a degree of uncertainty on their part, probably more than a feeling that they might be able to have it both ways. Such respondents may have intended their vote to indicate that, while they were in favor of reorganizing, if it was necessary they would also be willing to return to the old ways.

The almost accidental survival of the original signed ballots from the election allows us to identify the respondents, indicating what type of individual was likely to

Table 1. Voting results from 17 June 1931.⁹

VILLAGE	Number Sent	Number Returned	Question #1		Question #2		Percent in Favor
			Yes	No	Yes	No	
Homestead	118	117	3	101	113	3	96.0
South Amana	110	110	6	103	106	2	96.0
Main Amana	270	261	6	253	251	6	93.0
West Amana	88	87	6	54	81	5	92.0
East Amana	64	63	13	45	42	2	66.0
High Amana	63	63	10	52	33	10	52.0
Middle Amana	204	199	65	122	50	117	24.5
TOTALS	917	900	109	730	676	145	74.0

⁹ Results are as reported in Lawrence Rettig, *Amana Today: A history of the Amana Society from 1932 to the present* (South Amana, Iowa: privately printed, 1975), 123.

vote a particular way, and suggesting some of their motivations for doing so.¹⁰ A brief summary of voting patterns, village by village, is the best way to indicate the Amana Society members feelings about reorganization. In two villages, Homestead and South Amana, over 96 percent of the residents favored pursuing a plan of reorganization. As noted, in Homestead four percent of the population, or a total of four people, opposed reorganization. In South Amana, with a slightly larger population, the 4 percent willing to return to the old way of life constituted six individuals. All six of these respondents were elderly with an average age of 69.8 years, and also displayed a degree of inter-relatedness. However, three of the South Amana respondents voted “yes” to the second question, indicating that, while they were willing to go back to a stricter lifestyle, they were also willing to support reorganization. This unusual response did not occur in any other village.¹¹

In Main Amana and West Amana the number of respondents willing to reorganize was also above 90 percent. In Main Amana six respondents stated that they would be willing to return to the old way. An additional four respondents indicated that they would be unwilling to support either proposition. Four of these ten opposition voters were members of the same family: a father, mother, son and daughter-in-law. Another two respondents were married, and another two were brother and sister. Only two of the negative responses in Main Amana were

¹⁰ The ballots are in the Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

¹¹ Although the Homestead Local Committee reported only three votes against reorganization, one respondent voted against both propositions and, due to this discrepancy, his ballot was not counted as being either for or against either proposition (although it was counted among those returned). Further, one ballot was not returned, and, because of the committee’s practice of weighing support for reorganization against the total number of ballots distributed (rather than returned), this ballot was counted as a negative response. One of the South Amana ballots, signed “a Member,” was counted. It is impossible to determine this individual’s identity. One of the South Amana respondents who voted “yes” to both questions, was a trustee. He may have wished to continue the old lifestyle, but, as a trustee, he was fully aware that this was not financially feasible.

registered by individuals with no close family connections to other reorganization opponents. This indicates that family connections had as much, if not more, to do with responses than individual action. In some cases these familial responses may represent the influence of a powerful patriarchal figure, as may be the case in the family of four cited above. Furthermore, those individuals who voted without a family connection tended to be, in almost all cases, older -- the average age of the ten Main Amana opponents to reorganization was 57.¹² It is clear, that, aside from the responses registered in Middle Amana, which will be discussed later, few, if any, individuals willingly opposed reorganization on purely ideological grounds. Usually other factors, such as age and familial connections, explain these responses.

In West Amana, like the other three villages with over 90 percent approval, residents had a great degree of interaction with "outsiders." There, only six respondents voted to return to the old way. As in the other villages, there was some degree of interrelation between the respondents who opposed reorganization. Two of these respondents were married, while another three were a father, his unmarried daughter and his widowed sister. As in the other villages, these individuals tended to be elderly, with an average age, in 1931, of 69.8 years.¹³

A large gulf separates the results from the four villages already examined and the villages of East, High and Middle Amana. In contrast to the other four, none of these villages was located on a state highway or along a railroad. Although the High Amana general store did a great deal of business with area farmers, the

¹² The average age of the Main Amana respondents increases to 63.5 when the ages of a young married couple, ages 30 and 32, are excluded.

¹³ One of the respondents was considerably younger than the others; without her, the average age was 78 years.

stores and craft shops in Middle and East Amana did not. To a large degree, these three villages were the most isolated from outside influences.

East Amana, which lies near Main Amana, and was, therefore, indirectly influenced by the many visitors who came to that community, supported reorganization by 66 percent. This approval represents a decrease of over 26 percent from the next highest village, West Amana. In East Amana thirteen respondents indicated that they would be willing to return to the old way of living and, consequently, did not favor reorganization, while 42 residents did favor reorganization. An examination of the ballots reveals that all but three of the votes against reorganization from East Amana came from members of two families, both of which had emigrated from Saxony in the 1880s. The average age of these respondents, almost all of them siblings, was approximately 62.8 years.¹⁴

The view has long persisted among Amana residents that individuals who joined the Society in the 1880s, when the last inspired leader died, did not share the same religious experience and consequent devotion as individuals who had joined the Society at an earlier time. The suggestion is, then, that such individuals saw the Society completely in terms of secular issues, while earlier members and their descendants were more interested in preserving the Society's religious elements. When confronted with an economic situation which would ultimately mean the bankruptcy of the Society and the end of their church organization, the earlier arrivals and their descendants were willing to sacrifice communalism to preserve the community, while people who had joined later were not.

¹⁴ The age of one respondent could not be determined. One East Amana resident, when questioned about opposition fifty years after the reorganization, stated that is mainly centered around "some elderly people." Marie Blechschmidt, Interview by Kirk Setzer, 8 March 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Like East Amana, High Amana was not on a main public road, nor did it have a railroad connection. Although isolated much like East Amana, High Amana residents began to experience a greater degree of interaction with “outsiders” through the development of the local general store in the 1920s under its manager, William Foerstner. Not satisfied with serving the needs of village residents, Foerstner expanded his operations and by 1931 sold radios, bicycles, automobile tires and batteries through his store. Foerstner’s business was statewide, involving the use of a delivery truck and driver who carried batteries from town to town. Despite this outward looking enterprise and the outside contact that it brought to the village, only 52 percent of High Amana residents answered “yes” to the question whether they supported the Reorganization. However, only ten residents went on record as saying they opposed reorganization. A total of fifty-two residents stated that they were unwilling to return to the old way of life. Thirty of these individuals then left the second question blank, feeling, perhaps, that their negative answer to the first question indicated their opinion on the second. However, because they did not mark the second question “yes,” the committee was unable to count their votes as being in favor of reorganization. Consequently, it may be possible to state that High Amana residents were far more in favor of reorganization than their official election results would report.¹⁵

In High Amana, as in East Amana, some interrelation is observable among the nineteen respondents who opposed reorganization. This number represented, in part, four married couples. A ninth member of the opposition was the mother and

¹⁵ “Dress Styles Two Centuries Old and Bobbed Hair -- Ancient Customs and Modern Business -- All Blend at Amana,” *Cedar Rapids Gazette and Republican* (undated clipping, Peter Stuck Papers). William Foerstner’s seventy-year tenure at the helm of the High Amana store made an indelible impression that community. His entrepreneurial abilities were inherited by his son, George, who went on to found the Amana Refrigeration Company after the Reorganization, and who remained a potent force in national business circles for decades.

mother-in-law of one of these couples, and the tenth and eleventh members were sisters, while two others were father and daughter. It should be noted that while husbands and wives often voted the same way, this was not always the case. The average age of the High Amana respondents who voted against reorganization was 63.3 years. Nine of the High Amana respondents who opposed had been born in Germany. This data would seem to suggest that older residents, particularly those who had immigrated, were more likely to oppose reorganization.

Although High Amana residents were far less enthusiastic than those of several other villages to approve a plan of reorganization, the response in Middle Amana was a resounding defeat. Only a quarter of the 199 ballots returned wished to pursue a plan of reorganization. Because of this result, Middle Amana became the target of significant antipathy by the rest of the Society and the brunt of many jokes. To this day, some residents of Main Amana, without any memory of their own village's support or lack thereof for the Reorganization, can quickly cite Middle Amana's recalcitrance.

The long-standing question in the Amanas has always been why Middle Amana so resoundingly opposed reorganization. No simple answer exists to this question. It has often been suggested that Middle was more isolated than other villages. While this is true, East Amana, which is virtually equidistant from Main Amana and its railroad and highway as is Middle Amana, still managed to muster three times the percentage of support than the other village.

Aside from the factor of isolation, one must also consider Middle Amana's leadership. Shortly after the Reorganization, Iowa historian Bertha Shambaugh was bluntly informed, presumably by one of her contacts in Amana, that the reason for Middle's lack of support was the complete opposition of its conservative head

elder, John Heinemann.¹⁶ Heinemann, it has been reported, did not see the need for reorganization and insisted that the problems of the Society could be overcome by hard work and faith. Alone among all the Society's elders, Heinemann had called a special church service in order to pray about the great trial through which the Society was passing.¹⁷ Heinemann was an extremely beloved figure in Middle, and his gentle management of the village no doubt made the residents more inclined to heed his injunctions against reorganization. Ironically, Heinemann died only a few months after this vote, and the most powerful voice against reorganization fell silent.

Apart from Heinemann's opposition and the village's isolation, there were other reasons for Middle's lack of support. As one longtime Middle Amana resident has stated, many in the village viewed the Reorganization with suspicion. They believed that some outside individual, such as a banker, was actually behind the Committee of Forty-Seven and was using them to destroy the Society so that he (or they) could buy the woolen mill or farm land.¹⁸ It has also been suggested that Middle Amana residents viewed the Reorganization as a "Main Amana and Homestead project." A long standing feud had existed between these three villages, and it may be that Middle Amana residents opposed reorganization simply because they wanted to oppose these towns.

The ballots which Middle Amana residents submitted also indicate a degree of "coaching." A large percentage of them are marked "no" to both questions. This

¹⁶ It should be noted that, while they shared the same surname, John Heinemann was not related to Barbara Heinemann Landmann, the spiritual leader of the Amana Society in the late nineteenth century.

¹⁷ Yambura. *A Change and A Parting*, 284. The position of respect which Heinemann held is still evident in speaking with older residents of Middle Amana.

¹⁸ Helene Rind, interview by the author, 17 March 1998, tape recording, collection of the author.

means that the respondent did not want either to return to the old way or to reorganize. This may be interpreted as a sign that Middle residents wished to preserve the status quo, but the fact that only a few ballots from other villages were marked this way calls this into question. For so many people to vote in such an unusual way bespeaks some form of prearrangement.

The opposition in Middle Amana to the Reorganization was staggering, and was found in all segments of the community: young and old, immigrant and native born. Outside of Middle Amana, only two elders of the Society voted against reorganization; in Middle Amana, ten of twelve did. Even six of the nine Middle Amana representatives on the Committee of Forty-Seven, the very group that was to plan for reorganization, voted no.

Because Middle Amana's support of the Reorganization was limited compared to that of other villages, the community was brutally mocked by other society members. While some of this mocking represented the good-natured rivalry that has always existed between the villages, at least some of it appears to have directed towards shaming the people of Middle Amana into accepting reorganization. The prime example of this activity is the anonymous poem entitled "Zum Nachdenken" ("In Reflection"). Although the author of this short poem is unknown, residents of the Amana Colonies strongly suggest that he or she was from the village of Main Amana. The poem, part of a long tradition of amateur poetry in the villages, suggests that as far as Middle Amana was concerned the status quo was good enough, "as long as there is something in the jug/ and the bacon is rich." It went on to suggest that when the supply of food was exhausted Middle Amana "would be set in the dirt" and passerby would hear them wail "why did I vote no!" Whether this poem had any effect is debatable, although it remains

vivid in the minds of many Amana residents today (the complete text of this poem, as well as a translation, may be found in Appendix D).¹⁹

In the final analysis there is little doubt that the members of the Amana Society, if not favoring reorganization, at least realized a need for it. In most cases opposition to reorganization appears to have been based largely on age and an understandable concern for well-being rather than any ideological concerns. The average age of the fifty-six respondents, outside of Middle Amana, who opposed reorganization was 64.7 years. Of this total, 33 (59 percent) were women. Several of the women who voted against reorganization were elderly widows, and, like their male counterparts, were likely deeply concerned about their future should the communal system which was caring for them in old age disappear. Again, in the villages other than Middle Amana, only five elders voted against reorganization, a small figure in light of the fact that fundamental adherence to religious ideals was the primary argument used to oppose the Reorganization. Of the Trustees only one voted against reorganization while another two abstained and the rest favored reorganization. All of these figures shift when Middle Amana is considered, but so many underlying factors contributed to the vote in that village, factors which appear to have had less to do with personal feelings than with following orders, that it would be pointless to include those results into a final analysis of the total vote.

While tabulating the results of the votes from the various villages, the members of the General Committee who supported reorganization must have been elated. Even with the response from Middle, over 74 percent of the total membership of the Society had voted in favor of reorganizing. Although members

¹⁹ Copies of this poem are still in circulation in the Amana area. The copy referred to here and reproduced in Appendix D was found among the Peter Stuck papers. The free verse translation is by the author.

of the General Committee were fairly certain that most individual members of the Society would support reorganization, the committee was hesitant to take such a step without the sanction of the Board of Trustees. Accordingly, the General Committee sent a copy of the voting results and a letter to the Trustees.

Between 12 June and the trustee meeting on 7 July no major action was taken regarding reorganization. It is perhaps odd that the Trustees felt no need to hold a special session in all that time to consider the results of the election. Perhaps, after having accomplished so much towards reorganization in only three months they sensed a need to slow the process and give due consideration to the situation facing them.

It was during this period of waiting that people outside of the Society first became aware that anything unusual was occurring within the seven villages. Several papers, including the *Des Moines Register and Leader*, which ran a banner front-page headline announcing, "AMANAS WILL DROP COMMUNISM" on page one of their 16 June 1932 issue, and the local Marengo *Pioneer Republican*, carried reports of the election results and proclaimed that the Amana Society had just voted to end the communal way of life, citing the Society's secretary as stating that such a plan would now be formulated.²⁰

At least one outside observer responded negatively to the suggestion that the communal way of life might end within the Amana Society. Henry A. Wallace, then editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*, but soon to become the Secretary of Agriculture in Franklin Roosevelt's cabinet, sent a letter to Society president Georg Heinemann, stating: "I was very sorry to learn from the *Des Moines Register* that the Amana Society had been having such a hard time that it was considering giving up its

²⁰

Des Moines Register and Leader, 16 June 1931; *Des Moines Register and Leader*, 17 June 1931.

present form of organization.” He went on to express the hope that any change made at Amana would be accomplished “slowly and carefully without heated argument,” and to note that he had long considered the Amana farming methods “not as efficient . . . as they might be.” Now that the Society was considering change Wallace believed he could now openly make such a criticism, and suggested that he “would be glad to help you if you think I could be of service in any way.”²¹

Wallace’s intense interest in the reorganization of the Amana Society led him to write an editorial about it in the *Wallaces’ Farmer* and later to offer advice, much of it unsolicited. Given Wallace’s interest in cooperative farming and communism, his interest in the Amana Society takes on, as shall later be demonstrated, some significance.²²

Perhaps the person on the “outside” with the most intense interest in the vote was Bertha Shambaugh, wife of Benjamin F. Shambaugh, Superintendent of the State Historical Society of Iowa and herself the author of an history of the Amana Society. Shambaugh held no illusions about the meaning of the vote, or why the results were in favor of reorganization. In her diary she wrote that “some change was inevitable,” and suggested that the current Board of Trustees was “conservative [and] reactionary” and had been “rather hard and unbending” in dealing with young people. Shambaugh appeared to believe that, aside from the economic difficulties facing the Society, the chief cause of the fall of the old order was poor leadership. She later pursued this theme in a book and articles she wrote after the Reorganization was completed. She continued to believe that the waning memory and influence of the Society’s major founder, Christian Metz, and the loss

²¹ Henry A. Wallace to John [sic] Heinemann, 17 June 1931, microfilm reel 7, frame 652, Henry A. Wallace Papers, Microform Department, Parks Library, Iowa State University.

²² Henry A. Wallace, “The Amana Society is Reorganized,” in *Wallaces’ Farmer*, 9 July 1932, 5.

of the flexible leadership style he pursued, was the cause of the old Society's demise. Shambaugh also was quick to assign a commensurate amount of blame to, what she termed, the "drones" of the Society: those individuals who did not carry their proportionate share of the work load.²³

Probably the most significant article written during the time between the vote and the trustee meeting was a piece published in the *Kansas City Star*. In it the author noted the condition of the Society, paying particularly attention to the "youth rebellion." He met with Society president Georg Heinemann and offered a poignant portrait of an elderly leader in the waning days of his authority. Heinemann was portrayed as a conservative man who, even in the modern age, refused to have his picture taken because he interpreted such an act as a violation of the commandment against making graven images. Still, the reporter found Heinemann to be kindly and reconciled to the will of his people even though it ran counter to his own wishes. In a flourish of journalistic eloquence the reporter perhaps most poignantly illustrated the intrusion of the modern world into the Amana Society which made reorganization inevitable as he described the elderly Heinemann shielding his eyes in order to watch an airplane pass over his South Amana home.²⁴

The Board of Trustees met on 7 July 1931 at West Amana, where they authorized the General Committee to proceed with drafting a plan of reorganization, provided they "report back to the [Trustees] for further direction."

²³ Bertha M.H. Shambaugh. Housebook, 18 June 1931, Shambaugh Family Papers, box 22, folder 2, University of Iowa Special Collections, University of Iowa Library, Iowa City, Iowa. Examples of Shambaugh's writings on the Amana reorganization are: *Amana That Was and Amana That Is* (Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1932), and "Amana - In Transition," *Palimpsest* 17 (May 1936): 149-184.

²⁴ *Kansas City Star* 28 June 1931.

The General Committee was also encouraged to call upon Divine assistance in their work, and the members were also to keep the Trustees informed of developments. In the meantime, the Trustees decreed, all rules and orders they had issued would remain in effect. The Trustees, therefore, had resigned themselves to reorganization, but also maintained the old standards of faith and control for the Society as long as they were still in control.²⁵ At least one journalist was surprised that the board did not immediately vote to dissolve the Society, given the results of the June vote. The journalist in question noted that the "survey committee" which had conducted the vote, was "still in existence," but he, like many outside observers, apparently did not realize that this "survey committee," and not the Board of Trustees, was where action would originate.²⁶

The General Committee met on 15 July 1931, almost a month after the results of the "test vote," having received the sanction of the Board of Trustees, which, given the comments of the Society's secretary in early June, appears never to have been in doubt. As with all General Committee sessions, the 15 July meeting was called to order at 8:45 p.m., a time late enough to insure that all members would have time to finish their work, eat, and still have time to reach the meeting site in the basement of the Homestead Church. Meetings generally lasted only two hours, due in part to the fact that much of the Committee's business was conducted outside of meetings by small delegations of members and because of the late hour at which meetings necessarily had to begin. When a more

²⁵ Minutes of the Amana Society Board of Trustees, 7 July 1931, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

²⁶ Ray Anderson, "Amana Board Meets But No Action Taken," unidentified clipping, 8 July 1932, F. A. and Louise DuVal Papers, folder 147, box 3, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

complicated agenda was foreseen, meetings were scheduled during the early afternoon.

By this time, with the result of the “test vote” and the sanction of the Board of Trustees, there was no question as to the ultimate goal of the Committee: they were to establish a plan under which the Amana Society could abandon its communal system. Precisely what such a plan would entail was unclear. At the 15 July 1931 meeting F. William Miller laid out several criteria which he felt any reorganization plan should include.

The first criterion Miller listed was the retention of the church organization. Because the religious and temporal aspects of the Amana Society were so closely intertwined, there existed a very real fear that abandoning the communal life which had become so enmeshed with religion would mean the end of the Amana church. The second point which Miller felt a reorganization plan must adhere to was to provide for the support of “deserving needy members and in case of sickness and disability.” A very real concern, held by many Amana residents at this time was what would happen to those unable to provide for themselves, particularly the elderly. Miller and his colleagues were aware that they needed the support of the elderly members of the Society to win approval of any reorganization plan. They also felt a keen sense of responsibility toward older members of the Society who had, after all, given a lifetime of service to the old Society. It would have seemed particularly callous, both to younger members of the Society and to the outside world, if communalism were to be abandoned without providing for the care of older members.

The third point Miller suggested a plan should take into consideration was to provide preference in employment for members to continue working in local

industries once the Society had reorganized. Understandably, given the economic conditions then prevalent in the outside world, the threat of mass unemployment in the community following the abandonment of communalism was very real. Miller's final point was that any plan adopted should provide a means whereby members could acquire the homes they then occupied which were, of course, the property of the Society. All of the criteria which Miller outlined regarded concerns held by many Society members about a reorganization. In laying out these criteria Miller established the ground rules by which a plan could be established that would gain the acceptance of the membership.²⁷

As they had two months before, the General Committee realized that their large size of twenty-three members would make the delicate discussions necessary for drafting a reorganization plan difficult. Therefore, it was decided to create a "Committee of Ten" to actually draft a plan. This committee was to consist of the chairman, the vice chairman and secretary of the General Committee, as well as one delegate elected by each local committee. These elections were held over the next several days by the local committees.

The members of the Committee of Ten were among the strongest advocates of reorganization. They included John Eichacker, William Miller and Peter Stuck, who as officers of the General Committee were automatically delegates to the Committee of Ten. A fourth member, William Noe, was the selection of the Main Amana committee. Because Miller and Stuck were also from Main Amana this meant that this village had three members of the ten on the Committee of Ten or 30 percent of the total membership, slightly more than population percentage. Although Eichacker was from Homestead, that village also got to select another

²⁷ Minutes of the Committee of Forty-Seven, 15 July 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

delegate. Thus, Main Amana and Homestead provided half of the delegates to the committee which actually drafted the reorganization plan. The delegate from Homestead, Dr. Henry G. Moershel, was an obvious choice for the position, given his early and strong agitation for reorganization. The other delegates were: Ferdinand Ruff, South Amana; Carl Flick, West Amana; Henry Bendorf, High Amana; William Heinz, Middle Amana; and Louis Hess, East Amana.

Of the ten members of the new committee, all but three were local committee chairmen. Seven of these men had at one time lived outside the society; four of them held college degrees; and all but Louis Hess, a baker, were in professions which necessitated outside contact. Three of the men -- Stuck, Moershel, and Miller -- were members of the agitator group that had initiated the call for reorganization in March 1931. Finally, the General Committee minutes indicate that the ten men who constituted the committee included all of the most outspoken delegates to the larger body. In short, the Committee of Ten was composed of strong advocates of reorganization who were fairly well-educated and who had outside contacts to draw upon for assistance.²⁸

The General Committee decided, at the 15 July meeting, that the Committee of Ten should meet in Main Amana on 20 July. The committee met on that date and periodically for the next three weeks. Most of these meetings appear to have been held in the basement of the Main Amana Pharmacy, which Miller ran and where he

²⁸ For some reason no material, beyond a draft copy of the reorganization plan, survives from the Committee of Ten. The identity of the ten members was determined only after much research into available records. A *Des Moines Tribune* article of 16 June 1931 mentioned a committee of local committee chairmen. This list identified seven members of the committee, excluding William Miller and William Noe, both of whom are clearly identified as members in the Main Amana Local Committee minutes, and Carl Flick, the delegate from West Amana, whose membership has been established through the recollections of Paul Kellenberger, the West Amana chairman. Despite the fact that the committee was not formally organized, it is very likely that the committee chairmen had already been meeting informally before that time, and that the committee was merely a formalization of this fact.

lived with his family. They met three times a week, often until midnight, during the short period of their activity.²⁹ After weeks of deliberation, during which the rest of the reorganization process ground to a halt, the Committee of Ten emerged with a skeleton plan, listing several points to be included in a final reorganization plan.

On 31 July the Main Amana Local Committee met and considered the work, to that point, of the Committee of Ten. In this respect, the Local Committee appears to have been given special consideration, as not even the General Committee was allowed to consider the work of the committee until 19 August. Suggestions were made by the members, and the Local Committee advised Stuck to revise the outline in accordance with these suggestions. He was then to present the revised form to the Main Amana Local Committee before taking it back to the Committee of Ten.³⁰ Stuck returned with the revised "Points to be Considered in Reorganization" and presented it to the Main Amana Local Committee on 3 August. Further changes were suggested, and the meeting adjourned after two hours.³¹ Perhaps the fact that the Main Amana Local Committee had three delegates on the ten member committee gave it a special position. It might be that the three men serving from Main Amana were attempting to seek the guidance of their local committee in their deliberations. Perhaps the delegates from other villages held similar meetings with their local committees during this time. Unfortunately, only the Main Amana committee appears to have kept minutes which survived.

²⁹ Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, "Memoranda on Amana at Time of Reorganization," folder 17, Amana Society Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

³⁰ Main Amana Local Committee Minutes, 31 July 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

³¹ Main Amana Local Committee Minutes, 3 August 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

On 19 August the Committee of Ten presented their plan to the General Committee. This plan seems to have been little more than an expanded outline of points to be considered in a final plan of reorganization, which the General Committee intended some outside authority to write. The surviving draft, which appears to approximate the final version, addressed eleven points, suggesting, in part, the retention of the name "Amana Society," the establishment of a board of thirteen directors to control the reorganized society, and the issuance of two types of stock, common and preferred, to the members. Other points addressed industrial, agricultural, and public utilities, all of which were to be owned and managed by the proposed corporation.

In his initial charge to the Committee of Ten, Miller had listed four points which he felt ought to be considered, including ownership of homes, provision of employment for members, maintenance of the church, and care of the elderly. The proposed plan addressed two of these points. Homes were to be appraised at a reasonable value, and residents would then buy homes for cash or by trading in stock shares. Families would only be allowed to buy one home, and lenient rental and deferred payment agreements were suggested. In other words, the Committee of Ten went to great lengths to provide a plan by which every person could own the home in which he or she then was living. In regard to the elderly, the committee included a lengthy section detailing the proposed benefits, which were to be limited to "members of the old corporation and their dependents." These benefits included free medical care and funeral expenses. The plan also provided for administration of finances by "competent businessmen" in case a member was inexperienced in handling money (in order to protect them from fraud).

The major points proposed by the Committee of Ten were incorporated into the final plan submitted some months later to the voters. Thus, by 19 August, less than six months after the Board of Trustees set the wheels in motion for a reorganization process, a plan existed. In the coming months, the plan was redrafted and fine-tuned, and would find the members of the General Committee turning increasingly to outside help. After what appears to have been limited discussion of the plan by the General Committee at its 19 August meeting, it was approved.³² The committee then decided that the plan should be presented to the Attorney General of Iowa, John Fletcher, for his comments.

Fletcher had already agreed, while passing through Amana in early July, to review any plan the Society devised for its reorganization and to make suggestions. He was careful to note, however, that he would do so as a personal favor and would not accept payment as he regarded this as a conflict of interest. Fletcher's "personal favor" was granted on behalf of William F. Moershel, the secretary of the Society's Board of Trustees. Fletcher had known Moershel since the turn-of-the-century when Moershel, then a salesman for the Amana Society, made visits to Avoca, Iowa, where Fletcher was an attorney. His friendship with Moershel indicates that Fletcher was probably aware of the problems facing the Society, and that he may have held more than the typical outsider's knowledge of the internal workings of the Society and concern for its well being.

The General Committee, reflecting what appears to have been almost a mania in the Amana Society for the creation of committees, insisted on electing the three delegates who were to take the plan to the Fletcher. The three men elected were particularly appropriate: Peter Stuck, Henry Moershel and William Miller, all

³² Minutes of the Committee of Forty-Seven, 19 August 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

members of the original agitator group which had forced the formation of the reorganization committee. Moershel's qualifications were enhanced because, as a village doctor, he had a car and could drive the other two to Des Moines.

Fletcher's assistant, Oral Swift, was present at the meeting in Des Moines. Swift was not unknown to the committee members, having been raised only a few miles from Amana. Then only thirty years old, Swift was a rising Des Moines attorney who had served part time as Assistant Attorney General for several years. Following this meeting, Swift's involvement with the Amana reorganization became increasingly significant and forged a professional bond between him and the Amana Society which was to endure for decades.³³

The skeleton plan was apparently left with Fletcher, and he spent the next several weeks considering its various points and drafting a formal legal plan. This plan was completed by late September and was presented by Oral Swift at a special meeting of the Committee of Forty-Seven on 23 September 1931. This marked only the second time that all forty-seven delegates met together. Swift carefully explained the various features of the proposed plan and promised to be present at future meetings to clarify various points as needed.

In the days following this meeting the local committees met to consider the plan and to offer suggestions. The General Committee met on 28 September and formulated three typewritten pages of suggestions, but none of these proposals represented a fundamental change. Stuck had anticipated changes and had taken the liberty, the same day of the committee meeting, to write Swift to set a time at

³³ Oral Saville Swift (1901-1967) was born in Iowa City, the son of John Swift, a prominent local attorney. He graduated from North English High School in 1919, received his B.A. from the University of Iowa in 1923 and his J.D. in 1925. Swift practiced law in Marengo from 1925 to 1929, at which time he became Assistant Attorney General for the State of Iowa, serving in that capacity until 1933, when he entered private practice in Des Moines. [*Iowa Press Association's Who's Who in Iowa* (Des Moines: Iowa Press Association, 1940) 1018.]

which he could meet with a “delegation from the committee.”³⁴ Two meetings were scheduled in advance, one for 1 October and a second, at which Oral Swift promised to be present, for 3 October.

The local committees likely met during the week-long period between sessions of the General Committee. During these meetings the plan as written by Swift and Fletcher was analyzed and discussed. By the time the General Committee convened again, on 1 October 1931, many members came with lists of changes that their local committees had suggested. This meeting, and the one following, were to prove crucial in the development of the final reorganization plan.

The General Committee meeting on 1 October 1931 was held, apparently as were all such meetings, in the basement of the Homestead Church. Immediately after the approval of the previous minutes, Peter Stuck moved that the name “Amana Society” be retained following reorganization. This proposal met with the approval of the committee, none of which, it is presumed, were willing to sacrifice the name recognition of “Amana Society” in the larger business community. In other action the Committee determined that voting by proxy would not be allowed in the prospective new corporation and that only residents of the Amana villages would be allowed to hold stock. Other measures adopted centered on the purchase of stock by minor members of the Society upon reaching majority age. Finally, a motion required that a primary election should precede the election of the Board of Directors provided for in the new reorganization plan, and that the votes of the directors on important issues be recorded individually.

The nature of the motions at this meeting suggests that the Committee of Ten had done its work well in creating the skeleton plan for the use of the Attorney

³⁴

Peter Stuck to Oral Swift, 28 September 1931, (copy) Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

General and his associates, as no issues of major concern were discussed. Apparently the members of the General Committee, and by implication the local committees they represented, were fairly well satisfied with the plan as drafted by the Attorney General's office. One major consideration of the Committee at this meeting was the election of the original board of directors. This issue was resolved, after several proposals were suggested, by having an appointed selection committee choose six at-large members, with each village's delegates on the selection committee choosing a representative for their village, making a the thirteen-member board.³⁵

The General Committee voted to endorse the medical plan as outlined in the draft proposal. The medical issue was a particularly potent one in the reorganization process, as the fear of high medical bills hung heavily over elderly members who, naturally, did not have insurance or any savings with which to pay them. The committee decided that the proposals made at this meeting were to be taken to Oral Swift at the Attorney General's office for review the following day. The haste in bringing the changes before Swift was clearly due to the fact that a second meeting of the General Committee had already been scheduled for 3 October 1931. Stuck, accompanied by Dr. Herman and William Miller, traveled to Des Moines to confer with Swift, who, in turn, came to meet with the General Committee on the following day. Swift had rejected the committee's proposal for electing the original board of directors, and drafted a third plan in which a committee of fourteen would be selected by the membership of the local committees, with the number of delegates to the committee determined proportionate to village size. This

³⁵ The number thirteen was adopted for the board for a variety of reasons. This was the number of members on the original Board of Trustees (representing the number people at the "Last Supper"), and it also presented an odd number of possible votes.

committee, in turn, would select the original board of directors. All three plans were presented at a General Committee meeting on 3 October 1931 and Swift's version was adopted.³⁶ In this case, as in many others, the Committee was willing to bow to Swift's suggestions.

The ease with which Swift was able to manage the reorganization process was due, in large part, to his position as Assistant Attorney General and to his friendship with many of the leading members of the committee (and of the Society as a whole). Because he held a responsible legal position in state government, General Committee members naturally assumed that he knew the best legal means to attain the committee's goals. Because Swift's father, John, and Swift himself had long lived near Amana and had built a reputation with members of the Society, General Committee members felt that Swift could be trusted. In dealing with Swift the committee members were not dealing with an "outsider." Rather, they were dealing with an individual they viewed as a friend, if not a compatriot. The close relationship that existed between Swift and some of the leading members of the committee is reflected in the informal first name salutations used on much of the correspondence between him and committee secretary Peter Stuck. Members of the committee who did not share such a close relationship with Swift demurred to his opinions because the "leading men" of the committee approved of him and their opinions could be trusted. As one member later wrote, "neither I, nor most of the others, I am quite sure, knew much about lawyers. We had heard, however, or were

³⁶ Minutes of the Forty-Seven , 3 October 1931, photocopies, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

told, that [Swift] was a good lawyer. We felt that he had been chosen by the 'top men.'"³⁷

After settling of the issue of electing directors, Ferdinand Ruff, a delegate from South Amana, moved that the Committee approve the reorganization plan as drafted by Swift, with the changes that had already been approved by the committee. The motion carried by a vote of eighteen to four (one member of the Committee, Adam Clemens, was absent due to illness). The die had been cast. Henceforth meetings would deal with additional changes proposed as the plan was studied in greater detail. The reorganization process from this point on became one of gaining acceptance of the plan by the Society's members and fine-tuning its points. After the General Committee's acceptance was clear, a period of preparation and transition ensued. As of 3 October 1931, however, the Amana Society had a road map for reorganization.³⁸

The next meeting of the General Committee was not held until 30 October. The relatively long period of time between meetings was to allow the Board of Trustees to consider the plan at their regularly scheduled meeting on 20 October. Peter Stuck spent the interim period in correspondence with Oral Swift over several points in the reorganization plan. In his first reply to a Stuck letter, one which apparently questioned whether members would be allowed to attend board meetings, Swift commented that this practice was "customary in many corporations." Swift noted that another reason he had included that proviso was that "the plan in general might meet with more wholehearted approval by the

³⁷ Paul Kellenberger to the author, 16 June 1997. The close relationship between Stuck and Swift continued until Swift's death in 1967. Even after that, members of Stuck's family continued to visit Swift's widow.

³⁸ General Committee Minutes, 3 October 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

people if such provision were contained [in it] ... As I understand it, aside from the direct and more practical effects to be had by the change in the conduct of the business of the [S]ociety, one of the underlying ideas of paramount importance is to obtain the wholehearted support of all the common stockholders.”³⁹

On 20 October the Board of Trustees met in special session at Homestead. Peter Stuck was present to explain the reorganization plan, after which the members of the Board made suggestions for changes. Stuck reported the results of this meeting to Swift in a letter, and the latter replied to him on 28 October, stating that he saw “no serious difficulty in connection with any of the suggestions, and in fact [thought] that some of them [were] very well taken.”⁴⁰

On 30 October the General Committee met to consider the changes which the trustees had suggested at their 20 October meeting. The trustees had noted that minors whose parents had died as members of the Society should be allotted a share in the new corporation. They also argued that members should pledge to accept shares of stock in lieu of any cash payments from the Society at the time of reorganization. Other points raised by the Trustees included clarifying the point that the secretary and treasurer of the new corporation should be distinct offices. These points were all adopted unanimously by the committee. Other concerns raised by the trustees (for a total of thirteen) included whether or not the board meeting should be open to the stockholders and other administrative changes. More significantly, the trustees urged the Committee to adopt a paragraph promising aid to any stockholder who was destitute due to illness, old age, or “misfortune,” a measure which was adopted by unanimous consent. This measure alone probably

³⁹ Oral Swift to Peter Stuck, 15 October 1931, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

⁴⁰ Oral Swift to Peter Stuck 28 October 1931, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

did much to convince hesitant members to approve the new plan. The only proposal of the trustees which did not meet with the unanimous approval of the committee was that members of the Board of Directors should be at least thirty-five years of age. This is not surprising since several members of the Committee were themselves below that age. Several proposed ages were suggested, the youngest being twenty-five, before the committee finally selected thirty as the minimum age.

The Main Amana Local Committee met on 2 November, at 3:30 p.m., this time to consider the period of transition which the Board of Trustees had suggested. Minor changes were proposed to this plan, and it was presented to the General Committee at their meeting later that night. In this instance, as in his work on the Committee of Ten, Stuck, and perhaps Miller, was using the Main Amana committee as a sounding board to test the popularity of proposals and to eliminate contentious points which might lead to long debates in a general meeting.

During the late fall of 1931, and at the suggestion of Attorney General Fletcher, the Committee hired a corporate lawyer, Don Barnes of Cedar Rapids. Barnes was a well-established Cedar Rapids attorney, then approaching retirement age. During the coming months he worked with Oral Swift in finalizing the reorganization plan. Later, Barnes was of great assistance in legally establishing the Amana Church Society, the body that assumed responsibility for the religious aspects of the old Society.⁴¹

That December the Society held its annual election for the Board of Trustees, a largely self-perpetuating body, the trustees usually renominated

⁴¹ Barnes, 55 at the time, was a native of Walnut, Iowa. He had been a practicing attorney in Cedar Rapids since 1901. During his career, Barnes served as counsel for the Cedar Rapids, Marion City Railway Company, counsel and director for the Cedar Rapids National Bank, counsel for United Light and Power Company, and president of the Linn County Bar Association. [*Iowa Press Association's Who's Who in Iowa* (Des Moines: Iowa Press Association, 1940) 722.]

themselves and were all reelected without incident. This election was unusual in that a vacancy, caused by the death of John Heinemann, had to be filled. His son, Adolph, was nominated for this position and easily elected. At the subsequent 8 December meeting of the board, Georg Heinemann resigned as president of the Society "on account of old age" (he was almost 88). Heinemann probably realized the changes ahead for the Society, and chose to remove himself from the fray and allow a younger man to fulfill his duties. Peter Zimmerman, a trustee from Main Amana, was unanimously elected to fill Heinemann's position. Zimmerman, the manager of the Amana Woolen Mill, had served on the committee commissioned by the board in April to present the Society's financial status to the members. He was a judicious man who had many outside contacts and a great business ability (gained during his long tenure as manager of the Amana Woolen Mill).⁴²

During the middle of December 1931 Barnes brought his version of a reorganization plan to Swift, who reported that "it will be necessary for several changes to be made in connection with [Barnes'] plan of reorganization and in connection also with the plan I had submitted."⁴³ Barnes and Swift met with Attorney General Fletcher on the evening of 17 December to discuss the plan.

On 2 January 1932 as the Committee of Forty-Seven met together for only the third time in Main Amana. This was a meeting of marathon proportions and of great importance, for it was at this meeting that the final plan was explained to all the local committee members and voted upon. The meeting convened at 1:30 p.m. and, with two extended recesses, lasted until 9:25 that night. Swift and Barnes were present.

⁴² Board of Trustees Minutes, 8 December 1931, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

⁴³ Oral Swift to Peter Stuck, 18 December 1931, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

At the start of the meeting the resignation of Henry G. Moershel from the Committee of Forty-Seven was accepted. Moershel had been elected to the Board of Trustees a few weeks before, and, as a trustee, was no longer eligible to serve on the committee. One of the leading voices for reorganization, Moershel did not fade completely from the process. He would be present at later meetings of the committee, and no doubt exerted a great deal of influence on the actions of his replacement, his brother. William August Moershel fit perfectly the criteria of a committee member. Slightly younger than the median committee member age of forty-one, Moershel had been educated on the outside as a pharmacist. Like many other committee members he had left the Society for a time.

After hours of listening to Swift and Barnes read the plan, a motion was made by Dr. Hermann and seconded by A. T. Ratzel of South Amana that a vote be taken on approval. The ballots revealed that the vast majority of the committee, thirty-nine to six, approved of the plan. Precisely why six members voted against the plan is unknown, as are their identities. Whether their disapproval was based upon a general opposition to reorganization or whether it was based on some provision of the plan is not recorded. The approved plan was sent to Fletcher, who reviewed it favorably, and Fletcher's letter giving enthusiastic approval of the plan was read at the next Committee meeting on 13 January 1932.⁴⁴

From the beginning the committee had always intended to have the plan approved or rejected through a simple yes or no vote by the membership. The purpose of the 13 January 1932 meeting was to establish the criteria whereby such an election could be held. Once this was accomplished, a motion was made that all the committee members pledge their support to the plan as it now stood. Despite

⁴⁴

John Fletcher to William Moershel, 6 January 1932, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

the fact that six had voted against the plan only a few days previous, all the members agreed to this pledge. At the end of the meeting, the fifth at which all the members of the local committees were present, the General Committee was effectively disbanded. Presumably because the minutiae had been handled and a large group would no longer encumber action, it was decided that all forty-seven members would now be allowed to participate in the meetings. With that decision, the meeting adjourned with no plans for further discussion until after the Society-wide vote.

Whether the outcome of the 1 February 1932 vote was ever in question is doubtful. The test vote taken the previous June had already indicated strong support among the membership for reorganization, and there was no reason to suppose that this support had dissipated in the succeeding six months. One concern may have been whether Middle Amana, the only village to oppose reorganization the previous June, would now reject the final plan. Printed copies of the reorganization plan, in both English and German, were prepared and distributed to the members in late January. The German version, a translation of the original English, had been carefully checked by O.J. Elsenblast, Swift's junior partner in private practice.⁴⁵

The polls opened at noon and closed at 3:00 p.m. on 1 February 1932.⁴⁶ During this period, 271 ballots were cast in Main Amana, only four of which opposed the plan. In other villages the result and process were much the same. While the plan was approved by over 96 percent of the population, however, some

⁴⁵ The German version of the plan, over a thousand copies, was printed by a Chicago firm, rather than by the Society's own print shop. This may have been done to facilitate greater speed in printing as the Amana shop still hand-set all type at the time.

⁴⁶ In High Amana, the polls closed after only an hour, all sixty-two residents having cast their ballots in that time (High Amana Poll Book, 1 February 1932, Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author).

significant patterns can be seen from village to village. In South Amana, for example, where the first vote to proceed with drafting a plan for reorganization had received 96 percent approval, the plan itself was opposed by eleven of the 113 residents voting (or about 10 percent). In Main Amana and Homestead, where reorganization had also been strong in the June vote, approval of the plan was almost unanimous. Voting results are presented in the table below (Table 2).

Table 2. Voting results of 1 February 1932.⁴⁷

Village	Yes	No	%Approval
High Amana	62	0	100%
West Amana	88	1	99%
Homestead	116	1	99%
Main Amana	267	4	99%
East Amana	64	1	98%
South Amana	102	11	90%
Middle Amana	186	23	89%
TOTALS	885	41	96%

The most dramatic shift from the June vote was in Middle Amana. In June only sixty-five people had voted to pursue a plan for reorganization; in February 186 residents approved the final plan and only twenty-three opposed it (or an approval margin of 89 percent). While Middle Amana's opposition to the plan was the highest of any village, it still represented a marked turnaround from the general vote the previous June. This shift can be attributed to several factors, the most important being education. In the interceding months Middle Amana voters had heard advocates of reorganization explain the dire financial straits of the community. They also had ample time to review the plan and its various features, such as medical benefits for members. This may have helped to allay some of their

⁴⁷

Results are as reported in *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, 4 February 1932.

earlier fears. Amana local tradition suggests that more direct pressure was placed on residents by members of other villages and by Society leaders who suggested that, unless Middle Amana supported the plan, the whole Society would have to dissolve. Also in the intervening months the beloved John Heinemann, Middle's chief elder and a staunch opponent of reorganization, had died. Without this champion to lead them, Middle Amana voter opposition began to falter. The antipathy which other villages displayed towards Middle Amana after the June vote also may have played a role in the shift. Middle Amana residents did not want to be thought of as "backward" or as loafers who coasted along under the old system.

The final results of the vote on the new plan were 885 for and forty-one against, or an approval of 96 percent. In the subsequent weeks all the members of the old Society signed a new Society constitution. Each village was given a small booklet which contained the plan, in English, and several blank pages for signatures. Since several of the booklets are hand-dated 2 February, it appears that the votes were tallied immediately following the election the day before and that some sort of gathering was held at which the booklets were presented for signature. Those members who opposed the plan were encouraged to resign themselves to the inevitable and also sign the documents, all within a few days of the election, so as to display a united front to the outside world. The approval was afterwards portrayed as unanimous, but the actual returns do not support this contention.⁴⁸

The approved plan in its final form established a joint stock corporation with authority vested in a thirteen-member board of directors. Each member of the old Society who had reached the age of majority, defined by the Society as age

⁴⁸ The seven signature booklets are in the archives of the Amana Society, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

twenty-one, was to receive one voting share of stock in the new corporation. These voting shares, or "Class A" stock, entitled the holder to payment of medical and burial costs by the Society. In addition to the membership share, each adult member received an additional share of prior distributive stock for each year of service they had given under the old corporation. These shares were known as "prior distributive," literally, because they were distributed once Class A shares had been provided for all members. The value of these prior distributive shares was ultimately determined by calculating the years of service of every adult member and then dividing this total (plus the number of membership shares) into the total valuation of the Society. Essentially, the broad powers granted the new Society by the reorganization plan (and the Articles of Incorporation that were later drawn from it) allowed the new corporation to continue all of the industries and farming practices of the old Society. The major differences from the old Society were that members would receive stock and wages, and that the religious life of the community would be separated from the business activity of the Society, a marked contrast to the old Society in which church elders controlled everything.⁴⁹

On 5 February the Main Amana Local Committee met for the last time. At this meeting the process of establishing lot lines was discussed, and two local men were appointed by the committee to serve on the three-man committee delegated to lay these lines (Henry Zimmerman, the third member, had been appointed by the local council). No formal statements suggesting that this was the last meeting were made; the committee simply never assembled again. It was probably due at least in part to the Main Amana Local Committee's prominence in the Reorganization that the other local committees also ceased to meet at this time. The local committees

⁴⁹ Committee of Forty-Seven, *Plan of Reorganization of the Amana Society*, Amana, privately published, 1932, collection of the author.

were no longer needed; the plans for reorganization had been made and the individuals needed to carry out these plans out could be appointed by the General Committee. The members of the local committees had provided support for the difficult work of the General Committee, and had offered suggestions which helped to improve the final plan and make it more palatable to the membership as a whole. Although these local committees all appear to have been dominated by certain "leading men," their contributions to the reorganization process should not be slighted.

On 13 February Oral Swift sent a typed resolution to Stuck which was intended to be read into the minutes of the next Board of Trustee's meeting. This resolution essentially declared a list of former members of the Society, who had left the community some years previously, ineligible for stock. The resolution was intended to block any attempts by former members, who had not remained with the Society and supported it to its end, from attempting to claim any share of the property. Additions to this list would be made until the very last Trustee meeting in May, assuring that no one who abandoned the Society prior to reorganization would be allowed a share in the new corporation.⁵⁰

In the months before the official date of the change, the Committee of Forty-Seven continued to meet as occasion demanded. One such occasion was on 23 February, when the committee assembled to correct a problem in the reorganization plan. The plan had called for incorporating the Society in the state of Delaware, which allowed corporations to assume perpetual charters, something

⁵⁰ While the Trustees were anxious to exclude anyone who had left the Society from membership, they allowed young people who reached their legal majority before 1 June to assume full membership. Twenty-one individuals were permitted to sign the constitution of the old Society between February 1932 and late May. The last individual to join the old Amana Society, Clarence Haldy, did so on 26 May 1932 -- four days before it ceased to exist. The constitution is in the Archives of the Amana Society.

which Iowa law did not. Unfortunately, it was discovered after the plan had been adopted that incorporating in Delaware would mean that the Society would have to maintain an office there. Since the cost of maintaining such an office was prohibitive, Swift recommended, and the Committee approved, that the Society incorporate under the laws of Iowa. This decision must have been made with some trepidation, for it meant that the members of the Society would have to vote to renew the charter every twenty years, and a majority of negative votes would mean the end of the corporation.⁵¹ Once the Committee had approved the change, it was sent to the Board of Trustees for approval. Since this represented a major alteration in the already approved reorganization plan, the Trustees ordered that copies of the amendment had to be signed by all the members who had signed the original agreement. This process was completed within two weeks.⁵²

Apart from reorganizing the secular affairs of the old Amana Society, the religious affairs also required some form of legal organization. The decision was made to draft Articles of Incorporation for what was to be called the "Amana Church Society," and these articles were presented to the Board of Trustees on 23 March 1932. Essentially, the new articles appropriated, almost word for word, the structure of the Society's original constitution. On 26 March the Trustees met to consider the articles, but felt that legal counsel was needed and declined to approve them at that time. Don Barnes, the attorney who had helped draft the final form of the

⁵¹ The conflict which the 1952 charter renewal occasioned amply justified any fears that the members of the Committee may have had about such a procedure. A change in Iowa law permitted the Amana Society to finally assume a perpetual charter in 1990, after having to endure the anxiety of charter renewal votes twice.

⁵² Seven copies of the amendment were typed and distributed, one to each village, for signature. These are now in the Archives of the Amana Society, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

reorganization plan, was hired to make the necessary changes.⁵³ The Trustees approved the final document in time for the Amana Church to be a legal entity by 1 June 1932. It was important that the church have legal status by this date so that the old Society, upon its dissolution, could transfer ownership of the church buildings and property to the Amana Church.

Thus it was that, by March 1932, the Amana Society had established and approved a plan for reorganization. Although some members of the Society may have held reservations about the plan, they reconciled themselves to the inevitable. During the next three months the Society prepared itself for its final conversion to a capitalistic corporation on 1 June 1932. The members of the Society who had worried about possible bankruptcy or who had chafed under the restrictions of the Society were now given new hope. The difficult developmental process, conducted by the various committees, had given birth to a new sense of possibilities. A new sense of optimism prevailed in the community, submerging the complaints of some older members who mourned the failure of communalism. By March 1932 it seemed that the committees had successfully provided a way for the Society and the church to weather the depression through reorganization. Only the coming months, however, could accurately judge how successful they had been.

⁵³ Board of Trustees Minutes, 26 March 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

CHAPTER FOUR: FINALIZING THE PLAN

[Was there a lot of fear about the Change among the people?] I don't know if it was fear, curiosity or what. I know, from my part, I was very curious [about] what was going to happen next.

-- Elizabeth Werner Christen, 1982¹

By the early spring of 1932 the people of the Amana Society had approved a plan of reorganization and set their eyes toward a new horizon which did not include the system of communal living under which most of them had lived their entire lives. Because the plan for reorganization set the date for the final transfer of power and property from the old Society to the, as yet uncreated, Amana Society on 1 June 1932 preparations for this "great change" in ownership and lifestyle had to be made within a matter of three months. During this time outside appraisers swarmed over the yards of Amana residents, the communal kitchens were closed and their contents auctioned off, and the new corporation's business office opened for business.

At the 23 March 1932 Board of Trustees meeting participants discussed the process by which the property of the Society was to be assessed. Such an assessment was necessary before a valuation could be placed on the proposed shares of stock. At the 23 February General Committee meeting where the incorporation was discussed, Peter Stuck and Dr. Henry Moershel announced that they had been appointed by the Trustees to manage the appraisals of the shops and kitchen houses. A plan was generated at this meeting in which the seven local committees were instructed to appoint a subcommittee to handle local appraisal

¹ Elizabeth Werner Christen, interview by Kirk Setzer, 25 February 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

work. These sub-committees, in turn, met at Homestead on 25 February to establish a uniform course of action.

The final plan for appraising the Society's property involved a great deal of outside assistance. Stuck and Moershel approached Anston Marston, Dean of the Engineering Department at Iowa State College to lead the appraisals of the 162 shops and the Society's two woolen mills at Main Amana and Middle Amana. Marston made his initial inspection on 16 March 1931 and the final valuation was submitted on 18 April. Marston's speed in completing the appraisals was due largely to the able assistance of three of his graduate students: Charles G. Parsons, Wallace Rogers and Dudley Day. Parsons, who supervised the field work, based his master's thesis on the project. For the most part, the Marston team requested the managers of each shop to make detailed inventories of their equipment, and then the team used standard appraisal formulae to determine the value of the tools, equipment and buildings which composed the industrial operations of the Society. The industries evaluated included six saw mills, a flour mill, three grain elevators, two woolen mills, a soap factory, four hotels, and the various bake shops, slaughter houses, basket shops, blacksmith shops, broom shops, cabinet and carpenter shops, cooper shops, harness shops, machine shops, tailor and shoe shops, wagon shops and other industries common to all seven villages. Aside from the amount of work done by Marston's team, however, the homes, kitchen houses and farms were evaluated by still other appraisers and appraisal methods.²

² For information regarding the Marston survey of the Amana industrial property see Charles G. Parsons, "Valuation of the Industrial Property of the Amana Society," (M.S. Thesis, Iowa State College, 1932). Parson's thesis holds the unique distinction of being the first of what amounts to now well over a dozen Master's theses and doctoral dissertations on Amana related topics.

The Society brought in other appraisers from Des Moines and Cedar Rapids to help the villagers place a value on the equipment and utensils that had previously been common property. The engineering firm of Howard R. Green and Company of Cedar Rapids spent several days surveying the villages. Since all the property in the Amana villages had been commonly held, no divisions existed between the yard of one family and that of another. In some cases two households might even share a building, such as a woodshed, which stretched behind them both. In the case of at least one Main Amana residence the outbuildings and structures situated near the lot line forced the surveyors to create a lot border with six corners on one side.³ Adam Clemens, a member of the Committee of Forty-Seven and a self-taught surveyor, assisted in drawing plat maps for the new lots, a difficult task given the unusual configurations required. Sixty years later a plat map of the village of Main Amana still resembles a crazy quilt. The plats for the other six villages, which had been settled somewhat later and usually followed a simple block plan or, in the case of Homestead, merely a line of houses fronting a street, were much less complex.

One of the most time-consuming aspects of the appraisal process concerned the kitchen houses. A complete inventory of items in them, down to the number of forks and spoons, needed to be made. Large and detailed forms were printed and supplied for these inventories. The forms appear to have been filled out by the various kitchen bosses and their staffs with some input from the local

³ The original plats for the Amana villages can be found in Lawrence Rettig, *Amana Today: A History of the Amana Colonies From 1932 to the Present* (South Amana: privately published, 1975), 158-168. The lot with the six-sided line is Block 8, Lot 3. In the 1950s, when neighbors wished to demolish their half of the shared woodshed, it was discovered that a major support beam was located two feet over the lot line. Thus, part of this building stands on the adjacent lot.

appraisal committees. Items noted ranged from large copper boilers to silverware, and inventories of these kitchens ran to several pages for each kitchen.⁴

With the end of the communal system the communal kitchens would cease to operate. For years many members of the society had not bothered to eat in the large communal dining rooms, preferring, instead, to stop at the kitchen with a basket and take home their allotment of food. Thus, most Amana families were already accustomed to eating in their own homes, although the food was prepared for them at the kitchen houses. Change would come, after 11 April, in the fact that now women would also have to prepare meals in their homes instead of picking them up at the kitchen house.

The closing of the kitchens also meant a complete disruption of the lifestyle of most Amana women. Since the age of fourteen, most females had spent their whole lives working in the kitchen houses, with only those women who had small children or were elderly or infirm excused from this duty. For some women, the closing of the kitchens represented an unwelcome end to a pleasant part of their lives. One woman later recalled "I missed the kitchens and the girls I worked with. Sure it was easier to cook for my husband and myself instead of [for] thirty people, but I missed the girls in the kitchen."⁵ Although many women, in remembering the kitchens, felt a sense of longing for the camaraderie they had experienced, others were glad to see them end.

For some women, the opportunity to cook what they wanted, when they wanted, instead of being governed by a kitchen boss, was a welcome event. Many

⁴ Examples of these forms can be found in the F. A. and Louise DuVal Papers, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁵ Emilie Zuber Hoppe, "A Story Recalled," unpublished paper, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, 1981, 13. The resident quoted is Minnie Setzer of High Amana, who had worked in the communal kitchens for over thirty years prior to the Reorganization.

younger women, especially those who wanted to attend high school, saw the closing of the kitchens as their liberation. For all the women, as well as the men in the Society, the closing of the kitchen houses, more than any other aspect of the reorganization signified a change in their lifestyle. At least one Amana husband viewed this change with some trepidation, noting "I seldom have eaten anywhere else . . . so I don't know what it will be like. In fact, I don't know much about home cooking. I don't even know how good a cook my wife is. She always had someone to cook with her under the kitchen system, but I guess we will get along alright."⁶

Even after the reorganization the factories, many of the shops, and the church would continue as they had before, the only difference being that people received wages. When asked what they recalled about the reorganization during the Amana Heritage Society's 1982 oral history project, the vast majority of the over one hundred subjects noted the closing of the kitchen houses. Few of them recalled the heated arguments over whether or not to reorganize, the work of the Committee of Forty-Seven or a shift in work patterns. For them, the reorganization represented a change in eating habits more than anything else.

On 11 April workers served the last meal in the kitchen houses. Since the reorganization officially did not occur until three weeks later, it can be said that the kitchens did not even survive to the end of the communal system. The kitchens were dissolved earlier so that residents would have enough time to purchase stoves and utensils, all on credit, from the local general store. Realizing the significance of the event, the *Des Moines Tribune* dispatched a reporter and photographer to cover the final communal meal. The resulting article, which briefly described the reorganization, included two photographs of the last meal at the

⁶ "What's What Out on the Acres" [interview with William Zuber, Middle Amana Farm Manager], *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 7 April 1932.

Beck Kitchen House in Homestead. As the article noted, most of the members had eaten their meals at home for the last few years, and had entered the kitchens only to fill their baskets with food to be reheated. Either because it was the last meal or because the word had gone out that a newspaper photographer would be there, the Beck dining room was filled with members in suspiciously fine attire.⁷ Although the caption under one of the photos printed with the resulting article began “smiles and laughter rather than tears prevailed [at the final meal],” the occasion was not one without sadness for many members. A young woman in West Amana, who eagerly awaited the new experience of cooking in her own home, recalled one of the older women at her kitchen suddenly bursting into tears while preparing the last meal; soon, the other women were also crying. Almost seventy years later some former Amana kitchen workers still claim to miss the camaraderie and disciplined work environment of the kitchen houses.⁸

Following the closing of the kitchens, Society officials held auctions in many of the villages to dispose of the goods. Before these auctions, the kitchen workers were allowed the opportunity to buy items they wanted. Everything was then placed on sale at auctions which were opened only to Amana residents. In West Amana five separate auctions were held in secession on the same April day. A crowd of potential bidders trekked from one kitchen to another, and then to the local butcher shop to purchase items, or to at least view the proceedings. Emil Miller, of West Amana, served as the auctioneer, and Carl Flick, a member of the Committee of Forty-Seven, served as clerk of the auction at which most items “were

⁷ *Des Moines Tribune*, 11 April 1932, 1, 3. Louise Kippenhan Selzer, one of the members pictured, remembers the occasion well, and agrees that some preening took place for the benefit of the media. Some of those pictured, including Mrs. Selzer’s then boyfriend, actually had gotten their meals from other kitchen houses, but showed up for the picture. Louise Selzer, personal conversation with author, 27 June 1998, notes, collection of the author.

⁸ Emilie Zuber Hoppe, *Seasons of Plenty*, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 219.

sold at a low price.”⁹ The event was reported in the *Williamsburg Journal Tribune*, along with other incidental village news. Rudolph Kellenberger, a talented amateur photographer from West Amana, carried his brownie camera to two of these auctions and snapped a few pictures, the only visual records of the reorganization.¹⁰ Similar auctions were held within the next few weeks at Middle Amana and at Homestead and the method in other villages was probably similar. At each auction items were disposed of “for little or nothing, as people bought things, [sic] mostly for souvenirs.”¹¹

The low prices realized at the auctions were a reflection of the fact that they were only open to Amana residents, most of whom were using small amounts of hoarded funds or were borrowing against their, as yet, undistributed shares, to make purchases. The auctions were not intended to serve as money makers; rather, they served as the most equitable way to divide the leftover items from the kitchens with the least hassle and squabbling. Later, some residents would charge that members of the kitchen staffs had withheld certain items, a charge which led one former employee of the Noe kitchen to firmly insist that every item in her kitchen was made available at their sale. This same individual, out of sentiment, wanted to buy several items, but was restrained by her mother who cautioned economy.¹² Six decades later she remained proud of the vegetable slicer and other items that she had purchased, and bemoaned the items which she had not. Garden seed, jams, jellies, sauerkraut and other food items were distributed

⁹ “West,” *Williamsburg Journal Tribune*, 21 April 1932; Barbara Selzer Yambura, *A Change and a Parting*, (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1961), 313.

¹⁰ “One Man’s Record: The Photographs of Rudolph Kellenberger,” *Iowan* 33 (Fall 1984), 49.

¹¹ Yambura, *A Change and a Parting*, 317.

¹² Lina Roth Unglenk, personal conversation with the author, 8 March 1998, notes, collection of the author.

among the kitchen workers by the various kitchen bosses at no charge.¹³ Following the sales, leftover items were generally gathered together and taken to a storage place in each village (in Main Amana they were placed in the abandoned calico factory). Residents were then free to help themselves to these items before they were finally discarded.

Even before the kitchens closed Amana residents had to make provisions for cooking in their own homes. Although the large wood-burning stoves found in most homes were adequate for rewarming food brought from the kitchen houses, many felt they were unsuitable for cooking, and certainly not designed for baking. This fact, coupled with the sudden appearance of sales representatives with shiny “bottled gas” and kerosene stoves, led many residents to cash in shares of stock for the luxury of having a decent cooking appliance. By 10 April, it was reported, “[m]ore than 100 kerosene stoves” had been purchased and installed in the villages.¹⁴ The average family had a small stove, a dining room table, eating utensils, and a few items of kitchen paraphernalia, such as apple peelers and pans, purchased at the kitchen sales. Meat and other items were sold at cost to members, who used their annual credit allowances from the Society to pay for these items. For many residents, cooking with the large utensils from the kitchen houses posed a problem. Accustomed to the large kitchen gardens, many Amana people planted enormous plots of land as gardens that spring, since they were simply unable to judge how much to plant for their families. As one resident recalled, “we started a monstrous garden and hauled the cabbage and things

¹³ Elizabeth M. Schoenfelder, “From Three Cups To a Teaspoon,” *Iowan* 2 (June-July, 1954), 40.

¹⁴ “Amanas Eat Last Meals as Communists.” *Des Moines Sunday Register*, 10 April 1932, section 6, 1.

home with a wagon, thinking we would need all this. And we never did.”¹⁵ The large gardens may have been a result of anxiety over the new system, one resident noted, in regard to the gardens, “you...think people thought they would starve if they didn’t raise all that [food].”¹⁶

Adapting to cooking in the home was a slow process, and one in which residents took a great deal of pride. One woman recalled “We had just put an oil stove in to cook with. Then the first Christmas, I got a kitchen cabinet. Was I proud! And then, of course, we had our kitchen sink, too. By and by, the kitchen was made.”¹⁷ Another woman, recalling the repeated trips she had to make to haul water to her primitive kitchen for washing dishes recalled, “that was all right because we still had it nicer, or we thought we had it nicer, than it was in the community kitchen.”¹⁸

As Amana cooks adjusted to preparing meals for families of four instead of thirty or more patrons of a kitchen house, recipes had be recalculated. Kitchen house recipes had been notoriously haphazard, often calling for “the pan with the broken handle full of potatoes.” After the kitchen house utensils had been sold, one cook approached her former kitchen boss and asked what had become of a particular kettle as she needed to know exactly how many quarts it had held. The

¹⁵ Marie Trumpold Geiger, interview by Larry Rettig, 21 January 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa. A number of Amana residents recalled over planting that first spring. However, many gardeners in Amana maintained large gardens for decades, canning excess produce or distributing it to family and friends. After tending the huge gardens associated with the kitchen houses, it appears that Amana gardeners simply could not content themselves with small garden plots. Helen Krauss, interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 6 January 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

¹⁶ Marie Franke, interview by Gaycia Neubauer, 23 March 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

¹⁷ Susanna Hahn, interview by Larry Rettig, 21 February 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

¹⁸ Marie Trumpold Geiger, interview by Larry Rettig, 24 January 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

boss directed her to the woman who had purchased the kettle, and the necessary measurements were made.¹⁹ Amana women spent the first few weeks after the kitchen houses closed testing recipes and pouring over cookbooks purchased from the outside. For some, the chance to try new things was an experience which they clearly relished. One individual expressed her new independence from the old kitchen house menus by buying and serving canned pineapple at the first meal she prepared on her own, the first time she, or anyone else in her family, had tasted this delicacy. For months, one woman recalled, people asked “what did you eat last night” when meeting friends on the street.²⁰

For some women, especially those who had been assigned to garden work and other non-cooking duties in the old communal kitchens, cooking for their families posed particular problems. A brief article in the *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, written only a few days after the kitchens closed, noted that “[h]eaps of kidding is in store around the Amana colonies about housewives knowing how to cook.”²¹ The article reported the comments of two Amana men, one of whom noted that the man whose wife is an experienced cook is lucky, and another who, when addressing the Marengo Commercial club, when asked if all Amana women knew how to cook, replied that “his wife had been cooking two days and he already had suffered an attack of indigestion.” The wife, who was present, swiftly countered that this was due more to the fact that her husband overloaded on her well-prepared meals than anything else.²²

¹⁹ Elizabeth M. Schoenfelder, “From Three Cups to a Teaspoon,” *Iowan* 2 (June-July, 1954), 42.

²⁰ Helene Hergert Hoehnle, personal conversation with author, 1 March 1998, notes, collection of the author.

²¹ Untitled article, *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, 14 April 1932.

²² Untitled article, *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, 14 April 1932. The couple who made this public exchange divorced a few years later.

For some Amana women the closing of the kitchens, far from forcing them into positions as homemakers, opened new opportunities for employment. As early as the end of April a few women were already working in the Middle Amana Woolen Mills, and, a few months later, other Amana women found work as clerks in the Amana Society main office and in various other business; a lucky few were able to attend high school in neighboring towns.²³

As Amana women began to adjust to cooking at home, and all the residents looked forward with both apprehension and a degree of excitement to the pending reorganization, the Amana people were never far from the minds of interested outside parties. In early April, Henry A. Wallace, editor of *Wallaces' Farmer*, began corresponding with Henry G. Moershel of Homestead, soon to become the president of the new Amana Society. This correspondence apparently began when Moershel approached Wallace and asked him to suggest a likely candidate to serve as a farm manager for the Society once reorganization was completed. The plan to have a professional farm manager never reached fruition, although Wallace happily supplied Moershel with several likely candidates. Wallace began, in subsequent letters, to offer other advice to Moershel, reflecting both the interest Wallace had expressed in the Amana Society and in cooperative movements generally. On 9 April Wallace wrote to Peter Stuck, secretary of the reorganization committee, in order to recommend someone he felt could help create a profitable woodworking industry in Amana. In other letters written that month Wallace urged the Society to maintain close ties with Iowa State College in its agricultural work, and suggested other people who might be of use to the Society in proceeding with reorganization. Perhaps the most unusual advice Wallace gave the Society came

²³ "Middle Amana," *Williamsburg Journal Tribune*, 28 April 1932.

in a letter addressed to Moershel on 29 April in which Wallace suggested that, in order to save money, the Society might want to promote a new diet among its members. "If your people wish to have the maximum of welfare with the minimum of work, it would seem to me they should consider living as nearly as possible on dairy and vegetable products."²⁴ Wallace's vegetarian plan was never implemented in Amana, although his advice on other matters, such as agriculture, was highly regarded.

Wallace's deep interest in cooperative associations, perhaps an early indication of his feelings towards the Soviet Union some years later, are contained in some of his correspondence with Moershel and in an editorial he wrote about the reorganization for *Wallaces' Farmer*. In the letter to Moershel Wallace wrote that "you can avoid falling too much for the lure of capitalism. To have your people fall for this at a time when capitalism is just beginning to display its most glaring weaknesses would be tragic indeed."²⁵ In his editorial, published on 9 July 1932, Wallace asserted that the reorganized Amana Society "furnishes a sociological and economic laboratory which may point the way out of some of our difficulties. . . .if we are right about this matter."²⁶

Wallace was far from the only interested outside observer of the reorganization. Aside from the myriad press accounts which appeared in papers around the country, prominent individuals also watched the change with some interest. Among the more unusual of these observers was Fiske Warren, a Boston philanthropist and paper manufacturer, and a leading proponent of the "single tax"

²⁴ Henry A. Wallace to Henry G. Moershel, 29 April 1932, Henry A. Wallace Papers, microfilm reel 14, frame 143-144, Microform Department, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

²⁵ Henry A. Wallace to Henry G. Moershel, April 1932, Henry A. Wallace Papers, microfilm reel 14, frame 143-144, Microform Department, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa.

²⁶ Henry A. Wallace, "The Amana Society is Reorganized," *Wallaces' Farmer*, 9 July 1932, 5.

views of the nineteenth century reformer Henry George. Warren had established several "single tax" enclaves in the east, where all land was held in common and residents paid a "single tax" on their individual plots which represented the rental value of their land. Warren, and other proponents of the single tax were repulsed by landed wealth, and felt that the current tax systems in the nation allowed a landed gentry to escape full taxation. In 1915 Warren had purchased a former Shaker community near his home in Harvard, Massachusetts, for use as a "single tax" enclave. Reading of the reorganization of the Amana Society, Warren saw another possible location for an enclave such as the one he had developed at the Shaker site. In March 1932 Warren paid a short visit to Amana, but found, as he had feared, that the Society was too far advanced in its plans of reorganization to consider his ideas. Warren, however, felt that the Society would not survive, and apparently felt that the contacts he had made during his visit might prove helpful should the opportunity arise for him to initiate his plan in the future.²⁷

Slowly the final days of April passed as officials completed the affairs of the old Society and the residents began to adjust themselves to a life of wages and greater freedom. On 5 April a special meeting of the Committee of Forty-Seven was held in order to introduce 39-year-old Arthur Barlow, the man the former Board of Trustees had hired to serve as business manager of the new Amana Society. Precisely how Barlow came to the attention of the Trustees is unclear. He had been a former examiner for the Minnesota State Banking Department, and was, at the

²⁷ Bertha Shambaugh, the Iowa City author who had written extensively about the Amana Society, recorded a visit Warren made to her home prior to making the trip to Amana, on what was a very rainy day. She appeared unsympathetic to Warren's designs, and noted that he had already come to realization that Amana would be unreceptive to him even before actually driving to the village. Shambaugh's position as the wife of a prominent university professor meant that she often had contact with and entertained, prominent visitors to campus. Among these was the Pulitzer Prize winning novelist and play write, Thornton Wilder, whose correspondence with Shambaugh indicates a great interest on his part, about the Amana reorganization.

time, general manager for the Shores Mueller Company of Cedar Rapids. A resident of Cedar Rapids for only a few years, Barlow had never visited the Amanas until the day he was interviewed for the position. For an annual salary of \$5,000 Barlow agreed to spend his afternoons in Amana as business manager of the new corporation.²⁸ The Board of the new Society realized the need for bringing in outside assistance in order to facilitate the change, especially given the Society's precarious financial condition. Under Barlow's conservative guidance the Society would slowly climb out of its financial difficulties in the next few years, and would, by the time of Barlow's resignation in 1942, be a highly successful corporation.

One of Barlow's first acts as business manager was to systematically evaluate the businesses of the old Society. The purpose of this evaluation was to eliminate those businesses the management felt would be unprofitable in a capitalist system. Among the shops closed were the umbrella and watch repair shops in Main Amana, the broom shops, shoe shops and the village apiaries. Other businesses, such as the butcher shops in Main Amana and Homestead, were retained, while similar shops in other villages were closed.²⁹ Under the old village system each community had its own blacksmith, cobbler, butcher, wagon maker, and cabinet maker, creating redundancies for the new Society. Realizing that it would be impossible for all seven butcher shops, for example, to operate under the new non-communal system, Barlow ordered selective shops to close. Terse

²⁸ Lawrence Rettig, *Amana Today*, 21. Barlow had been hired by the Board of Trustees on 23 March 1932. Minutes of the Board of Trustees of Amana Society, 23 March 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa; Arthur Barlow, interview by Joan Sniezewski, 18 May 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

²⁹ Forty years later Peter Stuck, the Society's secretary, was unable to recall precisely how businesses had been evaluated to determine which ones should remain open and which ones should be sold or closed (Peter Stuck, interview by Jonathan Gary Andelson, 18 June 1971, photocopied notes, collection of the author).

notices, such as the one sent to Homestead broom maker, Carl Hess, revealed the cool business-like attitude of the new manager:

Dear Mr. Hess,

Please be advised that the new system will go into effect next Monday morning, May 2nd. Also please take notice that your shop is to be closed, at least for the time being. Later on we will give further consideration as to the matter of shops and then either continue to operate them by the Society, sell or rent to the individual, or close some of them permanently.

Yours truly,
Arthur Barlow
Business Manager³⁰

Workers in the businesses which were closed were given the opportunity once reorganization occurred on 1 June, to purchase their shops and equipment from the corporation and to operate them as private businesses. Those individuals who elected not to continue on a private basis were guaranteed a job assignment elsewhere in the new Society. The closing of the shops generated some hard feelings in the villages, and decades afterward individuals affected by these closings bore personal animosity toward Arthur Barlow.

With an outsider for a business manager, the Amana Society "Main Office" opened for business on 2 May 1932, in a wing of the Amana General Store. The office contained offices or desks used by Barlow; by Stuck, the secretary of the corporation; and Stuck's father-in-law, William Moershel, who as treasurer of the new Society was the only official of the old organization to play a leadership role in the new one. William Noe, the treasurer of the new corporation, and Jacob Roemig, Barlow's assistant manager, completed the office staff. A small secretarial staff was also assembled and at work that first day.

³⁰ Quoted in Diane L. Barthel, *Amana: From Pietist Sect to American Community*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984), 65.

Symbolic of the new order that began the day the Main Office opened, the newly-appointed Board of Directors of the Amana Society convened this first meeting at 8:00 a.m. the same day. Although the Board met and elected officers, it actually had no legal power until after the official date of reorganization, 1 June. The members of the Board had been selected by a committee chosen from the Committee of Forty-Seven, and most board members were men who had previously not held elected office within the Society.³¹ Five of the new directors were members of the former Board of Trustees and represented continuity between the leadership of the old and new organizations. It should be noted, however, that the trustees selected for the Board, such as Henry G. Moershel, were among the younger trustees and, with one exception, had lent support to the reorganization process. Seven members of the new Board had served on the Committee of Forty-Seven, which leaves little doubt that the Board of Directors had been selected to reflect the spirit of the Reorganization. At the first meeting of the Board H. G. Moershel was elected president, Gustav Miller vice president, Peter Stuck secretary and William Moershel treasurer. The officers represented a mixture of old and new leadership with Miller and Moershel both having served as Trustees and Stuck and H. G. Moershel having led the reorganization process.³² The Board would meet twice more before 1 June, mainly in order to set policies regarding renting cars and selling property to members of the Society once the

³¹ This committee was known as the "Committee of Fourteen" and contained a representative number of delegates from each village, based on population. The Amana penchant for committee making leads to considerable confusion at times, which is why the author has not discussed this committee elsewhere in the text.

³² Board of Directors of Amana Society Minutes, 2 May 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa. Stuck later suggested that he had been offered the presidency, but had declined because he felt it was too political. Some form of prearrangement must have existed with the election of officers, as all the votes were unanimous, with the nominee, in most cases, choosing not to vote (Peter Stuck, interview by Jonathan Gary Andelson, 14 June 1971, photocopied notes, collection of the author).

reorganization was accomplished. They had no official power or authority, and the affairs of the Society remained firmly in the control of the Board of Trustees.

Not only did the the political machinery of the Society start on 2 May, but that date also saw the implementation of Barlow's new system of accounting.

Previously the financial records of each business and village had been kept separately. Barlow immediately centralized accounting at the Main Office and introduced a double-entry bookkeeping system. In Barlow's plan managers had to fill out daily reports of business activity showing cash on hand at the start and end of each day and the amount of cash and credit sales for each day. These reports were picked up by Barlow's assistant, Jacob Roemig, a member of the reorganization committee. The staff at the Main Office had great difficulty in processing all of the sales tickets and reports as they were delivered each day, and a backlog of these records soon developed. Barlow persisted in promoting the new centralized method of accounting, and within a short time it began to run smoothly as his staff became accustomed to the new system. The managers of the various businesses displayed varying degrees of difficulty in adapting to the new methods, but Barlow's persistent meetings with them apparently eased the transition.³³

On 12 May Peter Stuck printed several hundred copies of what he titled *The Amana Corporation News Bulletin*, on a mimeograph machine in the main office. Precisely who authorized the publication of the *Bulletin* is unknown, but it served as an informational guide to residents taking their first steps towards independence, and, later, it evolved into a community newspaper. The first addition of the *Bulletin* announced its purpose, praised the efforts of the main office staff and noted that no wages would be paid on "Decoration Day" because this was a day of

³³ Arthur Barlow, *Recollections of the Amana Society's "Great Change"* (Cedar Rapids: privately published, 1971), 6-8.

vacation. During the coming months Stuck managed to produce an issue every week, although these were often brief, and he was forced to make desperate appeals to Board members, among others, to make contributions to fill up the space.³⁴

During the spring Oral Swift and members of the new Society's leadership had drafted official Articles of Incorporation for the new corporation. The articles were approved and signed on 17 May by the Board of Directors of the new corporation.³⁵ These articles, along with the valuations of the Society's holdings and debts, were then submitted to the State Executive Council, consisting of the Governor, the Attorney General and the Secretary of State, for approval. On 20 May 1932 the Iowa Executive Council, after examining the Articles of Incorporation of the Society and its financial holdings, authorized them to issue stock to the value of \$1,700,000. The final valuation of the old Society, constituting all the buildings, equipment, land, merchandise, cash, accounts receivable and otherwise, was set at \$2,704,556.61 by the Executive Council. Indebtedness, which was to be assumed by the new corporation, amounted to \$490,639.35. The new cooperation now had the legal sanction needed to begin issuing stock, and awaited only action of the Board of Trustees to legally dissolve the old Society and deed its property to the new corporation.³⁶

On 31 May 1932 the thirteen members of the Board of Trustees of the Amana Society met and passed a six-page resolution which essentially stated that,

³⁴ Board of Directors of Amana Society Minutes, 16 May 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

³⁵ The original Articles of Incorporation are in the Amana Society Archives.

³⁶ Ralph E. Kittinger, Secretary of Executive Council, to the Amana Society, 20 May 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa. Oral Swift presented the materials for approval to the Executive Council on 19 May, and their decision was rendered the next day.

since all the legal obligations had been fulfilled and the frame work for the new corporation established, the president and secretary of the Board were authorized to “execute any further instruments of conveyance that may be proper and necessary to effectively carry out the plan of reorganization.”³⁷ By this, the Trustees essentially gave authority for all of their land and holdings to be transferred both to the new business corporation and, in the case of church buildings and cemeteries, to the Amana Church Society. The final part of the resolution stated that, when such conveyance had been made, “the Amana Society (a corporation not for pecuniary profit) be dissolved.”³⁸ Earlier that same day, all fifty-five church elders met and approved the transfer of property as well.

The legal end of the old Amana Society occurred on 1 June 1932, the first day of the new fiscal year. The date probably attracted little notice in Amana, since the kitchens had already been closed for several weeks and wages had been paid since 2 May. On the afternoon of that day, Peter Zimmermann, president of the old Amana Society, and William Moershel, the secretary, personally appeared in the Iowa County courthouse in Marengo and filed two deeds, in accordance with the resolution passed by the Board of Trustees the day before. The first deed, filed at 4:15 that afternoon, conveyed the church buildings, the school houses and the cemeteries to the Amana Church, which had not, as yet, been formally reorganized. Fifteen minutes later the County Recorder set his seal on a second deed by which the old Amana Society gifted the new corporation with all of its remaining property. In a legal sense, the Amana Society, the fourth longest-lasting communal society in the history of the United States, ceased to exist at exactly 4:30

³⁷ Board of Trustees Minutes, 31 May 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

³⁸ Board of Trustees Minutes, 31 May 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

p.m. on 1 June 1932.³⁹ The recording fee was seven dollars. Moershel and Zimmermann then drove back to a community that was exactly the same as when they had left it some hours before; exactly the same, only now, officially, a capitalist corporation.

The formal communal system that had been inaugurated 89 years earlier in western New York, ended in an Iowa courthouse. In a larger sense, however, the communal aspects of life in Amana continued unchanged for several years. Although now working for wages, Amana residents continued to hold the same jobs, live in the same homes, attend the same church services and engage in the same practices of mutual aid that they had before the Change. In this sense, at least, what happened on 1 June 1932 was only a simple legal action; it would be years before the Amana Society would integrate itself with the rest of the world. Nothing really ended on 1 June 1932, but a communal organization began a slow evolution that day, an evolution which is still ongoing.

After recording the last meeting of the Board of Trustees in his minute book, secretary William Moershel took time to ponder the significance of what had just ended. Remarking that the end of the old Society was due, in part, to the neglect of spiritual life by the members, Moershel wrote that he hoped the members would hold true to their fundamental beliefs "and [then] God should remain our leader and guide, and will not withdraw his blessing from us, but his blessed covenant of faith and mercy shall remain until eternity." He concluded, "so help us God. Amen."⁴⁰

³⁹ The eighty-nine year duration of the Amana Society is surpassed only by the Harmony Society of Pennsylvania (1805-1905), the Hutterites of Montana, North and South Dakota among other places (1874-), and the Shakers (1774-). Some current communal organizations may also soon surpass the record of the Amana Society for endurance under a communal organization [Andelson, "The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies," in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. by Donald E. Pitzer, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 202].

⁴⁰ Board of Trustees Minutes, 31 May 1932, translated by Helene Rind and Peter Hoehnle, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

CHAPTER 5: UNITED IN DOING OUR BEST

Should the "depression" force us to make a failure of it now, after consenting to this change upon which we have staked our hopes, it would just about break our hearts. . . . Therefore, let us have faith, that by being united in doing our best, this may not happen. Let us have faith in the future, and let us have faith in the Master of our destiny above us all.

-- Henry G. Moershel, President of the Amana Society, 9 June 1932¹

In a meeting on 2 November 1931 the General Committee which planned the reorganization of the Amana Society adopted a plan for a transition period which had been proposed by the Board of Trustees. The plan stated that since it would be impossible for the then proposed new corporation to pay "customary wages" a transitional period would be instituted during which wages would be paid that "approximated the present sums necessary for support."² The homes and garden plots of the community would remain common property under this plan, and staples and fuel wood would be furnished at cost. Individuals who were unable to work, could obtain credit at the store against their shares or future dividends. During this period, it was proposed, the necessary appraisals and surveys would be completed. The proposed transition period was to last until 1 January 1933. After some minor alterations, the plan was adopted by the General Committee in a vote of seventeen to six.

The arrangement proposed in the plan was that which the Society ultimately followed during the half year following the formal reorganization of the Amana Society on 1 June 1932. The period of transition thus extended the actual period of reorganization of the Amana Society so that, even though it had been abandoned,

¹ Henry G. Moershel, letter, *Amana Society Bulletin*, 9 June 1932.

² Minutes of the Committee of Forty-Seven, 2 November 1931, photocopies, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

vestiges of the old communal system continued to persist even as the new corporation struggled to pull the Amana community back from the brink of financial ruin. During the hectic months at the end of 1932 members of the Amana Society continued to adjust to cooking in their own homes, receiving a wage, and dealing with the new freedoms that reorganization brought them. For some individuals, particularly the young, this was a period filled with opportunity and endless possibilities; for the elderly, however, a period of uncertainty, doubt and disappointment persisted. By the end of the transition period, the Amana Society had completely converted itself to a capitalistic economy, while its members were busily joining the ranks of mainstream midwestern society.

Although the Society had been unofficially operating under the reorganization plan and subsequent Articles of Incorporation since 2 May, the official start of the new system was 1 June 1932. The Board of Directors of the Society had met on occasions previous to this date and taken some actions such as selecting their officers, however, these deliberations were viewed as unofficial. Although various measures were voted on and approved during these meetings, they were all reaffirmed following the official 1 June date in order to remove any suggestion of illegality in the conduct of the Society. The first official Board of Directors meeting was held on 6 June 1932, at the Main Office building attached to the General Store in Main Amana. The meeting convened at 10:30 a.m. and, with a lunch break, ran until 6:30 that evening. The reason for this marathon session was the need for the board to adopt resolutions to the effect that they acknowledged the land received by the new corporation from the old Society. They also agreed to assume all obligations of the old Society and to adopt the first two by-laws to the Articles of Incorporation.

At the first official board meeting a resolution was passed in response to a petition signed by 259 residents, mainly from Middle Amana, to reopen the dental office which had formerly been in operation there. Dr. Unglenk, the Main Amana dentist, was asked to spend a few days each week in Middle Amana.³ In subsequent meetings the board would consider various other issues regarding the free medical services that the Society was bound to offer Class A shareholders under the terms of its Articles of Incorporation. The board also resolved, at this first meeting, that shareholders should be slow to cash in their prior distributive shares for cash, lest the sudden return of stock for cash cause financial problems for the Society. It was decreed that in order to cash a stock share a member must need the funds for financial support in cases where they had no outside investments, were elderly and or unemployed, and had no children or dependents on the payroll who might support them financially.⁴

A surprisingly significant instrument of the Reorganization remained the *Amana Society Corporation News Bulletin*, first published on 12 May 1932, by the corporate secretary, Peter Stuck. The first issues appear to have limited to four hundred copies, enough so that each household in the Society would receive one.⁵ The development of the *Bulletin*, from a hurriedly mimeographed sheet to a professionally-printed paper, with masthead and regular feature columns, largely paralleled the development of the new corporation. The *Bulletin*, and the notices and editorials that it contained, gave “unity and coherence” to the often confusing, if

³ The original petition, dated 17 May 1932, is in the Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

⁴ Amana Society Board of Directors Minutes, 6 June 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa; *Amana Society Bulletin*, 18 August 1932.

⁵ The figure for the number of copies printed comes from a notation Peter Stuck made on his editorial copy of one of the early editions.

not chaotic, early days of the new corporation.⁶ Whether Stuck ever intended the *Bulletin* to be the permanent news vehicle which it ultimately became or whether he intended it merely as a source of information during the hectic days of reorganization is debatable. By the third issue Stuck already began to invite Society members to contribute to the *Bulletin*, an invitation he even made at meetings of the Board of Directors and which assumed an increasingly desperate tone as time went on. The pleas were repeated in several issues of the *Bulletin*, but, by 18 August, an exasperated Stuck noted that only one application had been received for assistance in producing the *Bulletin*, leading him to comment “we wonder, [sic] if you folks are not more interested in this work, whether it is really worth the effort and expense to issue this weekly bulletin.”⁷ A few issues of the *Bulletin* were published during its first months of existence which barely filled two columns on one side of a ten by eight inch sheet. By the Fall of 1932 however, contributions in the form of news reported by “correspondents” in the various villages began to become regular features in the *Bulletin* along with classified advertisements, reports on Society projects and official community announcements. The Society printed the *Bulletin* and distributed copies free to members. The mounting cost of production led Stuck to consider instituting a

⁶ Lawrence Rettig, *Amana Today: A History of the Amana Colonies from 1932 to the Present*. (South Amana: published privately, 1975), 28.

⁷ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 18 August 1932. Examples of Stuck’s pleas for contributions to the *Bulletin* appear in the editions of 26 May 1932, 21 July 1932, 11 August 1932 and in the Amana Society Board of Directors Minutes, 16 May 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa. The official name of the *Bulletin* was *Amana Society Corporation News Bulletin* until 1933, after which was known as the *Amana Society Bulletin*. Since microfilm and other sources have typically identified the paper by its shortened name, the author has chosen to do so here to avoid unnecessary confusion.

subscription fee, but this was not implemented and the *Bulletin* is still a free publication today, subsidized by advertising sales and the Society.⁸

While Peter Stuck and his staff were busy recording the events of the new Amana, August Koch, the Middle Amana pharmacist and official historian of the Amana Society, was busy recording the end of an era. Koch, writing in the official chronicle of the Society, the *Inspirations Historie*, viewed the end of the communal period as a defining break in the history of the Society, and he marked the occasion by reviewing the entire history of the Inspirationist movement from its inception in Germany in 1714 to the Reorganization. For Koch the separation of the Amana church from the everyday business activity of the new Society posed an interesting dilemma. Where once he had been able to record the actions of the Board of Trustees alone, he now was faced with maintaining a chronicle of both the new corporation and the church, a dilemma he neatly solved by writing two accounts for the rest of 1932: one for the church, and the other for the corporation.⁹ While Koch was clearly correct in viewing the Reorganization as a separation of church and secular, the activities of both organizations remained tied to one another for a considerable amount of time. This was largely due to the fact that, with few exceptions, the members of the Amana Church Society were also members of

⁸ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 5 January 1933. The subscription plan probably became unnecessary due to the sale of advertising, a practice that did not occur until the later part of 1932.

⁹ August Koch. *Inspirations Historie*, 1932 (unpublished manuscript, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa). The complete *Inspirations Historie*, written by five different authors, covers the entire history of the Inspirationist movement from its inception in 1714 until the early 1940s. The volumes covering the period to 1897 were written by the sect's first official historian, Gottlieb Scheuner. Following Scheuner's death, the chronicle was continued by Georg Heinemann, who later became president of the old Amana Society. In the 1920s Peter Stuck and August Koch were appointed Society historians by the Trustees. Once Stuck became involved with the Reorganization he left the duties of the office entirely to Koch, who faithfully, if sporadically, continued the record to 1939. After Koch ceased to write the duty fell to Adolph Heinemann, secretary of the Amana Church Society. Heinemann drafted versions of the history until 1942 and then abandoned the project. Only the history covering the years 1714-1923 has been published. Koch, Stuck and Heinemann's manuscripts are now in the collection of the Amana Heritage Society.

the Amana Society. The organizations may have been separate, but, in outlook, community awareness, and membership, they were identical. Almost seventy years later the two organizations, while proceeding along different paths, still share a common membership and the church's books are still maintained by the Amana Society Main Office.

In the early days of the new Amana Society the Board of Directors anxiously sought new ways to increase the faltering income of the new corporation. Since two major highways now crossed the Amana land, an early project revolved around the construction of "oil stations" to serve motorists. An oil station and garage had been established at South Amana in 1928, and the Society now sought to expand its gasoline sales and service work by constructing more stations. Propositions were sought from a variety of oil companies who might be interested in starting a station in the Amana area in cooperation with the Society. These proposals were solicited in early June of 1932 and by 7 July an agreement was reached with Midway Oil to operate two stations: one at Homestead and the other at Main Amana.¹⁰

An interesting part of the process of establishing the stations was the selection of a building design. The executive committee of the Society was divided on this issue with one member, Dr. Henry Moershel, the Society's president, arguing strongly in favor of building stations that resembled those seen in outside communities. Arthur Barlow, however, countered this suggestion, arguing that the new stations should be built in harmony with existing Amana buildings in order not to disrupt the distinctive character of the villages. Barlow won the argument, and

¹⁰ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 7 July 1932.

construction began on both the Main Amana and Homestead stations using brick which had been salvaged from the Amana calico mill.¹¹

The salvaging of materials to build the gas stations served a threefold purpose: it allowed the Society to demolish the unused portions of the long defunct calico print mill, and the bricks salvaged from the mill and reused in the construction of the oil stations represented a savings in materials. The third purpose behind the salvage was that it provided jobs for members of the Society who might otherwise have been unemployable due to age, lack of usable skills or need for their services. Thus, the salvage of the calico works served the same purpose as some of the New Deal programs which the Roosevelt administration launched the next year: providing work for the unemployed at a task which gave them a sense of worth and income and which at the same time provided a useful outcome for the rest of the Society.¹²

Construction on the stations proceeded rapidly after the foundations were laid in early August, and by the first week in November 1932 both stations were in operation. A notice in the *Bulletin* of 10 November strongly urged Society members to patronize the new stations, suggesting that "those who own cars fill up at one of our stations before they leave the colonies and again upon returning, if possible."¹³

¹¹ Keith A. Sculle, "Amana's First Decisions about Roadside Architecture: An Index to Cultural Change," *Annals of Iowa*. 49 (Fall 1988). Sculle's study is the best source for information concerning the construction of the first Amana service stations.

¹² The removal of the foundation remaining after the destruction of the South Amana cabinet shop was probably a make-work project similar to the salvage at the calico factory. The cabinet shop had burned years before, and there was probably little need to remove what remained of its foundation, except that it provided work to those who needed employment (*Amana Society Bulletin*, 18 August 1932). Following the demolition of the gas station in the early 1990s, some of the original brick was again salvaged and was later used to repair storm damage sustained by the Main Amana Woolen Mill in 1998.

¹³ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 10 November 1932.

The new stations provided a source of income to the Society, and they also helped to promote a practice which benefited the Society's other business interests: tourism. At this early date the Society did not actively promote tourism in the villages, but they were undoubtedly aware of the fact that the growing stream of visitors who came to the colonies contributed to retail sales. Thus, any action which might somehow force potential visitors to stop in the villages, such as the establishment of service stations, was seen as beneficial. Within a short time the Society expanded its visitor-oriented business by starting sandwich shops in Homestead, South Amana and Main Amana. The first such establishment, at Main Amana, opened in 1933. These sandwich shops did more than serve food and coffee, as they offered visitors a small selection of Amana-made products, such as wool blankets. The sandwich shops were essentially retail outlets for Society products, and the shops at all three sites were under the management of men who were also actively connected with the local general stores. It appears that the Society felt the general stores would continue to serve the needs of residents, while the sandwich shops were to cater to the needs of the traveling public. The new sandwich shops were immediately popular and, like two of the service stations, one continues to operate today.¹⁴

Further evidence of the Society's desire to encourage tourism after the reorganization came the following January, when an editorial in the *Bulletin* urged

¹⁴ The sandwich shop at South Amana operated until the 1960s. The high point in its history came in 1941 when the actress Katharine Hepburn, on a cross country trip, stopped there for lunch. The Homestead sandwich shop, originally a small building constructed from bricks salvaged from the calico factory at Main Amana, was later expanded and today it operates as a diner under the name "Homestead Kitchen." Like its South Amana counterpart, the Homestead shop has drawn its share of Oscar-winning actresses a modern guest being Patty Duke. The Main Amana sandwich shop, which, like the one at Homestead, stood near the service station, only operated short time. Its managers, William and Lina Leichsenring, took their food service experience in hand when they founded the popular Ox Yoke Inn Restaurant at Main Amana.

members to maintain flower beds and other decorative plantings rather than to spade the yards entirely into vegetable gardens. "A beautiful and unique appearance [in] our villages," the editorial suggested, "will attract outsiders and tourists from coast to coast and help increase our trade." Clearly, the leaders of the new corporation were well aware of the possible benefits to be reaped from an increased tourist trade.¹⁵

During June of 1932 members of the corporation were formerly issued their stock certificates.¹⁶ Each adult member (defined as anyone over the age of twenty-one for men and over eighteen for women) received a single Class A voting share as well as one additional share of prior distributive stock for each year of service they had given the old Amana Society beyond their age of majority. Children who had only one parent, or who were orphans also received shares of stock. If one parent was deceased, the child received five shares, if the child was an orphan he/she received ten shares. By law, a child with property required a guardian. Since thirty-seven Amana children were issued stock shares each required a guardian. Rather than appointing individual guardians for each child, a move which would have required each child to pay the necessary legal fees, secretary Stuck simply applied for the financial guardianship of all thirty-seven children, a record number of guardianships for one individual in Iowa county history.¹⁷ This move evidently caused some rumblings among the members of the Society, and an

¹⁵ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 19 January 1933.

¹⁶ Distribution of stock certificates occurred on a village by village basis between 17 June and 24 June. The new certificates replaced interim certificates which had been issued earlier. (*Amana Society Bulletin*, 23 June 1932)

¹⁷ "Peter Stuck Asks 37 Guardianships," *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, 28 July 1932. According to his long-time secretary and members of his family, Stuck remained extremely proud of his service in this capacity.

editorial in the *Bulletin* was printed to explain that the guardianships had been applied for merely in the interest of saving money and effort.¹⁸

Among the most interesting of the new activities undertaken by the Society during the summer of 1932 were its attempts to find employment for women. After the communal kitchens were closed many Amana women were hired for office work and light machinery operation and inspection work at the two woolen mills. The vast majority of women, however, became homemakers. Since the wages of their husbands (if they were married) were only ten cents an hour during the transition period it became a virtual necessity that women find some way of adding to their family incomes.

The Society tried to provide some means for this by encouraging women to produce traditional Amana crafts for sale and by creating a special section of the Society called "Department W" to encourage women to make preserves and jellies for sale. A notice in the 14 July issue of the *Bulletin* announced the formation of the department, and suggested that uniform recipes would be used in order to insure some consistency in quality and flavor between the preserves made by the various women who participated. The corporation would accept applications for women to participate and would supply them with labels and jars, but, if any preserves were found lacking in quality, the individual responsible could be dropped from the project. Because of the hectic schedule assumed in the early days of the Society the creation of the department was delayed past the time when most fruits could be preserved; nevertheless, the Society hoped that it would be able to market

¹⁸ An editorial comment in the *Cedar Rapids Gazette* humorously surveyed the responsibilities Stuck was taking upon himself by becoming a legal guardian for thirty-seven children: "Peter seems destined to understand why he came into the world with that surname [Stuck]. Thirty-seven children is quite a family." (*Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 7 July 1932, clipping in the F. A. and Louise DuVal Papers, box 3, folder 147, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

preserves from late crops such as Marabella plums, ground cherries and grapes.¹⁹ An application form was provided with the next week's *Bulletin*, and comments in the 1 September *Bulletin* suggest that several women must have applied. These comments also wished good luck to the enterprise which, it was observed, "provides a chance for the women folks to show their ingenuity in putting up preserves and possibly making a little money on the side."²⁰

On 24 November 1932 the *Bulletin* noted that Department W was in the process of placing 655 three-, five-, and eleven-ounce jars on the market filled with apple, blackberry, elderberry-apple, grape, pear, Marabella plum, plum and pear preserves produced by the ten women who had been selected as packers. Sales of the preserves must have been disappointing, however, as Department W passed from the record after this last announcement.

Another type of employment which the Society devised for women revolved around the old kitchen gardens. Several women were hired in each village to maintain at least some of the old kitchen gardens, the idea being that the produce would later be sold. This experiment in truck farming lasted for a few years. In Homestead the "Corporation Gardens" employed eighteen women by August 1932, under the direction of garden "boss" Henrietta Geiger Selzer.²¹ These women worked an average of 99.3 hours that month, 109.9 hours if the relatively

¹⁹ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 14 July 1932.

²⁰ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 1 September 1932.

²¹ Selzer had been employed in the gardens before the Reorganization. Agricultural ability seems to have run in her family, for her brother was appointed the Main Amana farm manager in 1932 and her brother-in-law, Louis Selzer, was the longtime manager of the Homestead Farm. It was Louis Selzer who hired his sister-in-law to manage the gardens, an act which may have had as much to do with the fact that Selzer was a widow with two teenage children and needed some form of income. Most of the other women on the crew were still married; none of the rest would have been the primary providers for their families. The Homestead garden crew was later heavily involved with the production and sorting of hybrid seed corn that the farm department there became heavily involved in by the middle 1930s (Arthur Selzer, personal conversation with author, 19 September 1998).

brief service of one woman is discounted. Most of the women working in the gardens were married and had families at the time.²² In early August the women in Homestead were reported in the *Bulletin* as having been “busy for some time” cleaning and sorting the large number of onion sets produced in that village. The *Bulletin* also reported on the large crop of vegetables raised in Middle Amana and noted ruefully, however, that the market for cabbage was not good and that the women there were putting it up as sauerkraut to “await better market conditions.”²³ Despite early difficulties with the markets, the Amana corporation gardens continued until at least 1936 as a source of employment for women “whose home duties permit[ted].”²⁴

Mildred Barlow, the wife of the Society’s business manager, suggested yet another possible industry for Amana women: the knitting of mittens for skiing. Arthur Barlow attempted to launch such an enterprise, and while on a personal trip to the East, he took along samples of the mittens and was able to obtain large orders for them from Marshall Field and Company in Chicago and Saks and Altmans stores in New York. Unfortunately, the initiating of the National Recovery Act (NRA) for minimum wages, made the knitting venture unprofitable, much to Barlow’s chagrin.²⁵

In the end, it was the women who found employment in existing Society industries such as the woolen mill, who were able to contribute to their family incomes. One such woman was Helene Schmieder of Main Amana who found

²² The statistical data for the Homestead Corporation Garden was obtained from the Monthly Time Book maintained by the farm manager, Louis Selzer, and loaned to the author by Arthur Selzer.

²³ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 18 August 1932.

²⁴ Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, “Amana -- In Transition,” *Palimpsest* 17 (May 1936), 155.

²⁵ Arthur Barlow, *Recollections of Amana’s Great Change*, (Cedar Rapids, Iowa: privately published, 1971), 15.

work in the office of the mill where she served as the secretary to the superintendent Peter Zimmermann. Her remarkable business acumen soon became apparent and Zimmermann assigned her to buy the wool from area farmers that was used in the mill. At least one farmer refused to “sell wool to a skirt,” as he put it, but Schmieder soon won the confidence of even the most jaded suppliers.²⁶

Schmieder found herself virtually the acting manager of the mill following Zimmerman’s sudden death from a heart attack. Zimmerman had been very much a hands-on manager, and it was quickly discovered that the only person who understood the workings of the entire mill was his twenty-year-old assistant. For several months thereafter Schmieder served as the liaison between Barlow and the mill foreman until a new manager could be selected.²⁷ In later years Schmieder served as assistant manager of the mill and as the first female member of the Amana Society Board of Directors in the 1950s. More typical among Amana’s working women was the experience of Dorothy Schuerer, a nineteen year old former kitchen worker from East Amana who went to work at the woolen mill as a weaver. Like the other workers, she received ten cents an hour, and was paid once a month. Sixty-five years later she recalled, “my first paycheck was for \$19.00, and the first thing I bought was a new blue jacket.”²⁸

²⁶ Helene Schmieder Rind, interview by author, 17 March 1998, tape recording, collection of the author.

²⁷ Barlow, *Recollections*, 17; Helene Schmieder Rind, interview by author, 17 March 1998, tape recording, collection of the author.

²⁸ Caroline Trumpold and Clifford Trumpold, “The Great Change from the Communal System to Capitalism: A Short Paper on Its Effect on the Contemporary Amana Citizen,” unpublished paper, collection of the author, 4; One former mill worker recalled receiving five cents an hour, later raised to eight (Anna Hegewald, interview by David Rettig, 28 March 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa). Other mill workers do not seem to recall this differential in pay.

The employment of women in the mills led to controversy when some members of the Society petitioned the Board to show preference in employment to those who had dependents. The impetus for this petition was the reduction in shift time at the woolen mill to five hours. The petitioners were concerned that a head of household, earning ten cents an hour, would be unable to support a family on such wages. They may have felt that single people, particularly women, were taking away jobs from heads of households and that their employment was the cause of the shorter hours. The Board of Directors reacted to this petition by simply instructing the business manager to make such changes as he and the managers found advisable.²⁹ Little action was taken, as some of the women who began work in the mill during 1932 remained on the payroll for decades afterwards. One woman recalls that "some of the married girls with working husbands were laid off due to a shortage of orders for woolen goods," but that she, as a single woman, was allowed to remain since she "totally responsible for [her] livelihood." While some married women were removed, the Society management appears to have felt that single women had as much right to work as did "heads of households."³⁰

Some women became mainstays at the Society's Main Office, serving as secretaries and assistants. The Main Office had begun its operations on 2 May 1932, in cramped quarters attached to the Amana General Store. Although short on space, the office staff continued to expand out of necessity. In early June Arthur Barlow placed a notice in the Bulletin asking for "one or two girls" who might be interested in working in the office to apply. Several women expressed interest in the work of the Society, and, by 16 June, two women were on the staff: Irma

²⁹ Board of Directors Minutes, 21 December 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

³⁰ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 29 December 1932; Caroline Trumpold and Clifford Trumpold, "The Great Change," 4-5.

Schantz of West Amana, who handled the payroll, and Henrietta Roemig of Homestead, who became the assistant treasurer of the Society in later years.³¹

The Main Office remained a hub of activity throughout the transition period, and taxed the efforts of all its employees, both male and female. The space problems faced in the early days of the office were soon alleviated. In late August 1932 the family which had occupied some of the rooms in the building used by the office staff were coerced to move out. Once this space had been vacated, work was begun on remodeling the area.³² When it was finished, the new office, while not spacious, was an improvement over the original configuration. Separate offices were provided for the secretary, business manager and his assistants and the treasurer. Despite the modern office furniture and equipment, the Main Office, like other buildings in the Amana villages, still did not have electricity or indoor plumbing. This inconvenience was felt more acutely by business manager Arthur Barlow, accustomed to the well-lit streets of his home in Cedar Rapids. After one late meeting in Main Amana, Barlow had significant difficulty in locating his car due to the fact that there was no outdoor lighting in the village. Following this experience, Barlow made a point of carrying a flashlight when working after dark.³³

³¹ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 2 June 1932 and 16 June 1932. It is interesting to note that as of August 1998 one woman who worked for the main office during its early period was still doing part time bookkeeping and record work there. One of these women, Elizabeth Blechschmidt, who began work in January 1933, has been an employee continuously since January 1933 sixty-five years. Another early employee of the Main Office presently, at age 91, continues to work as a bookkeeper for an Amana business.

³² *Amana Society Bulletin*, 1 September 1932.

³³ The description of the Main Office is based on a personal conversation with Elizabeth Dickel Blechschmidt in August 1998. Barlow, *Recollections of Amana's Great Change*, 14. At the 7 August 1932 meeting of the Board of Directors, the Society president was advised to explore the possibility of buying a used "lighting plant (generator) for the Main Office." Although the results of the president's investigations are unrecorded, it is likely that such a plant was installed by at least early 1933. A few buildings in the Society had small generators before 1932. The woolen mill at Main Amana, for example, was electrified by such a generator as early as 1924.

During slow news weeks, Stuck often described activity in the Office to fill space in the *Bulletin*. Thus, Amana residents were treated to an account of how some members of the staff had been forced to walk to the office when their car broke down some miles outside Amana, and how well Arthur Barlow did on his first duck hunt. Stuck may have also intended these notices as a means of putting a human face on the office staff, particularly Barlow, who was still viewed with suspicion by many members.³⁴

Male members of the Society continued to perform many of the same jobs for the new corporation that they had performed under the communal system. For many the difference between the old and new ways of business was simply that now they received a paycheck for their work. Over sixty businesses survived Barlow's purge and remained under Society control.³⁵ The two largest enterprises in the Society were the woolen mills in Middle Amana and Main Amana and the farms. The woolen mills continued to run, although woolen sales and orders were very low. By August some of the Society's traveling salesmen reported a slight increase in orders, but these were not large enough to offset the overall trend. By the fall of 1932 the woolen mills had reduced working hours in their two shifts from eight to five. Rather than simply reduce production to a single shift, which would have meant laying off half their work force, the Society opted to keep everyone employed but at reduced number of hours. The primary objective in keeping the mill wheels turning was to keep Amana men at work. There is evidence to suggest that on those occasions when the mills had to remain at a complete standstill for a time, the workers were sent to the woods to cut wood for railroad ties, fence posts

³⁴ For examples of "personalizing" office anecdotes see *Amana Society Bulletin*, 18 August 1932, 22 September 1932, 13 October 1932 Stuck's invitation for members to "get in touch with" the Main Office appeared in the *Amana Society Bulletin*, 29 September 1932.

³⁵ Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, "Amana -- In Transition," *Palimpsest* 17 (May 1936), 151.

and fire wood.³⁶ The mills, given their prominence in the Society's economy, were a topic of increasing concern to Arthur Barlow. By the fall of 1932 he had begun to explore the possibility of handling blanket sales through a New York sales firm, and he would spend time touring woolen facilities in neighboring states in an attempt to learn how to improve conditions at Amana.³⁷ Gradually, after 1932, the mills began to turn a profit, largely through concerted sales drives pushed by Barlow, although they would pass through a period of upheaval before reaching that goal.

Next to the mills, the primary employment for most Amana men was on one of the seven local farm departments. Some older men, displaced when the craft shops they had been working in were closed, found work on the farms. At the time of the Reorganization, all of the over two hundred hired workers that the Society had employed under the communal system were discharged.³⁸ The vacancies left by their departures were easily filled by Amana men displaced from other lines of work. Amana residents and outside observers have often pointed to the large number of outside workers as proof that some Amana people were "slacking."³⁹ They charge that many Amana workers simply feigned illness to avoid labor, and that the Society was forced to hire "outsiders" to do the tasks which members

³⁶ Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, "Amana -- In Transition," *Palimpsest* 17 (May 1936), 151. Shambaugh suggested that the Society saved over \$60,000 annually which would have otherwise been used for the salaries of the hired workers.

³⁷ Barlow suggested contracting with the New York firm of Jehn and Lind at the 12 October 1932 Board of Directors meeting. This suggestion was met with scorn by the manager of the mills, who also happened to be on the board, but Barlow's suggestion won board approval (Minutes of the Board of Directors, 12 October 1932). Barlow's visits were to the Fairbault and North Star Woolen Mills (Arthur Barlow, Report of the Business Manager, Annual Meeting of Amana Society Stockholders in Minutes of the Board of Directors, 13 February 1933).

³⁸ Caroline Trumpold and Clifford Trumpold, "The Great Change," 13.

³⁹ A *Cedar Rapids Gazette* reporter took this assertion a step further in his 23 January 1933 article "Communism Ends for Cows as Well as Folk at Amana," in which he suggested that "Muley and bossie must be 'worth their groceries' and prove it if they continue to enjoy the privileges of board and room, medical care and valet service afforded at the colony barns."

should have been able to do themselves.⁴⁰ The large number of hired workers would seem to support this, as it is unlikely that a fully-functioning Amana workforce would have required that much assistance in tending their 26,000 acres. Many of the hired workers had been associated with the farms for several years and, in some cases, decades. Despite the mandate that they all be dismissed, benevolent farm managers often managed to retain a few of these valued hands.⁴¹

On the farm workers assisted in the production of corn, oats, wheat, milk, beef cattle and hay. By 1932 most of the Amana farm departments had been modernized to the point where tractors were used to some extent, although horses still provided the main source of power in farm work. Louis Schmieder, a nineteen year old worker on the Main Amana farm received \$22.00 a month for operating on of that farm's two tractors to do plowing.⁴² In 1932 the Homestead farm, under its manager, Louis Selzer, employed forty-four men who worked an average of 123.6 hours that month.⁴³ Farm employees began working at 7:00 a.m. and continued at their tasks until 6:00 p.m. six days a week. Working on the farm was hard, but the pay it brought, as one resident recalled, "bought our groceries and we were able to

⁴⁰ Caroline Trumpold and Clifford Trumpold, "The Great Change," 13. The comment that many residents pretended to be sick to avoid work is fairly common among the oral histories conducted by the Amana Heritage Society in 1982. For some examples see: Louis Schmieder, interview by Kirk Setzer, 6 May 1982; Edna and Otto Zuber, interview by Gaycia Neubauer, 3 May 1982; Carl Neumann, interview by Joan Sniezewski, 29 April 1982; typed transcripts, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁴¹ Caroline Trumpold and Clifford Trumpold, "The Great Change," 14; Arthur W. Selzer, personal conversation with author, 19 September 1998, notes, collection of the author. Selzer insists that most of the hired hands on the Homestead farm, where he was employed, were retained after the Reorganization. One worker at the Homestead farm, August Mink, spent over forty years as a hired hand. A fixture in the community, Mink ate his meals with Selzer's family, while continuing to live in one of the small buildings on the west edge of town which the Society had constructed for hired worker housing.

⁴² Louis Schmieder, interview by Kirk Setzer, 6 May 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁴³ All information regarding employment on the Homestead farm is taken from manager Louis Selzer's time book, now in the possession of his son, Arthur.

move ahead, buy an automobile, do things like that, spend a little more money going to a picture show.”⁴⁴ In short, Amana workers, although finding that their duties had not changed much with the Reorganization, still appreciated the freedoms which it offered.

Aside from the salaried labor provided by the Society, many members attempted to establish small businesses, often reopening shops which the Society had previously closed and which they had purchased. Typical of these small businessmen was Carl Hergert of Middle Amana. Hergert had been the shoemaker in that village for over 30 years. In 1932 he purchased his shop equipment, which he relocated to a workroom in his house. Soon advertisements for “Mr. Hergert’s Shoe Hospital” began to appear in the *Bulletin* and other local papers. Hergert promised to help clients “retain a good stand and sound footing” and promised that he was “equipped to remedy all ailments that are liable to befall human foot-wear -- socks and hose excepted.” Hergert eventually supplemented his income by working in the woolen mill, but he managed to keep the shoe shop in operation until 1950.⁴⁵

Other craftspeople, such as the Homestead basket maker, also advertised their services in the *Bulletin*, where a “want ads” section became a popular feature beginning in August when an advertisement requesting a “second-hand wheelbarrow” appeared, followed by an editorial suggestion inviting members use the *Bulletin* as a means of exchange “similar to what the Farm Bureau publication

⁴⁴ Arthur Selzer, interview by Paul Staman, 4 April 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁴⁵ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 8 September 1932. Hergert’s sense of humor, which often took the form of practical jokes, was well-known in the community.

is doing.”⁴⁶ One of the craft services advertised was the work of Ida Werner of East Amana. Werner, blind since childhood, offered bead work for sale at Christmas time. Other residents advertised such items as apples for sale, but the vast majority of the advertisements printed in the fall of 1932 were to offer some item of clothing or furniture for sale. While many of these advertisements undoubtedly represented persons attempting to dispose of outgrown children’s clothing or unused furniture, many may also have represented desperate attempts on the part of members to earn a little extra money. Surviving on ten cents an hour wages, even with all the benefits provided by the Society, was difficult at best. The sale of an extra bedstead, pocket watch or heating stove may have eased a family’s financial situation or provided a few extra dollars to purchase a longed-for bottled gas cooking stove or an automobile.

The summer of 1932, while a busy time for the members of the Amana Society, was not without its diversions. On 4 July a picnic was held to celebrate Independence Day at the Middle Amana ball diamond. Refreshments were served, a speech was delivered by guest speaker J. P. Gallagher, editor of the *Williamsburg Journal Tribune*, two short plays were presented by school students and a baseball game was played between teams from High Amana and Middle Amana. Among the diversions at this gathering was a selection of oil sketches by Carl Flick, a West Amana store clerk who had started to win recognition for his art work. Flick had early come to attention of the noted Iowa artist Grant Wood who encouraged Flick and suggested that he concentrate on painting Amana scenes rather than copying the gaudy landscapes he found on calendars. By the time of the Fourth of July picnic Flick had already staged a one-man show at the

⁴⁶ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 18 August 1932.

Homestead Hotel, and several of his paintings had been included in shows in the East, including a painting, *Amana Interior*, which had hung at the Pennsylvania Academy of Arts.⁴⁷

Despite this foray into the fine arts, the principal infatuation in the Amana Society during 1932 seems to have revolved around baseball. The baseball craze had struck the Amanas in the 1920s as young men from several villages, but particularly Middle Amana, began playing games on secret fields located a distance away from the towns. These games were in direct violation of several injunctions issued by the Board of Trustees against the sport, which was deemed worldly and frivolous. After much discussion and the earnest petitions of at least one of the Society's doctors that baseball was healthy exercise, the ban was lifted.

In 1928 an Amana Athletic Association was formed, and games were arranged between teams representing each of the villages. One of the young men who became actively involved in the baseball craze, William Zuber, Jr., of Middle Amana, demonstrated particular promise. On 3 May 1932, the day after the Amana Society reorganization technically occurred, Zuber signed a contract to play minor league baseball for the Cedar Rapids Bunnies.⁴⁸ This was the start of Zuber's professional career which ultimately led to ten years in the major leagues, including play for the New York Yankees. An apparently short-lived business venture grew out of the baseball craze as Max Hertel, a resident of Main Amana, began turning baseball bats in June 1932. The bats were sold under the Amana

⁴⁷ Emilie Zuber Hoppe, "The Artist of West Amana," *Willkommen* 5 (Winter 1997), 16.

⁴⁸ Cliff Trumpold, *Now Pitching: Bill Zuber From Amana*, (Middle Amana, Iowa: Lakeside Press, 1993), 21. Zuber had been scouted some time before, in the Fall of 1931, by Cy Slapnicka, a Cleveland Indians scout living in Cedar Rapids. At the time, so the story relates, Zuber was helping in the onion harvest. With no baseball at the ready, Slapnicka asked Zuber to hurl an onion at a barn over 250 feet away. Zuber threw the onion over the barn, and this impressed Slapnicka enough to make the necessary connections with the Cedar Rapids team.

Society label, and represented one of many intriguing, but short-lived-business ventures in the Society.⁴⁹

Other recreational opportunities available to members of the Society revolved around the previously established community clubs in the villages of Homestead and Middle Amana. The Middle Amana organization, called the Middle Commonwealth Club, had been founded before the change as a largely social organization. Few records survive of this organization's work, and it was relatively short-lived. The Homestead organization, called the Homestead Welfare Club, had been founded in 1919. This organization, like its counterpart in Middle Amana, primarily was concerned with providing opportunities for social interaction and entertainment for its members. During the 1920s a popular club activity was watching motion pictures which had been rented for the purpose. The club also subscribed to several magazines which were shared and read by the members, and staged annual Fourth of July and Christmas pageants and games.

In January 1932 the Homestead Welfare Club elected its officers and then, presumably by mutual agreement (although no motion was declared) did not meet again until September. The long gap was intended, according to the club secretary, to permit the members time to adjust to the Reorganization. It was felt that adjustment should take preeminence over any sort of social activity. By the September meeting, the club secretary noted, the members had "adjusted [themselves] and [were] used to the new and better ways."⁵⁰ However, the club did not remain totally dormant during this period. In April they sponsored a talk by Arthur Barlow in which he explained the reorganization process to the residents of Homestead; they also sponsored an exhibit of Carl Flick paintings at the

⁴⁹ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 23 June 1932.

⁵⁰ Homestead Welfare Club Minutes, 22 September 1932, collection of the author.

Homestead Hotel and a talk by Grant Wood which opened the event. As always, they sponsored the annual Fourth of July picnic at Homestead. In August, through the assistance of club members, a performance of the play "Wilhelm Tell" was performed by a traveling company of actors, the *Deutsche Wandervogel*, who passed through Homestead on a tour of the world. This performance, one a series of unusual events in the summer of 1932, was well attended.⁵¹

One of the first items of action that the Homestead club took following the reinstatement of regular meetings on 22 September 1932, was to consider the role of women within the organization. Although women had been actively involved in club events and activities, they had never been admitted as members to the all-male organization. The club members now took action to correct this situation by forming a "Ladies Auxiliary." The stated reason for making the change, according to club secretary Carl Fels, was that women "had played important parts in the past years in our programs and entertainments, and as the problems that we face today are of as much interest to them as to [the men], they should not be denied the privilege of entering in [the] discussion of these matters."⁵² In a sense, then, the male members of the club used the changes brought by the reorganization of the Amana Society as a reason to alter their social organization as well. As stated, women had always been active in the club, but had been denied participation in business meetings; this situation changed after the male members elected to admit women by a vote of nineteen to seven. Once established, the Ladies Auxiliary of the Homestead Welfare Club flourished. In 1948 the women of this organization edited a cookbook of old Amana recipes which, in the half century following, has

⁵¹ Henrietta Ruff, *Seasons to Remember: Recollections of an Amana Childhood* (Deep River, Iowa: Brennan Printing, 1996), 56-57.

⁵² Homestead Welfare Club Minutes, 22 September 1932, collection of the author.

never gone out of print and has largely funded all Club activities and charitable giving.

In their homes, residents continued to experience a sense of new-found freedom. Many families were able to convert rooms, or in some cases, portion off a part of a room or hallway, into reasonable kitchen areas. The large copper boilers and frying pans of the communal kitchens were ill-suited to family cooking. As money from wages and other sources became available, families began to purchase cooking utensils more suited to their situation. Six decades after purchasing it, one Amana woman still treasured a Pyrex casserole plate purchased during this period.⁵³ Food stuffs were still purchased at the General Stores, where they were sold at cost to members. Despite the low prices offered by the stores, some Amana residents apparently found better bargains in neighboring communities, for an editorial in the *Bulletin* harangued them against buying outside of the Society. "Boost home trade," the article suggested, noting that whenever a stock holder purchased from a non-Amana business, he/she was actually helping the competition.⁵⁴

Another consumer item in which the residents of Amana, particularly younger men, were interested was automobiles. For many, automobiles were luxury items that were well beyond reach in the days of ten-cent-an-hour wages. Some enterprising individuals however, could not wait to make the trip to Marengo and purchase a car from the local dealership. By the end of 1932 the Amana Society Board of Directors had approved the transfer of 10 shares of prior distributive stock to the Simmons Motor Company of Marengo, and this number

⁵³ Henrietta Ruff, *Seasons to Remember: Recollections of an Amana Childhood*, 27.

⁵⁴ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 4 August 1932.

only increased as time went by.⁵⁵ By the fall of 1934 the Simmons company had taken in 85 shares of prior distributive stock, of which it had sold at least fifty shares to members of the Amana Society who were speculating in the stock. Some residents were able to bid on and purchase the cars sold by the Society which had been used for transportation in communal times. Still other residents were able to find people in neighboring communities to part with a vehicle for the right price. George Selzer, a young clerk at the Main Office, was able to purchase a second-hand Nash in this way, using money saved from a paper route and raising guinea pigs and goats during the communal period.⁵⁶

The rush to buy cars, in part, prompted Arthur Barlow to write an editorial in the *Bulletin* urging members to follow a "conservative course" when making purchases. Barlow suggested that members defer the purchase of non-essential items until such time when conditions had improved. He specifically singled out automobiles stating, "[p]erhaps you have gotten along all these years without a car. Surely then you can continue to do so a little longer."⁵⁷

Many of the young men purchasing automobiles were doing so in order to have transportation to high school. One of the first thoughts that crossed the mind of many young people in the villages was that now they would be able to continue their educations.⁵⁸ Unless selected to do so by the Trustees, no one in old Amana had been able to attain more than an eighth grade diploma. This situation frustrated many, particularly young women, who, as a rule, were not even among

⁵⁵ Amana Society Board of Directors Minutes, 29 December 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

⁵⁶ Barbara Selzer Yambura, *A Change and a Parting* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1961), 303-306.

⁵⁷ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 2 June 1932.

⁵⁸ Henrietta Ruff, *Seasons to Remember: Recollections of an Amana Childhood*, 54-55.

those considered for the positions of teacher and doctor (professions for which they would be sent away for more education). Community leaders, apparently, were already considering the establishment of an Amana high school, but were unable to do so in the short amount of time between the Reorganization and the start of the fall semester. Therefore, any young person who wished to attend high school would have to do so in either the neighboring communities of Marengo or Williamsburg.

Approximately thirty students, fifteen boys and fifteen girls enrolled in high school that fall; six at Williamsburg and twenty-four at Marengo. All of these students came from the villages of Homestead, South, Middle and Main Amana. The average age of the new high school students from Amana was fifteen-and-a-half years, with a median age of fourteen years nine months. The oldest student was twenty years old and the youngest was three months short of his thirteenth birthday.⁵⁹ Most of the students commuted the approximately twelve to fifteen miles to school each day. These commutes were made in recently purchased automobiles and represented an early form of the "car pool."⁶⁰ At least one student boarded in Williamsburg during the week and returned home on the weekends.

Adjusting to high school was far more difficult for these young people than it is for the average eighth grader today. Not only had many of them been out of school for a few years, but many had some difficulty in adjusting to using English.

⁵⁹ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 15 September 1932. A later addition of the *Bulletin* added four names to this list, all students from West Amana. The author has opted not to include these students in his analysis, since all of them attended school some distance from the villages. Statistical information concerning the students was obtained from birth and death records privately maintained by Peter Stuck and now in the possession of the author.

⁶⁰ The students attending Williamsburg High School rode together in a 1927 Model A Ford. The car belonged to one of the older students, and the others each paid him a dollar a week for expenses (Adolph Schmieder, interview by Louise Miller DuVal, 11 May 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.).

While English had been taught in the Amana schools, most conversation was still in German. The new students were self-conscious about their clothes, and, for one young man, his family's lack of familiarity with the ways of the outside world proved especially embarrassing. As he recalled, "my folks bought me a very cheap suit of clothes . . . they thought you had to wear a suit to go to high school. [When] we got there . . . I don't think anyone was wearing a suit . . . the farm boys came in bib overalls and the other kids had their slacks and sweaters and things like that but since [my parents] bought [the suit] why, I had to wear it till it got worn out."⁶¹ The new students from Amana were conspicuous with their homemade clothes and thick accents. On the first day the six Amana students attending Williamsburg High School met at their car at noon and drove a few miles out of the town to eat their lunch while they discussed their worries.⁶² In Marengo, a sympathetic teacher made a point, that first day, of lecturing the student body on being supportive towards the Amana students.

Students from Amana quickly adjusted, and once acclimated to their new environments, they produced fairly outstanding academic achievements. One Amana student enrolled at Williamsburg High School, Christian Hess, ultimately graduated as valedictorian of his class in 1935.⁶³ Social barriers between the Amana children and their mainstream Marengo and Williamsburg counterparts remained strong, however. The social separation between the two groups was intensified by the fact that most of the Amana students commuted to school, leaving

⁶¹ Adolph Schmieder, interview by Louise Miller DuVal, 11 May 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁶² Adolph Schmieder, interview by Louise Miller DuVal, 11 May 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁶³ "Amanan Wins Honors at School He Drove 60 Miles to Attend," *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 2 June 1935.

them little opportunity to participate in extra-curricular school or social activities.⁶⁴ In 1934 a separate Amana school district was organized and most of the Amana students who had not already completed the full high school course enrolled there.⁶⁵

While older students experienced the exciting new environment of high school outside of the Amana villages, younger students also found their schools changed. The school year began the first week of September, and, as in communal days, a school was maintained in each of the seven villages to instruct pupils to the eighth grade level. No major shifts were made in curriculum from that taught in communal times since Amana schools had always been strictly public schools under the direction of the county superintendent. One significant change which occurred following the Reorganization, however, was that students were required to purchase their own text-books. In the past textbooks had been paid for by the Society. These books were in English, and instruction in class was in that language as well. Although English had always been taught in the Amana school it was not until World War I that this teaching was done in earnest. Since the Amana schools were technically always part of the public system they were required to use the textbooks suggested by the county superintendent. These texts were in English, and their use furthered the knowledge of that language among the students. One former West Amana teacher recalls that he "always insisted that [the students] speak in English," although, in his experience, they continued to ask questions

⁶⁴ Yambura, *A Change and a Parting*, 325-327. Yambura noted how this same teacher who lectured the student body on having a positive attitude towards the Amana students painstakingly helped her improve her English diction.

⁶⁵ An exception to this practice was Marie Stuck, daughter of Society secretary, Peter Stuck. Since she had boarded with a Williamsburg couple rather than commute, she formed strong ties to the community, which endured over sixty years.

about their English textbooks in the more familiar German.⁶⁶ The only difference between the schools of communal Amana and those of the reorganized community appears to have been that the teaching staff in some villages was reduced. This was done to lower the tax burden on residents.

Major changes came to the Amana school system in the years immediately following the Reorganization, as the residents slowly consolidated the village schools and established a high school. The development of the modern Amana school system was guided for almost twenty years by John Ruskin Neveln, an experienced school superintendent. Neveln was enthusiastic about the opportunity that the reestablishment of the Amana schools presented. Like Barlow, Neveln was careful to respect local leaders and the unique Amana culture. He proved particularly effective in that he could speak German and that he made a point of communicating school goals and programs, first through the pages of the *Amana Society Bulletin*, and later through a school paper which he established. In three years time Neveln developed an orchestra, built an auditorium and completely reestablished the elementary schools and formed an Amana High School.

During the hectic days of the summer and fall of 1932 Amana residents continued to attend several church services each week. While the rest of the community changed in marked ways the church, at least for the time being, remained remarkably the same. The minutes of the church board of trustees are barely a tenth as long as those kept by the corporation, with many of their thirty-two pages containing official deeds and other records which were read into the minutes. The church board of trustees were the members of the Board of Trustees

⁶⁶ Paul Kellenberger, letter to the author, 5 August 1998, collection of the author. Kellenberger taught in the Amana schools from the late 1920s until leaving for service in World War II. Despite his insistence on using English in the classroom, Kellenberger had a strong fondness for the German language and as a Boy Scout leader once had his students stage an entire program in that language.

of the old Amana Society. At the time of the Reorganization that board simply converted into the new board which governed the newly formed Church Society. This sense of continuity from old to new prevailed in trustee meetings, where old rules and practices were reinforced. Although Amana ceased to be communal, for example, the trustees continued to approve marriages, just as they had done before the reorganization. Perhaps they believed that, since these marriages occurred within the church they still held that jurisdiction. The trustees also reaffirmed restrictions against playing baseball on Sundays and maintained the old schedule of several church services every week.⁶⁷ The Wednesday afternoon service, however, quickly fell by the wayside: since members, now working for a salary, were unwilling to take time off from work to attend the service.⁶⁸ Change was coming, however, and within a year even the conservative trustees would find themselves approving actions that altered the practices of the Amana church in conformity with the post-reorganization situation of the community.⁶⁹

A sign of change in church activities occurred at an East Amana wedding held the summer of the Reorganization. The young couple to be married chose to circumvent the elders by having the service performed by a justice of the peace. Afterward, the benches in the old kitchen house where the service was held were pushed back, friends began to play music and people danced. Although celebrations at Amana weddings had traditionally involved some form of music, this

⁶⁷ Minutes of the Amana Church Society Board of Trustees, 7 June 1932, Amana Church Society Archives, Middle Amana, Iowa.

⁶⁸ Edna and Otto Zuber, interview by Gaycia Neubauer, 3 May 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁶⁹ Trustee business appears to have been fairly light during 1932, despite the tremendous upheaval occurring in the Society at the time. Only six meetings were held between May and the end of the year.

was “the first wedding dance ever held in the Amanas.”⁷⁰ Culturally, the wedding party, and others like them, were breaking away from the strict orthodoxy of the elders which had prohibited such worldly pastimes as dancing under the communal system. Other changes would follow, but it would be 1948 before an Amana bride would wear a white dress and carry a bouquet at her nuptials.

As the fall of 1932 progressed, the time when members would be allowed to purchase their homes rapidly approached. After months of preparation which included finalizing the village plats, appraising the homes and producing a rough form of a deed to be used, the Society was finally ready to begin the process of selling homes. The final form of a deed was approved by the board on 7 September. On 15 September, the *Bulletin* assured readers that the printers were working on the form of a deed and that, as soon as the deeds were finally published, transferal of houses could occur. Although the notice promised quick action, it was not until 3 November that a one-sentence notice at the end of the news column in the *Bulletin* announced that the secretary was now ready to accept prior distributive shares for the purchase of homes. Two weeks later, while the transferal of homes was well under way, a notice appeared in the *Bulletin* suggesting that members consider carefully in whose names their houses were to be registered. The Board of Directors, at their 20 July meeting, had very forcibly stated that any property disputes should be settled by the parties involved, and not by the Board.⁷¹ In many cases elderly residents would contribute a few shares of their stock toward the purchase of the homes which would then be registered in the

⁷⁰ Caroline Trumpold and Clifford Trumpold, “The Great Change,” 5.

⁷¹ Minutes of the Amana Society Board of Directors, 20 July 1932, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

name of a son or son-in-law. In the cases where a home was lived in by two unrelated families joint tenancy agreements were reached.

The transferal of homes progressed rapidly, with over sixty filed by 17 November, only two weeks after the announcement that the Main Office was prepared to handle such transfers. The work of handling the transfers kept Society secretary Peter Stuck very busy. During the day he met with stockholders desiring to purchase their homes, and then did the necessary bookwork at night. Stuck pled with purchasers to be patient as he and his staff were already "spending perhaps more time in the office than we should if we want to keep physically fit."⁷² Shareholders were encouraged to trade prior distributive shares for their homes, which is what occurred in almost every purchase. Stock shares were credited at their book-value of \$65.00 rather than the par value of \$50.00 which they actually held, perhaps in an attempt to encourage redemption of the stock.⁷³ Sales of homes progressed fairly rapidly, by the end of December arrangements had been made for the transfer of fifty-eight homes. During November 1932, the period of greatest activity for home transfers, Stuck processed requests at the rate of 3.4 homes a day. Transfers of homes began to decline so that, by April only eleven were transferred. Although a few homes would still be transferred after May 1933, the vast majority of Amana residents had acquired their homes well before that time.⁷⁴

⁷² *Amana Society Bulletin*, 17 November 1932; *Amana Society Bulletin*, 5 January 1933.

⁷³ *Benton County Star*, 12 January 1933, clipping in F. A. and Louise DuVal papers, box 3, folder 147, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁷⁴ Information on home transfers is taken from notes kept by Peter Stuck as the transfers progressed. These notes, which list transfers chronologically, are in the Amana Society Main Office Archives. An article in the 29 September 1938 *Williamsburg Journal Tribune* announced the sale of the last home owned by the Amana Society.

For those individuals who did not want to buy their home, or who, for some reason, could not, the Board of Directors dictated that a rental rate of 1.5 percent would go into effect as of 1 January 1933. This date was later moved back. The Society also eased the strain on its members by paying all property taxes for the year 1932.⁷⁵ The average cost of a home in the Amana area was \$550, considerably less than the \$1,700 average that reportedly prevailed in Iowa at that time. This was due, in part, to the fact that most of the homes were over seventy years old at the time of the appraisal, and many were in a poor state of repair.⁷⁶

Buying a home represented a welcome opportunity for Amana residents. Since the homes were, for the most part, purchased with the prior distributive shares given them by the Society, no residents appear to have voiced any complaint about having to purchase homes that they had often already inhabited for years. As one resident, a member of the Committee of Forty-Seven, noted, "they could furnish their homes and think 'that's my home now.' Before, it was never really your home because you never knew when the elders would say 'now you have to move,' you don't need as much space, and you never felt secure."⁷⁷

In early December stock-holders were reminded of their status as part-owners of a business corporation in two distinct ways. During that month meetings were held in each village to elect the officials who would nominate candidates for the Board of Directors at the upcoming election. This would be the first time that stockholders would actually have a voice in selecting their board, as the current

⁷⁵ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 19 January 1933.

⁷⁶ The average cost of homes in Amana and that of homes in the area were reported by Richard H. Roberts in notes he wrote for Dr. Benjamin Shambaugh of the University of Iowa and now in the Amana Society Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa.

⁷⁷ Emilie Zuber Hoppe, "A Story Recalled," unpublished paper, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, 1981, 13. The resident quoted is Friedrich Blechschmidt of East Amana.

board had been appointed by the Committee of Fourteen, a subcommittee of the Committee of Forty-Seven which had planned the Reorganization. Meetings were held to elect the delegates to the nominating committee, and the committee met and selected the candidates. A controversy erupted when it was discovered that Peter Zimmermann, the manager of the Amana Woolen Mill, president of the Amana Church Society and a highly respected member of the community, was not among those nominated. In order to remedy this situation, a group of men organized a write-in campaign which ultimately led to Zimmermann's successful election to the Board by a significant margin over all other candidates at the election in February. Their triumph, however, was short lived, as Zimmermann died of a massive heart attack soon after the election.

The second event which reminded residents of the Amana villages of their status as stockholders was a series of informal meetings which Arthur Barlow conducted in each of the seven villages. Barlow was probably motivated to hold these meetings by a desire to quell rumors and misconceptions that were forever floating around the villages. The informal meetings were held during the second week of December 1932 during which Barlow, his assistant Jacob Roemig, Society president H.G. Moershel and secretary Peter Stuck were present to make presentations about the activities of the Society and its plans for the future, as well as to answer questions. The *Bulletin* urged members to attend these gatherings, suggesting that "we are all interested in our Corporation and should all take every opportunity to keep informed of what is going on."⁷⁸

The informal meetings were held over a two week period, beginning on 10 December in East Amana and ending the week of 18 December with meetings in

⁷⁸ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 8 December 1932.

Main Amana and Homestead. Barlow's message at these meetings was that the operations of the new corporation were "satisfactory," and he predicted continued success for the Society provided, "the Class A stockholders keep politics out of elections and vote sanely at the Corporation poles." This last comment was most likely a reference to the controversy involving the nomination of Peter Zimmermann for the upcoming Board elections. As he often did in his public pronouncements, Barlow stressed the poor business conditions in the outside world and he discussed the way in which the payroll would be adjusted after the first of the coming year. This adjustment represented a shift from the standard ten-cents-an-hour wage paid to members during the transition period. After the first of the year, wages would be adjusted, slowly, to reflect the relative value of the work done by each employee. Barlow later supplemented his comments with a brief editorial in the *Bulletin*, which restated much of the same material.⁷⁹ The editor of the *Bulletin* enthusiastically reported on these meetings, and, in fact, used his accounts of the meetings as part of his ongoing campaign to increase stockholder involvement in the affairs of the Society. Stuck wrote, "a fine spirit has been shown by the people of the villages. . . .and it is very gratifying to note the feeling of belonging together and the willingness to work towards the same goal, namely, the success of the Corporation, the welfare of AMANA SOCIETY."⁸⁰

Throughout the year Stuck and Barlow had urged members of the Society to "boost home trade" by buying locally instead of going to neighboring communities,

⁷⁹ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 5 January 1933. The substance of Barlow's presentations has been taken from the editorial and summary which he printed in the *Bulletin* once the meetings had concluded.

⁸⁰ One memorable outgrowth of Barlow's meetings was an anecdote which has been repeated in the Amana area for over sixty years. At the start of the informal meeting held at South Amana, Barlow reportedly asked, "who is chairman of this meeting?" to which an elderly, and presumably hard of hearing resident shouted back, "we are all GERMAN here!" (Henry J. Ruff, telephone conversation with author, 12 August 1998, notes, collection of the author).

and otherwise urged them to keep abreast of the actions of the corporation. Barlow's informal meetings were a further extension of this effort, as were the well-crafted reports he presented at the annual meetings of the stockholders. Barlow would later comment on what he termed the "fine spirit" of the Amana people in cooperating with him and with each other to make the new corporation a success. In a sense, he encouraged this spirit by trying to involve Society members in the business work of the company. Barlow often confided to one of his longtime secretaries that he would have brought friends in from Cedar Rapids to manage the business affairs of the Society, but he realized the importance of having Amana people at his side.⁸¹ As it was, Barlow was resented for his status as an "outsider." Ironically most of the attacks on Barlow were leveled by non members of the Society, who saw in his employment an abrogation of traditional authority in Amana. The Amana community which they had known so long was now being managed by a canny capitalist . Within the Amana community itself criticism was also leveled at Barlow, but, after sixty years, memories of his time as business manager are remarkably pleasant. One elderly resident, when asked in 1997 about her feelings toward Barlow stated, "if he came in[to the room] now, I would give him a hug."⁸² Some members, in a tongue-in-cheek way, took to calling their business manager "Doctor Barlow," since his arrival meant that the old excuses of being sick and unable to work when this was not the case would no longer be tolerated.⁸³

⁸¹ Elizabeth Dickel Blechschmidt, personal conversation with author, 4 July 1997, notes, collection of the author.

⁸² Elizabeth Oehl Wetjen, personal conversation with author, 4 July 1997, notes, collection of the author.

⁸³ Adolph Heinze, interview by Barbara Hoehnle, 17 June 1982; Louis Schmieder, interview by Kirk Setzer, 6 May 1982, typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa. This remark about Barlow occurs in several of the oral history transcripts made by the Amana Heritage Society in 1982.

Once Barlow was on the scene, this joke implies, a lot of members were suddenly cured.

A week after Barlow's meetings were concluded the members of the Amana Society celebrated Christmas. Adeline Taylor, a *Cedar Rapids Gazette* reporter who wrote a number of articles about social conditions in the Amana Society, wrote a short piece about the Christmas traditions of the villages, which were still heavily imbued with German traditions. Taylor concluded her piece by noting that, in the Amanas, there would be "no family without a Christmas dinner, no home where Santa has not visited, no child whose shoe has not been filled with candy."⁸⁴

The meaning behind Taylor's words can be easily discerned: unlike many others in Depression era America the people of Amana all had jobs, and, although their wages were low, they had regular incomes. Members of the Amana Society also were beneficiaries of the unique benefit system which had been created through the Reorganization. Unlike many families, those in Amana did not need to worry what would happen if one or both parents were to become ill or incapacitated, they knew that the stock and the medical benefits they received from the Society would provide for their families.⁸⁵ As Taylor observed, a degree of security existed in the quiet villages as the celebration of Christmas 1932 occurred.

The end of the eventful 1932 was a time of reflection for many, and messages which embodied a degree of introspective analysis of the past year were published in the year's final installments of the *Bulletin*. Three days before Christmas, the secretary wrote a brief editorial in the *Bulletin* which stated:

⁸⁴ Adeline Taylor, "Christmas Spirit Ideal in Amana Colonies: Santa Visits Every Child." *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, December 1932, clipping in Arthur Barlow Scrapbook, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

⁸⁵ Shambaugh, "Amana -- In Transition," 174.

These Christmas days should give us a little time for quiet contemplation and reflection of what this year, which is now so near its close, has brought us. How uncertain was the outlook a year ago, how doubtful seemed the future of our corporation, how much courage did it take to take those first decisive steps towards a change in our organization. . . . The future immediately ahead of us is not so bright on account of the awful depression in practically all lines of business. Never-the-less . . . we can make out undeniable signs of dawn and ultimate sunrise.⁸⁶

An anonymous letter, received from "a friend who is very much interested in the future success of [the] Society," was published a few weeks after Stuck's Christmas message, and in many ways mirrored the earlier statement. Like Stuck, the unidentified correspondent urged the members of the Society to work together for the good of the whole, suggesting that "there is no power on earth that can defeat them, if they will stand shoulder to shoulder." Such sentiments, expressed by Society leaders or, as in this case, by outside friends were not unusual in the early days of the corporation and many found their way into print.⁸⁷

On 1 January 1933, the transitional period of the Amana Society officially came to an end. The Society had entered the capitalistic world; however, because of delays, certain conditions of the transitional period continued for some months. Instead of charging rent on houses which had not yet been purchased, for example, the Society extended the period until 1 February 1933. The Society also continued to sell items at wholesale prices at the general stores, although this practice had been intended only for the transitional time. One thing that did change was that a wage scale was formulated and slowly put in place by Barlow.

Another change occurred on 18 January when the board finally moved to alter the relationship between the four physicians practicing in the Amana area and

⁸⁶ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 22 December 1932.

⁸⁷ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 5 January 1933.

the Society. At the time of the change the assumption appears to have been that these doctors would work as employees of the Society. However, this was soon deemed impractical by Barlow and, one assumes, by the doctors. An opinion received from the new state Attorney General, Edward O'Connor, also questioned the legality of carrying on medical care as a corporate business, and suggested that the Society divest itself of its medical connections.⁸⁸

At their January meeting the board reached an agreement whereby the doctors bought their equipment from the Society and agreed to received an annual fee for each Class A stockholder. The doctors were otherwise allowed to operate as independent practitioners, although the dentist opted to remain an employee of the Society. The sale of the medical equipment to the physicians occasioned some controversy. It was alleged that in the previous year two of the physicians did not surrender their income to the corporate coffers as they were supposed to have done. Because of this controversy, a brief editorial statement appeared in the *Bulletin*.⁸⁹ This controversy, and the one surrounding the nomination of candidates to run for the Board, were among the few signs of dissension among the members. Even following the Reorganization certain members found cause to complain about what they perceived as special treatment shown to some of the doctors. The reorganized Amana Society, while not suffering from all the ailments of the old Society, was still far from a harmonious body.

The Society further divested itself of an unmanageable business by agreeing, in the early part of 1933, to sell the four hotels to the current managers.

Originally, the hotels at South, Upper South, Main Amana and Homestead had

⁸⁸ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 19 January 1933.

⁸⁹ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 12 January 1933. Ironically, one of the physicians accused of non-compliance with the agreement to surrender income to the Society had actually written the agreement himself.

been managed the same as other businesses in the corporation. It soon, however, became evident that this situation was not in the best interests of the Society since the hotels were rarely profitable. Furthermore, the families who lived in the hotels and ran them apparently expressed anxiety over the fact that they, unlike their neighbors, would be unable to purchase their "homes" Accordingly the Board of Directors voted to sell the hotels to their occupants.⁹⁰ In all four cases the sale of the hotel did not mean the end of hotel service in Amana. The hotel at Upper South was maintained until and that of Lower South until 1942. The Main Amana hotel technically ceased to function as an inn in 1934 when it was sold and became the Colony Inn restaurant. The Homestead hotel ran until 1948 when it was purchased and became Zuber's Restaurant.

Although the end of the transitional period on 1 January did not occasion significant change within the Society, the national press marked it as a significant milestone. The *New York Times*, possibly utilizing a story from a wire service, lauded the Society's decision to abandon communism, a decision which had actually been reached by the voters almost a year before the article was published.⁹¹ Similarly, an article in the *Pasadena Post* also noted the Reorganization, but stated that the elders of the Society had called mass meetings in June to decide whether or not to continue the communistic way, and that the members voted to abandon communism "if, after a ninety day trial capitalism was found to be a better system." This entirely erroneous account of the Reorganization of the Amana Society, never-the-less, reveals the reporter's bias: capitalism *had* proven to be a better system, therefore one of the most successful communal

⁹⁰ Board of Directors Minutes, 4 January 1933 and 1 February 1933, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa. The idea of selling the hotels was proposed at the January meeting; the decision to sell was made at the next meeting, in February.

⁹¹ *New York Times*, 16 January 1933.

societies in the country which, according to the reporter had been “cited as the world’s most perfect example of Communistic success,” had just admitted the their system was flawed.

Like many observers, the author of the article in the *Pasadena Post*, was eager to point to the Amana Society as proof that communism was futile. As the national depression worsened critics began to suggest that communistic principles or at least socialistic structures might be better for the country than the current capitalistic system. The author of the piece in the *Pasadena Post* was far from the only observer who must have been uncomfortable with this prospect.⁹² One Iowa paper took the failure of Amana a step farther than most suggesting that “[t]he voluntary termination of the Amana experiment. . . .augurs no happy future for the Russian venture.”⁹³

On 9 February the Board of Directors met, presumably to prepare for the upcoming annual meeting of the stockholders. At the board meeting the results of the 6 February election of directors were announced, and it was found that all but one of the incumbent directors who were up for reelection had been elected. It was also stated that, of the 924 class A stockholders, 744 or 80.5 percent had voted.⁹⁴ This high turnout must have surely gratified Barlow and Stuck. The continued involvement of the membership in the business affairs of the corporation remained

⁹² *Pasadena Post*, 17 January 1933, Arthur Barlow Scrapbook, collection of Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa; Arthur Barlow, *Recollections of Amana's Great Change*, 1-2. The idea that Amana's reorganization was a symbol of communism's inherent weakness was revived in 1989 as East and West Germany were reunited. Soon after the fall of the Berlin Wall, an editorial in the *Wall Street Journal* used the Amana Society as an example of a former communistic organization that adopted free market status (John F. Stehle, “How Some Communists Became Capitalists Overnight,” *Wall Street Journal*, 29 November 1989.)

⁹³ Roland A. White. “Amanas as Their Neighbors See Them Since the Recent Changes to Modernism.” *The Iowa Publisher*, 4 (November 1932), 2.

⁹⁴ Board of Director Minutes, 9 February 1933, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

a paramount consideration to Stuck, who repeatedly urged every member “who is at all physically able to do so” to be present at the Society’s first annual meeting.⁹⁵

The annual meeting of the Amana Society convened in the Main Amana church on 13 February 1933, at 1:00 p.m. An attendance sign-up sheet shows that 477 stockholders, slightly over fifty percent of the total, were present.⁹⁶ This fairly large attendance was due, in large part, to curiosity, but also as a result of the repeated urging to attend that appeared in the *Bulletin*. Members who were unable to drive themselves to Main Amana rode with neighbors or in one of the cars still owned by the Society, which were made available for this purpose. The large group expected for the meeting led to the removal of one of the wooden partitions in the church building.⁹⁷

The meeting opened with the report of Arthur Barlow, beginning with an historical overview of the events of the past year. He commented “1932 certainly went by quickly.” He read the first two notices regarding the bookkeeping system and then neatly summarized the actions of the Society during the past year in a sixteen-point itemized list. Barlow noted that over 91 automobiles and small craft shops of the Society had been sold by 1933. Barlow concluded by praising the good work and loyalty of the Society members and suggesting that the past year had gone well. He also directed that all the reports given at the meeting be regarded as private and not be discussed with non-members. Once Barlow had

⁹⁵ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 2 February 1933.

⁹⁶ A typed version of this sheet is included with the Minutes of the Stockholder Meeting, 13 February 1933, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa. (These minutes are bound together with the minutes of the Board of Directors from May 1932 to that date.)

⁹⁷ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 9 February 1933. The partition was removed prior to the meeting, in anticipation of a large attendance. Previously, these partitions had usually only been removed to accommodate the special communion services held in the Main Amana church biannually.

completed his remarks his assistant business manager, Jacob Roemig read a condensed German translation of them.⁹⁸

The report of treasurer William Moershel was next read by his assistant, William Noe, and then explained. Moershel's report indicated that the Society had a total loss of only \$1,025.09, a significant improvement over previous years. Overall, Moershel suggested, "the financial condition of the corporation has been somewhat improved." Like Barlow, Moershel, in his report, counseled that while he was glad to provide his detailed financial data, he would "request that you do not give it to non-members."⁹⁹

Corporate secretary Peter Stuck next made his report in which he noted that 202 houses had already been sold, leaving 36 or so still unpurchased. Stuck noted a decrease in the amount of prior distributive shares and script totaling \$83,788.38, a result of people cashing them in to buy homes. In contrast, only two shares of class A stock, the membership shares, had been canceled, suggesting that only two members had left the community following Reorganization. This simple fact, buried in the secretary's report, indicated the overall success of the Reorganization in preserving the life of the Amana community. By reorganizing the Society had been able to relieve many of the social and economic tensions which had threatened it and, as a result, only a negligible percentage of its members had seen fit to leave. Stuck also reported on the activities of the Board of Directors, noting that 18 regular and ten special meetings had been held since the corporation came into existence, and that these meetings had generated 212

⁹⁸ Amana Society Board of Directors Minutes, 13 February 1933, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

⁹⁹ Wilhelm Moershel, "Treasurer's Report," in Minutes of the Annual Stockholder's Meeting, 13 February 1933, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

pages of minutes.¹⁰⁰ Following Stuck's report the meeting adjourned at 2:35 p.m.¹⁰¹

In an hour and a half a fairly complete summary had been given of the hectic year of 1932. As Barlow noted, the beginning of the year had seen the Society heavily in debt and still under the communal system. A year later the officers of the new corporation were able to report an increase in business activity to a crowd of stockholders who were, for the most part, employed and owned their own homes. Far from feeling threatened the members of the Society could feel a measure of security as they left the Main Amana church building that day. Their new corporation was on a sound footing, business prospects were improving as the darkest years of the Great Depression were soon to be left behind. Each member knew that as long as the Society lasted, some job would be found for them. They knew that if they became ill the Society would pay their medical bills under the terms of the Articles of Incorporation. They could also point out with satisfaction that the church had survived the transition. The younger members could now imagine their children attending high school, and, perhaps, even college. The future, although not entirely bright, was far more hopeful than it had been a year before. The Amana people had transformed themselves, they had moved back from impending bankruptcy and were well on their way towards creating a comfortable standard of living. For all intents and purposes the annual meeting of 1933 proved that the Reorganization had been a success, so far. Fifty years later one of the

¹⁰⁰ Minutes of the First Annual Stockholder's Meeting of the Amana Society, 13 February 1933, Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

¹⁰¹ Despite the laconic minutes kept by Stuck, the meeting was not without its drama. President Henry G. Moershel was in attendance even though his mother had just died the previous day. Partway through the meeting Director, Peter Zimmermann suffered what may have been a light heart attack and had to be led from the room. Zimmermann's attack was a portent of the fatal cardiac event which ended his life a few weeks later and left the woolen mills, of which he had been manager, in a temporary state of turmoil.

last survivors of the Committee of Forty-Seven, when asked about the success of the change, remarked that "it is still too soon to tell."¹⁰²

¹⁰² Emilie Zuber Hoppe, "Amana's Quiet Revolution," *Willkommen* 6 (Winter 1987), 11. The individual quoted was A.T. Berger of South Amana.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION

[T]here is a manifest desire to keep intact, as far as possible, the Community consciousness born of a precious heritage -- a wealth of common aspirations and memories, and of spiritual assets that can not be weighed, nor measured, nor tabulated, nor charted. What the Great Change will ultimately mean, no one can say; for ultimate destinies are in the lap of the gods rather than in the foresight of man.

-- Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, 1936¹

Were we successful? The preservation of the community is the key criteria for judging whether that can be said. It's too soon to tell if [the reorganization] was a success. . . . really it is too soon to tell.

-- Adolph T. Berger, 1987²

On 20 June 1982 the Amana Heritage Society sponsored a gathering on the grounds of its museum in order to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the "Great Change." Attendees listened to a few short speeches, enjoyed refreshments, and reminisced amongst themselves about what the event being commemorated meant to them.³

At the time of the fiftieth anniversary celebration, over three hundred Class A shareholders remained in the Amana Society. Then, as now, the survivors of the Great Change could survey a fairly thriving community which, had, in the previous ten years come to depend increasingly upon the steady stream of tourists for its principal income. The Amana Society continued to prosper, maintaining many of the same business it had in 1932, although some operations, such as the bakeries, had long since been modernized and consolidated. In Middle Amana, Amana

¹ Bertha M.H. Shambaugh, "Amana -- In Transition," *Palimpsest* 17 (May 1936), 181.

² Emilie Zuber Hoppe, "Amana's Quiet Revolution," *Willkommen* 6 (Winter 1987), 11.

³ "At Heritage Show," *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, 1 July 1998.

Refrigeration, a company founded by the son of the communal era High Amana store keeper, employed over two thousand people and was well established as a leader in the home appliance industry.

The Amana Church thrived as well, although attrition due to death and an inability to interest young people in German language services had caused a drop in numbers. The establishing of an English language service in 1961 went a long ways towards maintaining youthful interest in the faith.

Standing in the museum yard, formally the home of Dr. C.F. Noe the leading advocate for reorganization, the survivors of the change could look back upon a half century that had been one of comfort and prosperity for them. Not all of the fifty years had been prosperous ones, not all of them had been free from controversy, dissension and suffering. For all that, participants in the program and residents today, continue to portray the reorganization as a positive influence on the community. They point to the financial condition of the Society in 1932, which portended bankruptcy within a few short years. They speak of the influence of the outside world on their lives. They recall bitter battles with the elders and their parents over bobbed hair cuts and Sunday baseball games. They recall with pleasure, the first car they bought after 1932, the trips to Cedar Rapids to see a movie, family vacations, the electric stove they bought once the Amanas were connected to a Rural Electrification Administration line in 1937. Yet, despite the benefits of reorganization, many still long for the old camaraderie of the communal kitchens, for the security inherent in communal life; for all the friends and family and traditions now gone and forgotten.

The Amana reorganization was not inevitable; that it occurred at all was due in part to a small band of concerned members who agitated for some sort of change in the way things were done in the Society. The change occurred, too, because the Board of Trustees of the old Society was willing to consider such a reorganization, rather than to maintain their usual conservative stance of maintaining the Society as it was originally established.

The Change was successful due largely to the care with which it was planned. There was really no legal need for the Committee of Forty-Seven to have been formed. The Trustees might have simply drawn up a plan and submitted it to the members for approval. The fact that such a committee existed, however, allowed the ordinary members of the Society a chance to make their opinions and concerns known. The size of the body assured that careful consideration and deliberation would be given to all points it considered. The fact that so many members of the committee had been educated or lived outside the Society and were all relatively young was an early and clear sign that the Society members favored adapting to the outside world, leaving behind the ways represented by the elderly Board of Trustees.

Despite the opinions of a few of its members, the Committee of Forty-Seven probably never considered any other course but a full reorganization of the Society. The letter that the committee sent along with the ballot to determine interest in such a plan, was designed to convince the uncertain that reorganization was the only way. The vote received in response to this letter overwhelming vindicated the view of the committee to proceed with reorganization. Opposition to this course of action was received mainly from the elderly and from certain family

groups. The fact that Middle Amana, as a whole, was in opposition, stems from the benevolent leadership of their head elder, the fact that they were more isolated than many other villages, the fact that they viewed this action with suspicion, believing some outside person to be behind it, and the simple fact that many were probably not made aware of the Society's financial plight.

The reorganization plan itself, with its provisions for the care of the elderly, the purchase of homes, the issuance of prior distributive stock for years of service, was designed to help even the most recalcitrant members overcome their doubts. The Society was extremely fortunate in the gifted outsiders who aided their progress: an attorney general and his assistant, a former congressman and a future vice president of the United States were all involved at some point in the reorganization process.

Once approved, the plan was implemented slowly, but its effects were still jarring. By far the most serious dislocation of the reorganization process was the closing of the communal kitchens. The formal reorganization date of June 1, 1932 had little real meaning beyond the legal sense. Life in Amana continued along the same veins it had in the years past only that now members received wages and could purchase goods from outside markets. The biggest changes were felt by women, who suddenly found themselves away from the camaraderie of the communal kitchens. While many became homemakers, a surprisingly large number found jobs within the Society as food processors, clerks and factory laborers. The Society made special provisions for keeping women in the work force by encouraging commercial food sales and maintaining the old kitchen gardens.

Because of the ample number of prior distributive shares that each adult received,

members were able to purchase their homes from the Society when the time came to do so.

By the time of the first annual meeting of the Amana Society, its members were in the process of becoming accustomed to mainstream midwestern life. Ties of mutual aid between families would continue for decades, and a strong communal sense persists to this day. Many families continue to honor kinship ties extending to even the most distant cousins. The Amana church continued to hold services in the same manner and in German until 1961, and even then merely added an English service to its roster to satisfy the young people. Most men continued at the same jobs they had under communal systems, only now they received wages. The Great Change of the Amana Society was, then, primarily an economic one. The major reason for the change was the economic condition of the Amana Society which, by 1932, was almost \$500,000 in debt. The major changes after the reorganization mainly occurred in the areas of wages and the purchases made by members. Social life continued as before, community life remained largely unaffected for years.

Finally, one returns to the simple question, was the Great Change necessary? In retrospect, there are few who could reasonably argue that the reorganization of the Amana Society was a poorly chosen option. However, as at least one scholar has indicated, the Society may well have been able to reform itself internally and, in so doing, forestalled the threat of bankruptcy and the need for a full reorganization. Essentially, the suggestion that the Society could have survived states that many of the reforms initiated after the Reorganization by Arthur Barlow could have been accomplished as easily under a communal system. For

example, the Society could have adopted a centralized accounting system, it could have closed shops that were no longer necessary. If one continues this line of reasoning, one might suggest that the Society could even have discontinued the woolen mills when that industry proved to be unprofitable and, instead, tried to channel its energies into another industry. Certain rules and restrictions, such as the typical year long waiting period the trustees required couples to spend before marriage, could have been abolished. Perhaps the members would willingly have done without certain luxury items, had the trustees asked them to do so in 1925 as opposed to June of 1931. It is, of course, impossible to know what could have happened had the Society undertaken internal reforms before its massive debt made such reforms useless. Had the Society survived the Great Depression and its attendant financial problems, other problems would still have remained. The flow of visitors from outside would have continued, and, no matter how many reforms were made in the social structure of the Society, the very nature of a communal arrangement would have still made these outside visitors and their lifestyle more appealing to the young. Short of a move to a more isolated section of the country, there appears to have been little the Society leaders could have done to stem this situation.

In reorganizing, finally, the Society was merely completing another phase in its ongoing development. Just as the adoption of a communal way of life had insured the survival of the Community of True Inspiration in the 1840s, so, too, would reorganization insure its survival a century after. Far from failing, the communal society of Amana had achieved all of its purposes, providing a safe and secure haven for its members. By 1931 the haven had outlived its usefulness. The

Amana Society rose, phoenix-like from the ashes of its communal existence, into a new phase of existence, the duration of which is a matter of conjecture.

APPENDIX A: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE OF FORTY-SEVEN

This is a list of the forty-eight individuals, who, together, constituted the seven general committees which planned the Reorganization of the Amana Society in 1931-1932. In May 1931 the committee leaders decided that the whole forty-seven member committee was too unwieldy, so they cut the committee in half, resulting in a committee of twenty-three. It was this committee which essentially discussed the reorganization of the Society, periodically receiving input from the local groups. A committee of fourteen members was chosen to select the first Board of Directors for the new Society. The actual reorganization plan was written by a committee of ten members, delegates of which were elected by the local committees from their numbers. This list provides biographical data on each committee member and their various committee assignments.

Main Amana

- 1) Adam Clemens
General Committee
Born 27 November 1879 in Main Amana
Dentist at 18, surveyor, appointed an elder in 1921
Married Marie Heintz on 3 December 1903; two children
Died 22 March 1976, Colonial Manor Nursing Home, Middle Amana¹
- 2) Philip Carl Geiger
Born 11 June 1894 in Homestead
Moved to Amana in 1913
Married Elizabeth Zscherney; two children
Worked in flour mill, farm manager after the change until death²
Died 27 November 1945
- 3) Henry William Graichen
General Committee
Born 4 December 1892
Married Minnie Zuber on 19 April 1917; 2 children
Surveyor, worked in wagon shop
Died 18 February 1950 at Main Amana³
- 4) William Jacob Graichen
Born 12 May 1900 at Main Amana.
Married to Johanna Hergert on 8 May 1924

¹ "Obituary [Mr. Adam Clemens]." *Amana Society Bulletin*, 1 April 1976.

² "Philip Geiger, Amana Farm Manager, Is Dead." *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, 27 November 1945, clipping in obituary file Amana Heritage Society.

³ "Obituary [Henry Graichen]." *Amana Society Bulletin*, 23 February 1950.

Taught school before Reorganization
Died 8 January 1972 in Burlington, Iowa.

5) John H. Haas, Sr.

Born 20 January 1877 in Main Amana
Appointed elder in 1917
Married in 1901; wife died in 1913, had 3 children, one of them stillborn
Manager of Millwright shop, supervised reconstruction of mill after 1923 fire; self-taught mechanical drawing skills⁴
Died 19 September 1952 at High Amana

6) [Georg] Dave Krauss

Committee of 14
Born 24 January 1904 in Main Amana
Married Helen Seifert on 4 December 1924; 4 children
Worked in Amana plumbing department
Died 13 October 1965 near Homestead⁵

7) Fred Heinrich [Fritz] Meyer

Born 25 June 1899
Married Mae Zimmermann, 1922; son-in-law of Henry Zimmermann; wife was niece of Peter Zimmermann, both important leaders in pre- reorganization period
Main Amana store manager
Died August 1938

8) F.[riedrich] William Miller

General Committee
Vice Chair of General Committee
Member of Committee of 10
Committee of 14
Born 6 September 1876 at West Amana
Left the Society on 4 April 1893, and returned 27 November 1894
Moved to Homestead in October 1896
Graduated from University of Iowa in 1900, college of pharmacy
Married Helen Herrmann, 7 May 1908; two children
Brother-in-law of Dr. Noe and Dr. Herrmann
Pharmacist at Homestead 1900-1915, at Main Amana 1915-1952
Appointed an elder, March 1921
Amana school board president
Died 15 July 1952⁶

⁴ "Obituary [John Hass, Sr.]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 25 September 1952.

⁵ "Dave Krauss of Amana Is Dead," undated clipping in obituary file of the Amana Heritage Society.

⁶ "Prominent Amana Man Passes Away." Undated clipping in obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

- 9) **William F. Noe'**
General Committee
Committee of 10
 Born 2 September 1898 at Main Amana
 Married 5 October 1922 to Ida Hertel, one daughter
 Completed business courses at La Salle Extension University
 Died 1 August 1978⁷
- 10) **Charles L. Oesterle**
General Committee
 Born 11 May 1883
 Longtime Main Amana station agent
 Died 16 August 1952 in a Cedar Rapids hospital⁸
- 11) **Jacob Roemig**
Committee of 14
 Born 16 June 1893 at Main Amana
 Married first to Johanna Goerler, 5 December 1918, one son
 Left Society for a few years
 Worked as a machinist in Main Amana
 Died 16 October 1978 at Cedar Rapids⁹
- 12) **Peter Stuck**
General Committee
Secretary General Committee
Committee of 10
Committee of 14
 Born 12 November 1890 at Main Amana
 Married December 1914; wife died shortly after birth of daughter in 1916
 Attended Iowa State Teacher's College and Highland Park College in Des Moines
 School teacher until 1926; assistant postmaster
 Son-in-law of Society secretary, William F. Moershel
 Died 21 December 1979 at Homestead

Homestead

- 13) **John Louis Eichacker**
Chair, Homestead
General Committee
Chair, General Committee
Committee of 10

⁷ "William F. Noe." *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, undated clipping in obituary file at Amana Heritage Society.

⁸ "Obituary [Charles L. Oesterle]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 21 August 1952.

⁹ "Jacob Roemig, 85, Dies; Was Amana Businessman." Undated clipping in obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

Committee of 14

Born 20 January 1882 in Homestead

Married; two children

Homestead post master, had spent period (1907-1909) outside of Society in Oregon

Member of Homestead Welfare Club; President; noted as an "eloquent" speaker

Died 28 October 1935 in Homestead¹⁰

14) Carl Friedrich Lipman

Born 6 November 1898 in Middle Amana

Family left, but came to Amana again at age seven with parents

"Absent" from the Society 1917-1919; always worked at store, and was manager for a period after the change

Married Helene Moershel 9 November 1922

Died March 1940 Homestead¹¹

15) Fred Wilhelm Moershel

Born 18 April 1890 in Homestead

Married Katherine Hofer, spring 1914; 2 children

Had worked in the wholesale department at Homestead was a traveling salesman; later, he

worked in the Main Office at Amana and at the Homestead Store; first cousin to H.G. Moershel

Appointed an elder on 16 March 1931

Died 18 December 1952 in Homestead¹²

16) Dr. Henry Georg Moershel

Chair Homestead (prior to resignation)

General Committee

Committee of 10

Born 13 April 1891 at Homestead

Graduated from Iowa City High School, 1910; University of Iowa with medical degree, 1917

Served in World War I (noncombatant)

Married Henrietta Jeck 26 November 1917 (daughter and sister of managers of Middle Woolen Mill); 3 children

Died 13 March 1971 in Cedar Rapids hospital

William August Moershel

Committee of 14 (took his brother's place, following the former's resignation in January 1932)

Born 22 August 1893 at Homestead

Married outside the colony

¹⁰ "By the Homestead Correspondent [obituary of John L. Eichacker] *Amana Society Bulletin*, 7 November 1935, 1.

¹¹ "Obituary [Carl F. Lipman]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 4 April 1940.

¹² "Obituary [Fred W. Moershel]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 25 December 1952.

Left Amana on 23 March 1917 returned in 1919
 Pharmacist, educated at State University of Iowa
 Died 7 August 1975 at San Pablo, California

17) Louis Carl Selzer

General Committee

Born 10 December 1889 in Homestead
 Married Caroline Shoup, December 1913; 2 children
 Homestead Farm Manager Extensive contact with outside in connection with his work
 Died 20 April 1960

South Amana

18) Adolph Theobald Berger

Committee of 14

Born 19 October 1908 at South Amana
 Graduate of Williamsburg High School, 1928
 Attended Iowa State Teacher's College, Cedar Falls
 Teacher, South Amana Schools
 Died 23 January 1996 in Marengo¹³

19) Charles Philipp Berger

Born 7 December 1898 at South Amana
 Married 7 December 1922 to Emilie Stande; children
 Depot agent
 Died 1 December 1985¹⁴

20) Theodore Carl Berger

Born 14 November 1886 South Amana
 Wagon maker
 Married on 4 January 1917 to Wilhelmine Ruff; married 4 December 1924 to Susanna
 Wiswasser; one daughter born before Reorganization
 Died 21 October 1962, South Amana¹⁵

21) Adolph Theobald Ratzel

General Committee

Committee of 14

¹³ Mary Almquist. "Old Upper South Hotel Is A.T.'s Hobby Headquarters." *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, 9 July 1987.

¹⁴ "Amana Church Society News" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 5 December 1985.

¹⁵ "Church Notes and Announcements." *Amana Society Bulletin*, 25 October 1962.

Born 20 January 1889 in South Amana
 Married 27 March 1913 to Marie Herrmann, two children
 Traveling salesman
 Died 2 July 1949 in a Cedar Rapids hospital¹⁶

22) Ferdinand Jacob Ruff

General Committee
Committee of 10

Born 15 January 1894, South Amana
 Married 22 May 1919 to Henrietta Siegel (her family ran hotel, heavy contact with outsiders)
 Postmaster; World War I veteran and member of American Legion
 Died 4 April 1977, South Amana¹⁷

23) Fred[rich] Setzer

General Committee

Born 3 December 1892 at South Amana
 Married to Henrietta Ruff (sister to Ferdinand) on 30 June 1921 at South Amana; 6 children,
 two died very young. Brother of Theodore Setzer
 World War I veteran, member of American Legion
 Operated the South Amana garage
 Died 27 March 1973¹⁸

24) Theodore Setzer

Born 20 May 1889 at South Amana
 Lived in South all his life except for 8 months in South Dakota, and his service in World War I
 Worked on farm department
 Married Emma Siegel on 10 March 1921; two sons. Brother of Fred Setzer
 Died 27 April 1954¹⁹

West Amana

25) Carl Peter Flick

Committee of 10

Born 5 January 1904 at West Amana
 Married Marie Shoup; three children
 Worked in West Amana Store

¹⁶ "A.T. Ratzel Death Came Unexpectedly." Undated clipping in obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

¹⁷ "Ferdinand Ruff, 83, Dies; Was South Amana Postmaster." Undated clipping, obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

¹⁸ "Obituary [Fred Setzer]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 12 April 1973.

¹⁹ "Obituary [Theodore Setzer]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 6 May 1954.

Artist, extensive contact with Grant Wood and Cedar Rapids artistic community
Died 16 September 1976 Cedar Rapids (hospital) ²⁰

26) [Friedrich] William Graesser

Born 26 February 1884 at West Amana.
Married 15 November 1906 to Lina Griess (brother-in law to Philip Griess); five children
West Amana Farm Manager before Reorganization
Appointed an elder on 16 March 1931
Died 17 November 1945²¹

27) Philip J. Griess

General Committee
Committee of 14
Born 13 December 1888 in West Amana
Broom maker, became blind at 17; never married; he was a brother-in-law- of William Graesser
After he became blind, he was sent to Iowa Sight Saving School at Vinton
Died 11 April 1977²²

28) Paul Emil Kellenberger

Chair, West Amana
General Committee
Born 11 August 1909
Graduate of Williamsburg High School, 1927
Schoolteacher, West Amana

29) Otto Schaedlich

Born 2 December 1885
Never married. Worked in horse barn
Died 27 November 1943

High Amana

30) Henry Bendorf, Sr.

Chair, High Amana
General Committee
Committee of 10
Born 26 February 1898 in South Amana
Left Society to live with brother in Cedar Rapids, attended Washington High School
Urged to return to Society by William Foerstner in ca. 1917 came to High Amana

²⁰ "Obituary [Carl P. Flick]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 23 September 1976.

²¹ "Obituary" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 22 November 1945.

²² Linda Graesser Selzer, personal conversation with author, 14 September 1997, notes, collection of the author.

Worked in wholesale selling batteries bulbs and tires for store
 Married 9 September 1920
 Died 19 March 1972 in a Cedar Rapids hospital

31) William Foerstner

General Committee

Committee of 14

Born 23 November 1881 in East Amana

Married 22 August 1907, two children

High Amana Store manager. Enormous contact with outside world, through sale of batteries, tires and other goods through the store. He was very closely associated with Henry Bendorf.

Appointed an elder in 1921

Died 4 March 1974²³

32) Carl Pitz

Born 30 July 1884

Skilled cabinet maker and carpenter. Close friend of Theodore Berger

Died 9 November 1964²⁴

33) Fred [Fritz] Schaedlich

Born 21 April 1892 in West Amana

Married Helen Heinze on 9 July 1925 at High Amana

Was schoolteacher at West Amana, then at High Amana

Died 20 July 1953²⁵

34) August Wendler

Born 10 March 1883 in Middle Amana

Left the Society in 1900

Married Louis Gernand 26 March 1908, children

Died 12 November 1955 in Peoria, Illinois

Middle Amana

35) William Georg Hahn

Born 6 August 1907 in Middle Amana

Married 13 August 1931 Susanna Reihmann

Worked in harness shop

Died 21 August 1972 Middle Amana

²³ "Obituary [William Foerstner]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 14 April 1974.

²⁴ "Church Notes and Announcements" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 19 November 1964.

²⁵ "Obituary [Fred Schaedlich]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 30 July 1953.

36) William Christian Heinze

Chair, Middle Amana

General Committee

Committee of 10

Born 6 September 1890 Middle Amana

Married Marie Hertel 3 September 1914; 1 son

Carpenter until he cut off fingers and was reassigned to work as a teacher

Teacher, 1911 - 1953, attended Iowa States Teacher's College

Appointed an elder on 10 March 1930

Died 25 November 1960²⁶

37) Dr. Christian Heinrich Hermann, Jr.

General Committee

Born 24 February 1890 Middle Amana

Married Johanna Jeck 10 July 1919 ; children

His sister was wife of Dr. C.F. Noe, other sister wife of F. William Miller, both strong promoters of Reorganization

Doctor, received training outside: Marengo H.S. 1908, BS and MD U of I 1915 (he was captain of gymnastics team there). Intern at Montreal General Hospital 1915-1916

World War I service 1918-1919

Practicing Physician in Middle Amana

Joined staff of Mercy Hospital 1929

Died 1 November 1970²⁷

38) Adam John Kippenhan

General Committee

Born 21 December 1878 in South Amana

Married to Emilie Heinemann on 5 December 1912, with two children. Wife and father-in-law, the head elder in Middle, died in the months preceding the Reorganization. Brother-in-law of Adolph Heinemann. Wife was niece of Society president, Georg Heinemann

Middle Amana Store Manager

Appointed an elder on 15 March 1926

Died 26 February 1960 at Middle Amana ²⁸

39) Ferdinand Heinrich Loenhardt

General Committee

Committee of 14

Born 29 July 1888 in Middle Amana

Married to Minnie Reihmann 30 April 1914, two children

²⁶ "Wm. Heinze, 70, Longtime Amana Teacher, Died." Undated clipping in obituary file at Amana Heritage Society.

²⁷ "Rites Tuesday At Amana for Dr. Herrmann." Undated clipping in obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

²⁸ "Obituary [Adam Kippenhan]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 3 March 1960.

Millwright and locksmith
Died 9 April 1979

40) **Jacob Albert Reihmann**

Committee of 14
Born 17 January 1891 in Middle Amana
Married Helene Jung on 15 April 1915
Died 3 January 1933 in Middle Amana

41) **William Heinrich Rettig**

Born 28 June 1895 in Middle Amana
Married on 10 July 1919 to Lina Zimmermann, son in law of Henry Zimmermann, brother-in-law of Fred Meyer; one son.
Worked in print shop
World War I service
Died 21 August 1968

42) **[Johann] Jacob Ruedy**

Born 3 May 1870
Married Louise Geyer on 6 December 1928.
Lived in Homestead as young man, later returned to Middle where he worked in the store.
Died 4 March 1957²⁹

43) **William C. Zuber**

General Committee
Committee of 14
Born 14 July 1887 in Middle Amana
Married to Emilie Murbach on 9 November 1911; 3 children
Manager of Middle Farm Department
Died June 1951³⁰

East Amana

44) **[August] Fred[rich] Blechschmidt**

Born 20 May 1901 in East Amana
Married Minnie Pohlers on November 4, 1926; one daughter
Worked in wagon shop
Died 23 September 1987 in a Cedar Rapids hospital³¹

²⁹ "Obituary [Jacob Ruedy]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 7 March 1957.

³⁰ "Obituary [William C. Zuber]" *Amana Society Bulletin*, 14 June 1951.

³¹ "East Amana Resident Fred Blechschmidt Dies," *Marengo Pioneer Republican*, undated clipping in obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

45) Louis Friedrich Hess, Jr.

Chair, East Amana

General Committee

Committee of 14

Committee of 10

Born 14 May 1894 East Amana

World War I July 1918-September 1919, American Legion

Never married

Worked in Bakery and farm

Died 9 November 1967 Marengo nursing home³²

46) Richard Frederick Schaefer.

General Committee

Born 9 May 1878 in Saxony

Married 12 June 1902 East Amana to Susanna Pfeffer; children

Farm manager of East Amana

Appointed elder in 1920

Died 17 September 1964, East Amana³³

47) Walter Schuerer, Sr.

Born 11 October 1897 at East Amana

Married in 1919 to Magdalena Oehl; 3 sons

Worked in East Amana meat market; manager of Amana meat market before death

Died 29 April 1948³⁴

³² "Louis F. Hess, Longtime Amana Resident, Died." Undated clipping in obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

³³ "Funeral Sept. 20 For Former Amana Director." Undated clipping in obituary file, Amana Heritage Society.

³⁴ *Amana Society Bulletin*, 6 May 1948.

APPENDIX B: JUNE 1931 LETTER TO SOCIETY MEMBERS

The letter sent by the Committee of Forty-Seven to members of the Amana Society, June 1931, accompanied by the ballot to determine interest in pursuing reorganization. Translated under the direction of Bertha M.H. Shambaugh.¹

Dear Brethren and Sisters:

It is the wish of the recently elected committee to deal in so far as possible in agreement with and with the consent of the fellow-members, and the committee naturally depends upon their support and concurrence, for without harmony and close cooperation nothing can be achieved which will serve the welfare of all. In order to further such mutual cooperation, the committee has deemed it best to urge the fellow-members once more to give the most thoughtful consideration to the facts which have been laid before them at the meeting recently held, and to draw from them an open and honest conclusion as to the best course to follow for the ultimate good of all. It should, however, be borne in mind that the welfare of the majority or the whole must be understood, and that selfish purposes or self-advantageous thoughts have here no place. The committee has felt it its duty to take a stand one way or the other, but it has thus far taken no decisive step, because it has recognized that many fellow-members had not sufficient time nor opportunity as yet to weigh the matter carefully and to make a clear-sighted decision. But as it is imperative that something be done and as we can no longer go the habitual way in an undecided manner, all are hereby petitioned to think the matter over seriously, to discuss it wherever possible with the members of the local

¹ This translation is fairly rough and literal. It was found among materials that Shambaugh donated to the State Historical Society of Iowa, and probably was done for her use while writing the book, *Amana That Is and Amana That Was*. Amana Society Collection, folder 10, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

committee, and to come to an understanding with the elders of the respective congregation in order to clear up all points with the assembled local committee. The enclosed questionnaire should then be filled out, signed, and handed to the committee. But before this is done, the Brethren and Sisters must, as has been suggested, weigh all sides carefully and unbiasedly, and not give an overhasty, predetermined, and selfish answer.

To this end we wish to briefly glance over the facts once again, as they have already been presented to us, and attempt to draw several conclusions which might aid in forming a logical, unprejudiced judgment.

First is the fact that we as a community do not anymore have the necessary profits and are each year becoming less prosperous, and that if no change takes place, we will be bankrupt and thoroughly impoverished in the near future. Thus, it must be plain to everyone that we cannot and dare not continue in this way.

If we appreciate this fact, the other question follows: What to do? Or better: What can be done? We should like to give this answer: There are but two possible ways, as has already been shown us. Either we must be willing to follow wholeheartedly in the ways upon which the community ideals were instituted, to give up many of the comforts which have become dear to us, and to adopt a standard of life which will be lower than the average in the outside world; or we must give up our communistic system and reorganize our community in the way indicated in our constitution. There are many members who believe that it would be simpler to improve our present system here and there, to obviate certain undesirable conditions, particularly if one is himself not greatly affected by them, and then calmly wait for better times and the help of God. But that will scarcely help to check the oncoming fall. Patching and repair will not achieve much in the

long run, for this has been done for many years without real success, as we see. If return to the old path is to bring results, it must be done thoroughly. Then we must remember that this presupposes going back to the life of denial as the founders did, and should we be willing to do that, there is still the prospect of getting very little more than our bare subsistence. The accounts from earlier years prove that even in those times, when the sentiment for the communistic way was strongest and when everyone did his utmost to help along, that there was a very small balance and that everything was needed to make ends meet. Thus we must conclude that it would be a useless attempt to make a half-hearted trial at the old life.

Have we surely taken everything into account what returning to the original way includes? We want here only to touch upon a few points, which must absolutely be carried into effect, if we expect any sort of success:

Our expenses must be limited to the barest necessities.

Private earnings of any kind would not be allowed. This would include the sale of fruits and other garden products, as tobacco and the like, as well as the sale of the handwork of the women, the manufacture of furniture and other things -- trade of all kinds for personal gain.

Besides private capital which constitutes in itself a breaking of the constitution contract, would have to be placed in the common treasury.

Few realize how unjust the amassing of private money is toward those fellow members whose property, held by the Community for 80 years without yielding interest has made our communistic existence possible thus far. Had all sums which rightfully belong there, been deposited with the community, it would seldom have been necessary to borrow money and to pay high interest for it.

No payment for any sort of services could be made. Even when extra work is done, it must be done willingly for the common welfare without extra compensation.

We would have to be willing to reduce outside help to the utmost.

Acquisitions which cannot be made with the money used for subsistence cannot be purchased otherwise. These include radios, fashionable clothes, silk stockings, coats, etc.

No cent of the community money may be used for private purposes.

No community care may be used for personal affairs or for pleasure rides. That private autos may not be owned goes without saying.

Pleasure rides would have to be dispensed with, as well as anything in which money or the community's time would be used. Members who have dropped the Society could not be given shelter here, even though only for a short time, without the express permission of the Council of the Brethren. We would at least for a time have to dispense with all comforts and improvements which take money until we have first met our living expenses.

The purchase of articles of luxury, sweets, cigars, cigarettes, tobacco, etc., are naturally not permitted, if we wish to get along with the money we have.

Full time working hours would have to be kept and Saturdays must be spent as other week days. We would all have to be willing to submit without reservation to the regulations of the Elders of the Community, to give aid in any work that is demanded without contradiction; in short, to put all private interests below the good of the whole.

The expensive presents at weddings, at Christmas, and at birthdays would have to be omitted.

Subscriptions to papers and magazines would be reduced considerably.

Kerosene could not be used for cooking and baking, and we would have to limit ourselves to eating in the community kitchen.

The use of large amounts of sugar for the manufacture of drinks would be curtailed.

One would have to get along without the help of the men in the kitchen and garden and still try to increase production.

The above are just a few points, and it is obvious that other things would have to be included. If anyone thinks that these measures are too drastic, we would remind him that half-way regulations would be of little or no use. Compromise in any instance would put us farther back in a short time.

How many of us would be willing to carry this out completely? And as was suggested, unless this is done, ours would be a hopeless task and we would be impoverished in a few years.

In case it is not possible to carry the above into effect as is necessary for our existence and should the fellow-members recognize the necessity for reorganization and reconstruction, it should be pointed out that only such a plan of reorganization would be considered which would correspond with the constitution of the community as it was approved by over 90 percent of the members last fall and in which no changes can be made except by another change of the constitution.

Therefore such a plan would demand first of all, that our total property be fairly evaluated. For this property, stock certificates would have to be issued which would be divided among the members according to length of membership. Each share in the corporation would be reckoned as well as the basis upon which

services or losses would be figured. In this manner it would be provided that the old members would receive a greater share than the younger members who still have the capacity to work.

If the vote of the majority would be for reorganization it is hoped and desired that the support of the members will be given to the plans and views of the committee. Any plans or helpful suggestions for such a reorganization may be submitted by letter by any individual or group. It should be remarked that what the committee with the aid of the members may do is not yet binding; the plans will first be presented to the Great Council of the Brethren, and then if they are approved they will be submitted to the vote of the fellow-members.

Attention should be called to the fact that under this plan of reorganization, we may keep many of the things to which we have become accustomed, as for instance, living in our old homes. Or, we may purchase them as private property, or in cases where quarters are too limited a practical solution could be worked out. A way would also be found to support the needy or the sick. Our church services could still be held in common and we could perhaps lead a more God-pleasing life than now, since many have fallen away from true Christianity.

All these are conditions and facts which merit consideration although these plans would have to be worked out with the assistance of financial experts and lawyers who understand the corporation laws thoroughly. Naturally, carrying out such a plan in all its details entails much time and should not be done over-hastily. For the present we are in a position to speak only of possibilities and it is a mistaken idea, as some already hold it, that everything has been worked out in detail. Nothing has as yet been done and nothing will be done until the committee is certain that the members, at least the majority of them, are agreed upon the

goals to be attained. And the members may be assured that no important steps will be taken by the committee before the members are instructed about them. Above all, no one should expect rapid transactions in such a matter which demands the most careful consideration. We therefore beg that the members lend patience and sympathetic cooperation, and that they put faith in the committee that all that is to be done will be done for the good of the community as a whole.

After the members have thoroughly considered the matter, they should answer the enclosed questionnaire, which should then be returned to the committee signed, thus better to make public the general opinion.

-- The Committee

It should be added that, no matter what will be done in the future, we must in the meantime see that wherever possible our expenses be reduced to the minimum and our income be increased as far as possible.

APPENDIX C: QUESTIONNAIRE OF JUNE 1931

The questionnaire distributed to the members of the Amana Society in June 1931. Translated under the direction of Bertha M.H. Shambaugh.

As the time has now come for each voting member to decide one way or the other, and as the two questions, upon which judgment is to be taken, are in the enclosed separate sheet presented to you as fully as possible, it is necessary that after careful consideration a decisive vote be given. We also ask that these questions be answered and signed according to your open and honest conviction, and that it be given to a member of your local committee as soon as possible.

1. Is it in your opinion possible to go back to the old life of denial exactly as it is prescribed, and are you and your family willing to lead this life without reservation?

Answer "Yes" or "No." Answer_____.

2. Is it in your opinion possible that by reorganization (which is described as fully as can be at this time in the additional sheet), the building-up of our community can be effected according to Article V of our present Constitution, and are you and your family willing to present your plans and views before the Committee and to cooperate in carrying out the plan approved by the trustees and the majority of the members?

Answer "Yes" or "No." Answer_____.

Signature_____.

In case the questionnaire is not returned or not signed, it will be assumed that interest is lacking and the vote will not be considered. From this it is evident that it is for everyone's good, that the questionnaire be correctly filled out and returned.

The questionnaires should be in the hands of the local committee not later than June 10, 1931.

APPENDIX D: ZUM NACHDENKEN

This poem was written around June 1931 in response to Middle Amana's lack of support for reorganization. The author of this poem, part of a long tradition of Amana narrative poetry, remains unknown although local tradition suggests it was written by a Main Amana author at the request of Dave Krauss, a Main Amana delegate to the Committee of Forty-Seven and an ardent supporter of reorganization.

Zum Nachdenken

Die Fragenzettel sind jetzt hier,
Es prangt Nein, Nein auf dem Papier;
Und Mittel denkt es hatt gewahlt
So wie es sich am besten stellt.

In Mittel scheints ist gut genug
So lang noch nicht ganz leer der Krug.
So lang als wie der Speck noch reicht,
So lang kann lebeb man noch leicht.

Und wenn noch ein Leib Brot ist da,
Warum sollt' man dann schreiben "Ja"
Als Antwort auf die Frag die schon
Hin deut auf Reorganization?

So lebt man weiter sorgenlos
Bis alles fort und die Not grosz,
Der Krug wird leer, der Speck ist all,
Dann kommt das End mit lautem Knall.

So gar das gute Brot fehlt jetzt,
Und Mittel wird in dreck gesetzt.
Sie hatten sich so weit vergessen,
Sich selbst aus Heim und Haus gefressen.

Wenn's so weit ist, dann hoert man schrein,
Warum hab ich geschrieben "Nein,"
Damals als ich mit Spott und Hohn,
Veract die Reorganization.

In Reflection

The question-sheets are now received,
And no, no the papers read;
And Middle thinks that it has voted
The way that will serve them best.

In Middle the status quo is good enough
As long as there is something in the jug.
As long as the bacon is still rich,
As long as the living is easy.

For when a store of bread is here,
Why should one write "Yes"
As answer to the question
To worthlessly proceed to reorganization?

So one continues, free from care
Until all is gone and great the need,
The jug is empty and the bacon gone,
Then the end will come with a bang.

Even the good bread is gone now,
And Middle is set in the dirt.
They forgot themselves so completely,
That they've eaten themselves from house & home.

When this has come to pass, one will hear the cry,
Why did I vote "No,"
When I, with mocking scorn,
Rejected the Reorganization.

SOURCES CONSULTED

Published Sources

- Andelson, Jonathan Gary. "Communalism and Change." University of Michigan Ph.D. diss., 1974.
- _____. "The Community of True Inspiration from Germany to the Amana Colonies," in *America's Communal Utopias*, ed. Donald Pitzer, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).
- Barlow, Arthur. *Recollections of the Amana Society's "Great Change."* Cedar Rapids, Iowa: privately printed, 1971.
- Barthel, Diane L. *Amana: From Pietist Sect to American Community.* Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.
- Carman, Gary. "The Amana Colonies' Change from Communalism to Capitalism in 1932." *Social Science Journal* 24 (1987):157-167.
- Clark, Robert Edwin. "A Cultural and Historical Geography of the Amana Colony, Iowa." Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, Lincoln, 1975.
- Committee of Forty-Seven, *Plan of Reorganization of the Amana Society.* Amana, Iowa: privately printed, 1932.
- Crawford, Nelson Antrim. "Communism Goes Broke in Iowa." *American Magazine*, November 1946, 44-48.
- Derr, Nancy Ruth. "Iowans During World War I: A Study of Change Under Stress." Ph.D. diss., George Washington University, 1979.
- Heinemann, Georg. *Inspirations Historie, 1898-1905.* Amana, Iowa: Amana Society, 1923.
- Hoppe, Emily Zuber, "Amana's Quiet Revolution." *Willkommen* 6 (Winter 1987).
- _____. "The Artist of West Amana," *Willkommen* 5 (Summer 1986).
- _____. *Seasons of Plenty: Amana Communal Cooking.* Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994.
- Iowan Press Association. *Who's Who in Iowa.* Des Moines, Iowa: Iowa Press Association, 1940.

Lankes, Frank J. *The Ebenezer Community of True Inspiration*. Gardenville, New York: privately printed, 1949.

"One Man's Record: The Photographs of Rudolph Kellenberger." *Iowan* 33 (Fall 1984): 43-50.

Parsons, Charles G. "Valuation of the Industrial Property of the Amana Society." M.S Thesis, Iowa State College, 1932.

Perkins, William Rufus, and Barthinius L. Wick. *History of the Amana Society or Community of True Inspiration*. Iowa City, Iowa: State University of Iowa, 1891.

Pickle, Linda. *Contented Among Strangers: Rural German Speaking Women and Their Families in the Nineteenth Century Midwest*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1996.

Pitzer, Donald. ed. *America's Communal Utopias*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

_____. "Developmental Communalism: An Alternative Approach to Communal Studies." In *Utopian Thought and Communal Experience*. Ed. Dennis Hardy and Lorna Davidson, Enfield, England: Middlesex Polytechnic, 1989.

Rettig, Lawrence L. *Amana Today: A History of the Amana Society From 1932 to the Present*. South Amana: privately printed, 1975.

Richling, Barnett. "The Amana Society: A History of Change." *Palimpsest* 58 (March/April 1977): 34-47.

Ruff, Henrietta M. *Seasons to Remember: Recollections of an Amana Childhood*. Deep River, Iowa: Brennan Printing, 1996.

Scheuner, Gottlieb, *Inspirations Historie, 1817-1850*. Translated by Janet W. Zuber, Lake Mills, Iowa: Graphic Publishing Company, 1987.

_____. *Inspirations Historie, 1877-1883*. Amana, Iowa: Amana Society, 1916.

Schoenfelder, Elizabeth M. "From Three Cups to a Teaspoon." *Iowan* 2 (June-July, 1954): 40, 42, 44.

Shambaugh, Bertha M.H. "Amana -- In Transition." *Palimpsest* 17 (May 1936): 149-184.

_____. *Amana That Was and Amana That Is*, Iowa City: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1932.

Sculle, Keith A. "Amana's First Decisions about Roadside Architecture: An Index to Cultural Change." *Annals of Iowa* 49 (Fall 1988): 462-474.

Trumpold, Cliff. *Now Pitching: Bill Zuber From Amana*. Middle Amana: Lakeside Press, 1993.

White, Roland A. "Amanas as Their Neighbors See Them Since the Recent Changes to Modernism." *The Iowa Publisher*, 4 (November 1932).

Yambura, Barbara Selzer. *A Change and a Parting: My Story of Amana*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1960.

Interviews

Barlow, Arthur. Interview by Joan Sniezewski, 18 May 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Blechschtmidt, Elizabeth Dickel. Interview by the author, 4 July 1997. Notes, collection of the author.

_____. Interview by the author, August 1998. Notes, collection of the author.

Blechschtmidt, Fred. Interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 20 March 1981. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

DuVal, Louise Miller. Personal conversation with the author, 6 May 1997. Notes, collection of the author.

Geiger, Marie Trumpold. Interview by Larry Rettig, 21 January 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Hahn, Susanna. Interview by Larry Rettig, 21 February 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Hegewald, Anna. Interview by David Rettig, 28 March 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Heinze, Adolph. Interview by Barbara Hoehnle, 17 June 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Hoehnle, Helene Hergert. Personal conversation with the author, 1 March 1998. Notes, collection of the author.

Kellenberger, Paul Emil. Interview by Abigail M. Foerstner, 19 February 1998. Typed transcript, collection of the author.

- Krauss, Helen Seifert. Interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 6 January 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.
- Moershel, Henrietta Jeck. Interview by Emilie Zuber Hoppe, 19 April 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.
- Neumann, Carl. Interview by Joan Sniezewski, 29 April 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.
- Noe, Charles F. Interview by Herbert V. Hake, 13 May 1946. Typed transcript, F.A. and Louise DuVal Papers, box 2, folder 11, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.
- Rind, Helene. Interview by the author, 17 March 1998. Tape recording in collection of the author.
- Ruff, Henry J. Telephone conversation with the author, 12 August 1998. Notes in collection of the author.
- Schmieder, Adolph. Interview by Louise Miller DuVal, 11 May 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.
- Schmieder, Louis. Interview by Kirk Setzer, 6 May 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.
- Selzer, Arthur. Interview by Paul Staman, 4 April 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.
- _____, Personal conversation with the author, 19 September 1998. Notes, collection of the author.
- Selzer, Linda Graesser. Personal conversation with the author, 14 September 1997. Notes, collection of the author.
- Selzer, Louise Kippenhan. Personal conversation with author, 27 June 1998. Notes, collection of the author.
- Stuck, Peter. Interview by Jonathan Gary Andelson, 14 June 1971. Photocopied notes, collection of the author.
- _____. Interview by Jonathan Gary Andelson, 18 June 1971. Photocopied notes, collection of the author.
- _____. Interview by Jonathan Gary Andelson, 18 September 1972. Photocopied notes, collection of the author.

Unglenk, Lina Roth. Personal Conversation with the author, 8 March 1998. Notes, collection of the author.

Wetjen, Elizabeth Oehl. Personal conversation with the author, 4 July 1997. Notes, collection of the author.

Zuber, Edna and Otto, interview by Gaycia Neubauer, 3 May 1982. Typed transcript, Oral History Collection, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Newspapers

Amana Society Bulletin
Benton County Star
Cedar Rapids Gazette and Republican
Des Moines Register and Leader
Des Moines Tribune
Kansas City Star
Marengo Pioneer Republican
New York Times
Pasadena Post
Wallaces' Farmer
Wall Street Journal
Williamsburg Journal Tribune

Manuscript Sources

Amana Society Collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City, Iowa.

Amana Society Archives, Amana Society Main Office, Amana, Iowa.

Arthur Barlow Scrapbook, collection of the Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

F. A. and Louise DuVal Papers, Amana Heritage Society, Amana, Iowa.

Homestead Welfare Club Minutes, 1919-1953, collection of the author.

Hoppe, Emilie Zuber. "A Story Recalled." Unpublished paper, collection of Amana Heritage Society, 1981.

Paul Kellenberger, personal correspondence with the author, 1997-1998, collection of the author.

Charles J. Kippenhan, personal correspondence with the author, 1997-1998, collection of the author.

Koch, August. *Inspirations Historie*. Unpublished manuscript, collection of Amana Heritage Society, 1932.

Louis Selzer Papers, collection of Arthur Selzer, Homestead, Iowa.

Shambaugh Family Papers, University of Iowa Special Collections, University of Iowa Library, Iowa City, Iowa.

Peter Stuck Papers, collection of the author.

Trumpold, Caroline and Clifford Trumpold, "The Great Change from the Communal System to Capitalism: A Short Paper on Its Effect on the Contemporary Amana Citizen." Unpublished paper, collection of the author.

Henry A. Wallace Papers (microfilm) Iowa State University, Microform Department, Parks Library, Iowa State University, Ames, Iowa

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The genesis of this thesis can be traced to several conversations I had with my mother and grandfather in which both lamented the lack of a full-length study of the reorganization of the Community of True Inspiration, known as the Amana Society. The first serious account of the Reorganization, Bertha Shambaugh's *Amana That Was and Amana That Is*, was written within weeks of the event, and therefore the account lacks reflection and insight which later accounts have been able to provide. Although several scholars and authors have devoted their attention to the Amana Society since Shambaugh's book, they have been primarily interested in the community's communal period. Notable exceptions to this trend are the works of Jonathan Andelson and Lawrence Rettig. Rettig's concise history of the Reorganization and subsequent history of the Amana Society to 1975 provided a sound basis for the present study. Andelson's as yet unpublished dissertation provided a scholarly interpretation of the events leading up to the reorganization of the Amana Society which has proven invaluable. Neither of these works, however, provided the minute analysis of the Reorganization and its aftermath that the present work does. To these pioneers in the field, I owe a great measure of gratitude.

I owe an equal measure of gratitude to my family and friends in the Amana community. The person to whom I owe the greatest debt, however, died sixteen years before I even contemplated my work. Peter Stuck, my great-grandfather, died when I was not quite six years old, leaving behind, literally, cabinets full of his personal papers, memorabilia, and photographs. My great-grandfather was involved in the reorganization process from "before the beginning and after the

end.” An amateur historian, he was also a notorious pack rat, an idiosyncrasy that I have come to appreciate all the more in recent months. Following his death in 1979, his son-in-law, my grandfather, Arthur Selzer, laboriously indexed and filed most of these papers, including a massive collection of photographs and also material relating to Amana history dating to the eighteenth century.

During an afternoon exploration in the basement, however, I discovered that some of my great-grandfather’s material had been overlooked in the filing and sorting process. This material, contained in two small boxes, included the ballots from the June 1931 test vote, held to determine the will of the Amana Society membership regarding reorganization, and dozens of pieces of correspondence and miscellaneous material relating to the reorganization process itself. This material has proved an invaluable source of previously unavailable information. Aside from his personal papers, I have also encountered my great-grandfather in others ways. As secretary of the reorganization committee, and later secretary of the Amana Society Board of Directors, he kept most of the minutes I have utilized in this study. In addition, as editor of the *Amana Society Bulletin*, he also produced many of the journalistic accounts that I have used. For his foresight in preserving things and because of his role in creating the Amana Society, I owe him my biggest debt of gratitude.

My family and friends, especially my mother, Barbara Hoehnle and my good friend Stephanie Althof, have listened to my countless renditions of the Reorganization. They have also served as a source for anecdotal information, as have many other individuals in the Amanas, too numerous to cite here. Paul Kellenberger, the last surviving member of the Committee of Forty-Seven, the elected organization which planned the Amana reorganization, graciously

answered my several letters for information, while Lina Unglenk, Helene Rind and Elizabeth Blechschmidt, Frieda Oehl, Elizabeth Wetjen, Arthur Selzer, and Helene Hoehnle all allowed themselves to be interviewed.

A special thanks should also go to the staff of the Amana Heritage Society, particularly its director, Lanny Haldy, for their kind assistance. In 1982 Haldy led the effort which established the Amana Oral History Collection, from which I was able to draw heavily. Jonathan Andelson generously allowed me the use of his notes, and Donald Pitzer, director of the Center for Communal Studies at the University of Indiana, Evansville, has responded enthusiastically to my e-mail requests for information on the dissolution of other communal societies. Shirley Reihmann, the current treasurer of the Amana Society, was especially helpful in helping locate records at the Society's Main Office, and she and other members of the staff, endured my frequent, and always unannounced visits. Paul Zimmermann provided his insights into the Reorganization, and helped transcribe the minutes of the Board of Trustees from their original German script to standard form.

Finally, I owe a tremendous debt to professors Dorothy Schwieder, Michael Whiteford, and R. Douglas Hurt for their assistance. Dr. Schwieder, in particular encouraged me to pursue the topic at the beginning and she, along with Dr. Hurt, patiently read the often poorly typed drafts of the chapters which compose this final effort.