

News from the Communal Studies Association

2007 “Coordinated Conference” at Kirtland, Ohio

Plans are underway for the first joint conference between the CSA and the John Whitmer Historical Association (JWHA) to be held September 27-29. The theme of the conference is “Communal Experiments Among Latter Day Saints and Other American Groups.” Lodging will be available at the Comfort Inn in Mentor, located north of Kirtland. Meals will be at the Kirtlander Restaurant. Each day CSA members can tour the Kirtland Temple, the cemetery, and “Historic Kirtland.” Sessions will be held at the temple, the Visitors Center, and the Community of Christ Church sanctuary. There are three kinds of sessions—two sessions each on CSA and JWHA presentations, and one combined track on LDS communal history. On Thursday, September 27, pre-conference tours are scheduled to Zoar, the Shaker Historical Society, and the Western Reserve Historical Society’s Shaker Collection. On Friday morning, along with registration at the Visitor Center and book sales at the church, there will be a plenary session at the temple from 8:30 to 10:00. On Saturday evening at 7:00, there will be simultaneous events: the CSA annual banquet at the Comfort Inn, and the JWHA presidential banquet at the Visitor Center. On Sunday morning at 9:00 in the temple, a combined CSA and JWHA plenary musical festival will include Latter Day Saints and communal faiths hymns. For program information and registration, consult the CSA website www.communalsocieties.org after July 1.

In February 1831, twenty-five year old Joseph Smith and his wife, Emma, moved from Palmyra, New York to Kirtland. The previous April he had procured a state charter and established “The Church of Jesus Christ,” and its small congregation of a half-dozen followers met for the first time in the home of Peter Whitmer. He proclaimed the Ohio site to be the eastern boundary of a Zion that extended to the Pacific Ocean. Following a revelation, he established a “communistic society” at a farm owned by Isaac Morley. Every adult male deeded all worldly possessions to the Church, which through a bishop assigned the property back to the individual as an “inheritance” to use during his lifetime. This was not complete communalism, however, because the Church had no control over wages or market prices, and Mormons lived in separate family homes.

More information on the Kirtland community will be available in *Communiqué’s* “Historic Community Profile” this summer.