

The “Christian German Agricultural and Benevolent Society of Ora et Labora”

Walter A. Brumm



Emil Gottlieb Baur, founder of Ora et Labora.
Courtesy Archives of Michigan.

New insights into the “Christian German Agricultural and Benevolent Society of Ora et Labora,” or simply Ora Labora (pray and work), are coming to light through Hamilton College’s acquisition of a rare manuscript recently added to its Communal Societies Collection. First, a few words to orient the reader. The 1862 communal settlement was on property adjoining Wild Fowl Bay in Huron County, Michigan.¹ The community identified itself as culturally German and religiously Christian,

with a Methodist twist; a benevolent society; and economically agrarian, organized as a joint-stock company. Second, an observation, before providing an abbreviated account of this group, about the importance of the manuscript for understanding Ora Labora's history and documentary record.

The manuscript letter book contains the correspondence of Emil Gottlieb Baur (1831-1894), the inspiration behind Ora Labora and one of its founding members, for the years 1885 and into 1889. Since the colony disbanded in 1868, about twenty years earlier, why is it of interest for communal history and research? The answer is simple: Ora Labora's debts took longer to die than its physical existence. During the years between 1868 and 1895, when the debt was retired, Baur not only became the land sales agent of the Harmony Society but he continued to visit and correspond with Harmony Society trustees. The relationship between the Harmony Society (1805-1905) and the Ora Labora colony (1862-1868), which officially began in 1862 and ended in 1895, is a story of personal friendships as well as a revealing glimpse into communal financial relationships.²

One letter in the manuscript not only provides an historical sketch of Ora Labora, it establishes the authorship and date for the "Undated History" manuscript at the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. In Baur's letter dated February 5, 1887, written to the Honorable W. S. Webber of East Saginaw, Michigan, he states that he included a sketch of the Ora Labora colony, including his thoughts on why the commune failed. The form and structure of his sketch, beginning with its topical section headings, so closely follows those in the "Undated History" as to confirm Emil Baur as its writer. Furthermore, in a brief letter to Webber dated December 26, 1887,³ in which Baur wrote, "Your favor of 21st inst. [December 21, 1886] recd [received] asking for a sketch of the Ora Labora colony I will do what I can if you promise me that you will return my manuscript after ... and will favor me with the prove [proof] before it is printed, so that I could suggest such corrections which would be essential." The letter of December 26 also indicates why Webber asked for an historical sketch of the colony. Baur wrote, "You will also kindly mail me a copy of the Historical Pamphlets you desire to print." Variations between the Undated History and February 5th letter appear to be editorial rewrites and improvements.

Most of the primary source documents for Ora Labora are in two collections, those at the Bentley Historical Library's Ora Labora Collection, which include among other items the colony's constitution, financial accounts, and Board minutes. A second major collection is to be found in the Harmony Society Archives at Old Economy Village, Ambridge, Pennsylvania, in its correspondence and business records.⁴ The newly recovered letter book of Emil Baur substantiates and supplements that record.⁵



Emil Gottlieb Baur and his wife.
Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.

Prelude: Immigrant in America

Emil Baur emigrated from Wurttemberg, Germany, to America following the failed 1848 German Revolution. After settling in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, two important events occurred in his life. First, he encountered Wilhelm Nast (1807-1899), who in 1835 became the Methodist Episcopal Church's missionary to German immigrants in America. Baur converted to Methodism and subsequently became a circuit riding missionary⁶ in the German Methodist Movement led by Nast.⁷ Second, while living in Pittsburgh, Baur became acquainted with the Harmonists,⁸ then living in their third and final location at Economy,⁹ sixteen miles north and west of the city of Pittsburgh. His reported frequent visits to Economy established a relationship with The Harmony Society trustees to the extent that Baur felt comfortable requesting financial aid from them. Baur in 1863 requested a thousand dollar loan to help finance equipment for a saw mill at Ora Labora "so they can work rather than beg." In that letter he also stated that those in the community were primarily Methodists. About the colony's location in Michigan, he tells them that the "land is forested and includes a salt basin and limestone deposits. They have also acquired swampland from the state of Michigan upon their agreement to drain the land."¹⁰ Romelius Baker and Jacob Henrici, the trustees for the Society replied that same month: "The trustees have decided to make an exception to their usual policy because Baur's group has such praiseworthy purpose and are enclosing the sum requested without interest for two or three years."¹¹

Purpose of Ora Labora

The ramifications of those two events converged in Emil Baur's response to what he experienced as he met with and listened to the concerns of German immigrants while traveling his missionary circuit. His response is unique in that it was neither personal nor charitable. On his minuscule salary, Baur could afford little if any financial assistance. Furthermore, Baur does not frame the problem in reformist terminology. He does not refer to the evils of capitalism or about poor working conditions, let alone define poverty as the result of industrialization and urbanization. In fact, the closest to a reform perspective appears in Robert Conway's paper in which he cites a statement made by Emil Baur's granddaughter, Wanda Morse: "My grandfather believed that a Christian cooperative society ...

would provide a wholesome and satisfying life for the impoverished of the city's slums.¹² Even her reference to "the impoverished of the city's slums" is no more than recognition of a plight common among immigrants. As for Baur, he bypassed external causes for immigrant impoverishment and zeroed in on what the immigrants' goals were and how the immigrants themselves could achieve their objectives. His approach was not on what individuals could not achieve, but what individuals in cooperation could achieve. Baur's assessment of the immigrant's situation was attentive to social relationships.

What exactly was cooperation to achieve? According to Baur, "The objective was mutual cooperation by workingmen to get homes and good schools; at the same time enjoying the privileges of the social life ... advantages of village life not scattered on farms and the promotion of ... benevolent enterprises."¹³

In Article 1, section 2, of the *Ora Labora* Constitution, Baur further states that "the design object or intention of this Society shall be: a) the promotion of Family Wellfare [sic] by family & public exercises of [illegible] [and] b) By intellectual & mental culture of our youth whereby the holy scriptures shall never be [excluded?] from our schools."¹⁴

Baur's rational approach to immigrant concerns recognized what was lost in the wake of urbanization and industrialization. Lost in industrial-urban communities were people who knew one another through a variety of situations and who interacted in personal networks based on familiarity, intimacy, and mutual assistance. The loss resulted in a large segment of urban dwellers, and to a greater extent, immigrant urban dwellers, who experienced social isolation, loneliness, and alienation. Baur's vision for *Ora Labora* was that it would restore the web of social relationships that are meaningful and mutually beneficial but within the framework of the emerging values and norms associated with "modern" Western culture. The nexus appears in his reason for forming a cooperative commune and in solving the issues brought on by urbanization and industrialization. The latter played havoc with the web of personal community ties and mutual assistance once common in rural German communities. Therefore, Baur's opposition to scattered isolated farm families is rejected in favor of his planned village within a communal context. Nevertheless, Baur's communal cooperative organization was based on a new cultural vision that was the culmination of the rapid and radical socio-cultural revolutions that began in the Renaissance and Reformation Eras and continued

through political and scientific Enlightenment thought which brought about the American and French Revolutions, the Napoleonic Wars, and the 1848 German Revolution. Any restoration of traditional primary community relationships would have to take into account the emerging cultural outlook centered upon personal freedom and the right of self-determination. A value cluster embodied those objectives: individualism, democracy, and capitalism. The latter two supported the first. This value cluster Baur integrated into Fourier's ideas regarding phalanxes or communal associations.

Baur understood the importance of culture in overcoming personal feelings of social isolation, loneliness, and alienation. He used both the German language and Methodism to establish social cohesion. Both were important to resolving psychological issues caused by culture shock and the social pressure to acculturate. Baur's continued use of German was not to maintain a separate German community but to accommodate an easier and more individualized cultural transition.

Baur was a circuit riding missionary in the German-Methodist movement. Behind that movement were Methodist Church leaders who responded to the increasing number of German immigrants to America and who acknowledged that their use of English to save souls and preach God's grace was not very effective. The Methodist Episcopal Church in the 1830s decided to institute a mission to German immigrants led by German-speaking ministers. Not long after, it became clear that what was communicated in speech had to be supported by publications in German. Both methods made the transmission of ideas more meaningful, more comprehensible, as well as supporting and sustaining continued interaction.

Significant to the story of *Ora Labora* was Wilhelm Nast's newspaper, *Der Christliche Apologete*, first as aiding in immigrant acculturation and second as the means by which Baur recruited its readers to become part of *Ora Labora*. (1) While it provided immigrants with information needed to participate in American society, the weekly paper "was both a religious paper and a journal of general information for readers still unable to follow the English language."¹⁵ It also was Wilhelm Nast's conscious effort to use the German language to facilitate acculturation, or Americanization.¹⁶ Carl Wittke, Nast's biographer, wrote that Nast

undoubtedly would have become reconciled to the unavoidable shrinkage in the membership of the German churches, for he was

genuinely interested in the Americanization of the immigrant and always contended that preaching Methodism to the Germans would make them better citizens and help them to become Americanized.¹⁷

In exemplifying this point, Wittke writes:

In the summer of 1860, the *Apologete* published a series of articles on United States history, which emphasized that “Christianity is the palladium of this happy Republic.” Germans were urged to study the history and institutions of their adopted country so that no cleavage might develop between immigrants and native born ... Other contributions explained how the President was chosen and the intricacies of the electoral college.¹⁸

(2) Both the German Methodist movement and a Methodist German religious press predated Baur’s arrival in America. As one of Nast’s German missionaries, it was expected that he would read and distribute *The Christian Apologete*. Baur’s familiarity with it also was the probable cause for him to secure Nast’s permission to not only announce his plans to form a commune but to seek recruits to participate in it. If it had not been for Baur’s press appeal, Ora Labora would never have seen the light of day. Without the *Apologete*, Baur had no effective method for reaching a broad audience. By means of the paper Baur was able to reach persons in the northeast and Midwest. The initial membership of Ora Labora reveals their widely scattered origins. It also indicates that those who joined were relative strangers to one another.¹⁹

Not to be forgotten is that Baur was an immigrant and one of those caught up in the expansion of German Methodism. It was in his role as a Methodist circuit rider that he met and interacted with German immigrants. Out of this interaction came the idea for Ora Labora. Keeping this in mind, we return to Baur’s short historical sketch of Ora Labora. After relating the purposes for Ora Labora, he described what he called its scheme, by which he meant its organizational plan or structure.²⁰

By Anne Dr.

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*Ora Labora, Mich. Lithograph by Ehrgott, Fororiger & Co. Lithogr. Cincinnati (detail).
Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan.*

Structural Scheme of Ora Labora

Baur determined that his purposes could best be achieved in a communal society like that of Brook Farm, which utilized Charles Fourier's organizational model of a joint-stock company.²¹ For the generation born who were imbued with the Western cultural norms post 1830, this model was compatible with the immigrant's belief in *capitalism* for achieving economic opportunities and in *individualism* for actualizing greater personal control over an individual's life. In this last respect, it also was amenable to an important democratic principle, that the company's leadership was determined and accountable to the shareholders who voted them into office. None of these cultural values as used in the mid-nineteenth century were present in Harmony Society thought or practice, which may have been why Baur identified his ideas of communalism less with the Harmonists than with the Fourierist ideas embodied in Brook Farm. That said, a Fourier type cooperative communal society can be described as follows:

The community was a large corporation, in which everyone would gather their resources and contribute to the capitalization of the community ... Self-interest would mean that one would work for the good of the corporation. Since no two people contributed the same amount of capital to the community, stock ownership would contribute some equity. Arguments over who got stock, how much, who could vote (workers or stockholders?), and how many votes each person had were problems of joint-stock communes. ... Fourier's heyday was the 1840s and 1850s. Perhaps there were as many as thirty communities that owed some of their ideas to Fourier.²²

Four thousand shares of Ora Labora stock were offered for sale at \$25 a share. Any individual could buy stock in the joint-stock venture, but this did not mean that they were active members and part of the communal settlement. To satisfy the conditions of membership, every applicant for membership was required to pay a \$25 membership fee before any stock could be purchased.²³ To actually become an active member, the applicant had to buy at least one share of stock in the company, although they could buy as many as they wanted and could afford. In terms of overall actual

stock sales, Baur and associates must have been disappointed. As late as 1866, Baur was still attempting to sell those shares. Failing to sell all the available stock meant that the community would be under funded, a reality that caused tremendous financial burdens for the community.

Membership and Its Privileges

Article 2, section 1, of that Constitution states that there were three classes of membership: 1. active, 2. probationers, and 3. honorary. Also in article 2, sections 1-2, it is stated that all members will be white, male, and eighteen to seventy-five years of age, possessed of “such faculties & abilities which the association may prescribe in by laws.” Also in article 2, section 4, the Constitution states that active members have the right to vote and hold offices in the company. Voting rights did not belong to all stockholders or members; those rights belonged to white males who were both stockholders and active members of the commune.²⁴

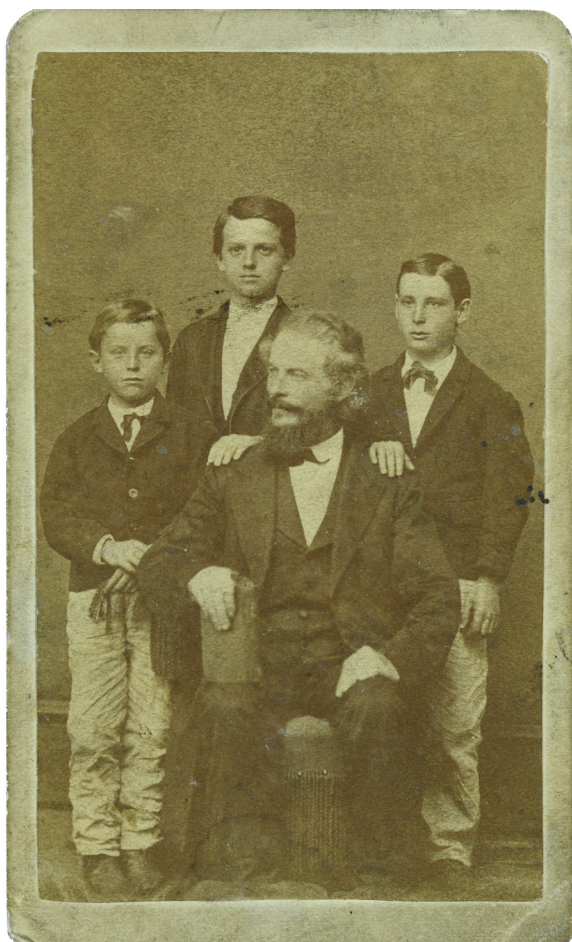
One of the stated benefits of being an active member was set out in article 6 of the Bylaws. “Each active member shall have 1 Town lot consisting of half an acre gratis.” A marginal note gave the lot size as 132 feet across the front and 165 feet in length. Then in section two of article six, “active members are allowed to own two cows, chickens, two pigs etc[.] as individual property.”²⁵

Organizational Operations

Article 3, section 1, stated the duties of active members. Under the “superintendence of the Board of Directors,” they are to cooperate in reaching the objectives of the company.²⁶ This Board mediated between the whole body of active members and the duly elected officers. Individuals elected by the active members represented the interests of the entire active membership group. One third of the representatives were to be elected every year, which allowed representatives to serve a three year term of office.²⁷

At the heart of this constitutionally defined order was the principle of democracy, authority rests with the electorate, not with the elected leaders. This was the popular reaction to the reviled rule of absolute monarchs and religious authorities, when the people were in a subordinate position. Therefore, votes, voting rights, and voters were the power within representative constitutional democracies.

The Constitution made clear for whom, what, and when members of Ora Labora would exercise their right to vote. While implications of the vote for Ora Labora will be discussed later, its basic and more common use is found in this illustration. “[For persons] who are working by the day, [they] shall elect a foreman among themselves, whose orders they have to obey and whose duty it is to deliver every evening all the tools of the Colony at their proper place.”²⁸



Emil Gottlieb Baur and his children.
Courtesy Archives of Michigan.

Statistical Profile of the Community

Statistical descriptions can be as deceptive as revealing. Ora Labora's population number is not to be equated with its actual membership count. Members were white, male, and eighteen to seventy-five years of age....” This accounts for why residents are spoken of as souls. Apart from this, just when did the colony have 140 souls? Baur, when he wrote his letter sketch of Ora Labora on February 5, 1887, stated that on

the 22 of June 1883 [sic, 1863?] there were 140 souls at Ora Labor, 28 heads of families, 28 wives, 10 single men, 5 single women & 73 children under 14 years. In 1884 [sic, 1864?] 13 dwelling houses 18 x 14, a barn 24 x 68, a store with post office, a blacksmith ... and wagon maker shop, a steam saw, grist and shingle mill, a tannery and sundry buildings for stables and storehouses and a ... dock 800²⁹ feet long were erected. A scow and some smaller boats were purchased, also horses, oxen, cows, and agricultural implements [sic] representing a value 10 to \$20,000. A Road was built from sandridge down to the dock.³⁰

Another community profile was written by a journalist from the *Huron County News* who visited the colony in 1865.

He found a group of about 30 families and 140 individuals, of whom 73 were children under fourteen, and 36 were qualified voters. Of the 3,000 acres of colony land originally acquired, only about 160 acres had been cleared, but the colony also owned an island of 180 acres in Wild Fowl Bay on which the settlers tried to grow grapes. Nearly every family had a cow, pigs, chickens, and geese, and the colony still operated a saw mill, flour mill, a tannery, and a small shop to manufacture shingles.³¹

Robert Conway in his history of Ora Labora does distinguish between active members and residents. Unfortunately he did not state the number of residents in 1867. “By 1867, no more than fifteen active members and their families remained. Baur no longer lived at the colony because he left in November 1866.”³² The end came when the colony disbanded in 1868.



Ora et Labora Colony map (detail). The small grid represents the core of the community.

Structures noted include a dock, sawmill, and tannery.

Manuscript Group 185: Harmony Society Papers, Business File.

Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Old Economy Village Archives.

Causes of Failure

1. Cooperative System Failure and Individualism: Background Considerations

At the heart of Emil Baur's assessment of why Ora Labora failed were these words: "The friction between the individual & common interest was appearant [sic] at once." It is a generalization that each person in the community, aware of it or not, struggled within themselves over their primary loyalty to their common cause or to their own self-interests. This was a psychological and spiritual struggle; it was not a social system failure. That this interpretation is correct is evident in the illustration Baur used to prove his point. He observed that individuals worked enthusiastically on Saturdays, a time when they worked on their own homes and lots. By contrast, Baur observed that "during other working days much time was lost in discussing the business before and during the work."³³

What Baur does not state is that (1) in the *presentation* of his communal proposition, individualism was at its core; and (2) in the *organizational structure*, three values that dominated mid-nineteenth century Western culture³⁴ were incorporated into it. These values were *individualism*, in which personal interests took precedence over collective or community interests; *democracy*, in which power to lead, manage, or govern resides with the governed; last, but not least, *capitalism*, in which individuals determine their own economic future by their investment decisions.³⁵

Ironically, how these values were utilized in the colony's Constitution and Bylaws did not structure a balance or a complementary interplay between individualism and cooperation. The Constitution was stated in such a way that it weakened, if not destroyed, cooperation. It often juxtaposed individualism and cooperation, thereby virtually eliminating any idea of a mutuality of cooperating efforts. The association was to provide mutual support for the realization of participant objectives. In fact, its only overt support for cooperation was in the restriction about the sale of shares and the agreement to revisit the association's communal arrangement. This provision stopped individuals from changing their minds about being in community and thereby willfully selling their shares when such an action would jeopardize the interests of other active members.

That being said, the organizational and social structure with their concerns for individual rights and benefits appears to have been created to ameliorate the participant's immediate social and economic circumstances.

As an aside, is it not worth observing that none of the community's objectives was in support of religion in general or Methodism in particular? God receives honorific notice and the Methodist discipline is recognized as the standard for appropriate social behavior. Even the colony's benevolent objectives are no more than hopeful dreams. It is curious that none of the objectives or the means to address them related to the benefit and practice of an evangelical faith, although the members claimed to be persons of faith—and may have been motivated by a highly personalized faith. In short, the organizational structure gave minimal support for either religion or the collective aspirations of the group.

If the foregoing is about what Baur or the Constitution and Bylaws failed to do in support of Ora Labora's cooperative plan, it does make clear Baur's emphasis on individual rights and objectives. And, it does this by making the individuals involved in Ora Labora's the cause of its failure. However, the particulars in all of Ora Labora's history are not the only facts to be considered. Beyond the space and time facts, attention must be given to social realities revealed through concepts derived from those facts and their statistical analyses. What about social facts and cultural mindsets? After a brief introduction to social facts and the part they play in explaining what happened to Ora Labora, some illustrations and interpretive comments hopefully will justify the position taken here.

From what I have observed, the facts behind individual self-interest must be taken into account if a full and comprehensive explanation of Ora Labora's failure is to be found. And yet, only the temporal and material have been mentioned. Attention needs to shift to general, and more specifically, to social facts. Factual generalizations are abstractions derived from the compilation of discrete occurrences and analyzed by statistical methods. Examples of these empirical and scientifically observable facts are corporate culture, types of land use, patterns of power sharing, dyadic and triadic relationships, value hierarchies, and social trends. In keeping with facts like these, historical narratives are told not in terms of unique persons and singular events, but in terms of types of societies, types of government, and types of social relationships which are described in relation to cultural priorities and in terms of the roles individuals play relative to the positions they held. Neither of the two types of facts nor their socio-historical narratives is complete in themselves. Each informs the other and creates a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of events and social histories.

C. Wright Mills wrote about the contrast and connection of the subjective human experience with the objective, and thereby abstract and conceptual, nature of that experience. The connection is effected when the subjective experience is comprehended through an impersonal or neutral perspective. An objective perspective is achieved when a multitude of subjective experiences are conceptualized and organized into categories based on common characteristics. That the human brain is capable to do and perform such neurological functions is the reason individual persons are not overwhelmed by an endless flow of stimuli and can stand back or above the flow and see the bigger picture, to grasp more than momentary experiences. This in turn allows the mind to reflect upon and to find meaningful connections in what is experienced subjectively, not simply by its own means but through cultural knowledge passed on by the process of socialization. Mills simply referred to the movement from historical facts to generalizations derived from them as *sociological imagination*. The human mind by means of imagination and symbolic formulation “sees” subjective experience differently. The dynamic relationship between personal experience and conceptualized experience is a collaborative or reciprocal interaction that provides a more nuanced and comprehensive interpretation or understanding of historical facts than otherwise would be possible. The subjective and objective perspectives are not in themselves oppositional, simply incomplete.

The sociological imagination is exemplified in how an unemployed worker can assess his or her situation. Subjectively the loss of employment is caused by an individual’s failure to do a job well and to do it as the employer wanted; or, unemployment is the result of an irrational animosity of the employer toward an employee. When causation is based on an individual’s actions due to personal characteristics, whether physical, chemical, or socio-psychological, the individual is responsible for being unemployed. The cause and consequence are different when understood objectively. The unemployed can get beyond the subjective and understand his unemployed status as the result of global market forces. This social fact is the result of a differential in labor availability and thereby it’s cost in different regions of the world. Manufacturers of products can increase profits as well as make their products more competitive if they produce them with equally competent workers who will do the work at a lower wage. When a formerly higher wage workers finds him or herself unemployed, the reason is not personal but the result of the relocation of the manufacturing facility,

downsizing, or outsourcing. None of these can be explained in terms of biochemical or character flaws attributable to an individual.

Since the objective perspective was established in the social sciences in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it would not have been in the mindset of Baur or his associates. Therefore Baur interpreted the failure in terms of individual self-interests. And, when he referred to how that caused the failure of the system, he identified cooperation as a system, which it is not by current standards. In commonsense terms it made sense to him. However, from Baur's assessment, viewed in terms of the sociological imagination, the interplay between the subjective and objective facts reveals a more complex and interesting perspective on why Ora Labora failed. From an objective point of view, its social structure was at odds with its objectives. Baur had not discovered the bigger picture, that the dominant cultural values of his time and the social structure of the commune shaped, even pre-determined, Ora Labora's end.

Was its failure simply the result of values and social design or were there other factors that contributed to its failure? After some illustrations to support the role its social structure played in its downfall, several other factors will be briefly mentioned.

1a. Examples: Ora Labora's Social Structure and Its Consequences

The purpose or objective of Ora Labora was to provide German immigrants with a means to improve their economic and social situation in American society. If that was its immediate objective, its long term goal also was to become a benevolent association, especially in providing a "Home for the Destitute" as stated in the Constitution.

Leadership at Ora Labora was layered; those layers were structured and described in the Ora Labora's Constitution. The stockholders directed and managed the organization by electing officers to carry out the will of the stockholders. The membership also elected a Board of Directors who had oversight of what the officers did and who saw to the general work assignments, set wages for work done on behalf of the colony, and served also as a grievance committee. The Board members were stockholders who were voted into office by their fellow stockholders. In short, all officers, managers, committee members came from those known as active members. The structure was a model of representative democracy in which ultimate authority was in the hands of those who owned stock and could vote.

Was this a perfect picture without flaws? How can and does leadership function in small capitalistic business company organized as a representative democracy? What role does the size of the organization play overtly and covertly in leaders leading? With the number of personal relationships in and out of office, would the familiarity and constant interaction between leaders and members not make it more difficult for leaders to make decisions without alienating their friends and follow stockholders? While authoritarian or dictatorial leadership could be easily seen and eliminated, an intimidating familiarity could not be eliminated. Did favoritism, intimidation, fraud, and avoidance affect leaders? In any case, the consequence of leaders who failed to make rational decisions and take decisive actions out of fear and imagined or actual intimidation would jeopardize community success and survival.

Leaders in the colony distributed work among all who lived in the colony by means of work assignments, officer specified duties, and by committee appointments. An example of this principle can be found in the Board minutes of May 11, 1863, when the Board resolved the following piece work assignments.

That Brother Bell should go out to find the cows which ran away, in case they should not have returned tomorrow morning. That sister Sarah should take care of the cows and milk them. That brother Seiffart should watch the cows for some days until they get used to the place[.]³⁶

This illustration is interesting for several reasons. First, the association's Christian orientation is evident in how men and women who lived in the colony were addressed: females were sisters, males were brothers. Second, it illustrates piece work assignments. And lastly, it reveals how this Board differs from most company or corporate boards. Most boards set policy and provide general oversight; they are not involved with such immediate tasks as work assignments or actually serve as arbiters in all disputes. The small size of the company and the actual number of workers could explain why the Board of Directors functioned as both directors and operational managers, including the appointment and oversight of special task committees. On the face of it, this organizational plan suggests a clear lack of duties and boundaries. If this did not lead to role conflicts it could only be that an informal governance structure operated along side the formal

one. In that case, personal prestige served to ameliorate conflict situations.

Another structural feature that contributed to individualism and undermined community cohesion was the institutionalization of a two-tiered labor system. Article 7 of the Bylaws stated that “The work of the Society shall, if possible, be performed by the piece [referring to assigned tasks to be carried out by mechanics, day laborers] or by the job[.]”³⁷ Which colony members fit into this category is not indicated. My current assumption is that the colony officers are in this category since that nature of their work was not piece work and since all workers were internal to the organization. However, one job specialization did exist, shoemaker. Neither clergy or board members or officers identified as being officially part of the job category. However, one clue to what this category refers to is revealed in the following statement. Those who work by the job “shall be delt [sic] with as it is customary in making contracts.”³⁸ Was the shoemaker under contract?

At Ora Labora, work was linked to wages. Since labor was two tiered so were wages. “Wages and salaries have to be fixed by the Board and the Society has to approve.” The division of labor and differential payment for different types of work reflected practices common in American society at large. Although American pay practices were followed, the wage differences in the two work classifications were relatively small; however, as the colony’s financial difficulties increased and meeting the expenses of daily operations worsened, the Board of Directors was “forced by circumstances” to lower wages. Unfortunately the percentage of wage cuts for the day laborers and for the officers was not equivalent, which led to occasional vociferous dissensions among the workers. At issue was the perceived injustice over the differences in wage cuts for piece and job work. While a differential had always existed, it went without notice until the differential members found it very difficult to meet the needs of their families. The fact was that the piece worker’s loss in pay had immediate and practical consequences. Since wages were practically realized as store credits, purchasing what was needed to satisfy even the most basic of family necessities became extremely difficult. Without any funds to meet those needs, rifts arose not only between individuals but between worker groups within the community over their competing interests.

While the two tiered labor and wage idea met capitalistic and individualistic expectations, they opposed communal ones, the sharing of a commonwealth in both labor and natural resources as well as in their

collective production benefits. Individual equity in a joint-stock company conflicted with the actuality of equal and cooperative labor expended by the participants. Whether labor was by the piece or job, the constitution made no acknowledgement of equity in work assignments, value of different tasks, or material benefits. This structural gap was complicated by the lack of recognition between those who owned shares, family size, and non-membership labor contributions to the cooperative labor supply. And, this in turn led to individual and group conflicts based on individual and family self-interests.

Beyond the issues of labor and wages, leadership was adversely affected by the Colony's organizational structure. Consider its impact on Baur's role as President of Ora Labora. As president, Baur was, according to the Constitution, to "watch over the [constitutional] agreements[,] the bylaws[,] and direct the whole as its superintendent." This included superintending the business affairs of the Society. He carried out these duties under the watchful eyes of the elected Board of Directors. All active members in this corporate democracy could vote and thereby see that their individual interests were being "fairly" represented.

When the idea of building a 220-foot dock to facilitate the colony's commercial trade transactions was proposed, Baur determined that the cost in materials, time, and labor would exceed any possible benefit—and deepen the colony's indebtedness. His concerns went unheard. "Against the will and the most convincing arguments of the president that the society had not the means to venture such an undertaking ... the majority voted for the building of a ... dock."³⁹ Baur saw himself as powerless. In his words, "The president had no veto power and had to submit to the majority even in business transactions."⁴⁰ His constitutionally mandated role as President was in conflict with the constitutional provisions for active member participation to vote on such issues. What Baur experienced was the tyranny of the majority as well as great personal frustration over being a responsible President. Furthermore, imagine how his opposition came with the loss of personal prestige. And, how did "rational" decision making impact his personal relationships within such a small group?

The foregoing shows how Baur understood his position as president and leader. On the other hand, how did those who lived at Ora Labora view his leadership? Although popularly elected, Baur was not exempt from criticism. The trigger for one particularly hostile response to his leadership occurred as a consequence of his absence from the colony when

a financial crisis arose. As the residents saw it, he was to be present to handle such situations. The fact that his absence was due to his efforts to raise money by selling shares of stock in order to keep the colony afloat apparently meant nothing. And, although the Vice President was officially in charge of Colony affairs during the President's absences, financial issues belonged to Baur alone. No mitigating factors offset making Baur either the Colony's financial savior or its sacrificial goat. In short, social structure was one thing but their were issues of trust and expectation that exceeded the formal organization and social structures. No matter where he was or what he was doing he could not have escaped colony criticism which reflected member frustrations over a looming financial collapse. In this there are several structural issues. In a well-organized company, a clear chain of command would be in place. The Constitution would suggest this, but countermanded it was how much his leadership was based on his personality and prestige. Second, Baur in fulfilling what he considered to be his obligations had assumed a role not defined or even recognized in the Constitution, that of fundraiser and publicist. Pragmatically speaking, he had to fill the role because there was no one else who had the social contacts with persons who would be able to help the colony, including those within the German Methodist Church and the Harmony Society.

Baur became the focal point for frustration and anxiety; he became the scapegoat. Although popularly elected, the electorate assumed no responsibility in their economic situation. That reality made an ugly situation worse. The charges against him went from momentary dissatisfaction to humiliating personal attacks on his character. On March 3, 1865, scandalous charges came before the Board.⁴¹

Baur was under attack on several counts, and he felt it necessary to write Nast to refute the lie that officers of the colony were buying up stock certificates at ridiculously low figures, and that he himself had cheated the colony out of a thousand dollars, and had used colony funds to hire a substitute when his name was drawn in the draft.⁴²

Despite the claims, there is no evidence of Baur's malfeasance in his duties as president. On the contrary it is manifestly clear that Baur worked untiringly to make *Ora Labora* successful, which is not intended to say that he never made a bad decision. In as much as the core issue was monetary, the various allegations real or imagined are best understood in

that context. Throughout Ora Labora's brief existence, the colony was never self-sufficient or debt free. It never became a producer of goods and services, but was a consumer of them.

As the financial situation worsened, other officials bore the brunt of an intensifying dissatisfaction. Even more telling was that some officers were at odds with other officers. One quarrel led to a Board meeting held on January 31, 1866. "The written opinion of the Board concerning the complaints of E. Baur against Louis Faul was read." Also, the Board asked three officers to resign: Kolb, secretary; Faul, vice president; and, Baur, president. All resigned but the Board accepted only that of Faul. However, Baur insisted that his resignation be accepted.⁴³ Then, on June 29, 1866, the Board held a town meeting at which time it was decided to sell colony lands. By November of that year, Baur's official residence was in Ann Arbor, Michigan. Ora Labora drifted haltingly into its 1868 collapse.

1b. Summary Assessment of Cooperative System Failure

The foregoing illustrations are not exhaustive of how Ora Labora's structural decisions predisposed it to failure. Although a thorough study needs to be done, it is hoped that what has been stated raises the importance of structural factors in the determination of communal viability. Secondly, structural considerations do not exist in the abstract but in relation to the Western Society's overarching and pervasive cultural orientation. During the 1830s the mindset or cultural orientation shifted from one based on primary relationships, a rural economy, and a political system that limited individual freedom. By the conclusion of the 30s, capitalism, democracy, and individualism were the dominant social values. Social relationships based on rural-collective, primary, long-term, and highly personal relationships were replaced by more urbanized, secondary, short-term, and more impersonal ones. The values common to the former were the submission of individual will to the acceptance of the collective will. Self interests or selfishness was disapproved.

Communal groups before the 1830s were accepting of communism, as a Christian virtue. The pooling of all economic assets signaled an individual's long term commitment to the group and willingness to be part of a commonwealth, or as the Shakers would say, a united inheritance. Implied in this value of anti-selfishness was the subordination of personal over spiritual and community interests. However, Baur and his followers were shaped not by a more cooperative cultural value system but by a

self-directed one which valued individualism. The first evidence of this was that it capitalized the purchase of their communal property through a joint-stock company. This was in keeping with what immigrants after 1830 were seeking in America: greater personal freedom and better economic opportunities. Freedom politically was found in America's sense of "we the people" and the right to vote; personal freedom meant more direct control over their own lives.

Without better earnings that freedom was limited. Immigrants on the whole had limited material resources, but as Baur pointed out, if they cooperated in a joint-stock company, their opportunity for economic advancement was better than what could be achieved individually. The proposition of a joint-stock company resonated with people predisposed to personal choice and freedom in buying and managing their investments. The value of personal choice and self-determination were also realized in the ideas associated with democracy. *Ora Labora's* governance model was that of a representative democracy, which located power and authority not in individuals with charisma, expertise, or by divine authority, but in the electorate. To vote, the individual had to be a shareholder and active member in the joint-stock company. Aside from having direct input into company operations, another stockholder benefit was that they were free to sell their stocks and cease being part of the colony if they did not like the communal experience or simply had a personal desire to move on to something else. It was also the will of the founding members that to protect all investors and to provide time for the community to get itself established, the latter freedom would be restricted for a period of ten years.

In spite of the ten-year restriction on selling one's shares in *Ora Labora*, individual shareholders did achieve one objective early on—a lot and home to call their own, which they were granted and which was not part of the communal holdings. For members with families, this represented independence from what other families did, although everyone ascribed to the behavioral code set out in the Methodist Discipline. The family was its own economic unit within the community. Perhaps most symbolic of family independence were the family meals, which were not communal. Although common meals would have supported group solidarity, the family meal bolstered individual family identity and self-interest. Collectively, the independent family, the individually owned house and lot, and the individual asset ownership and management catered to the individual and encouraged individualism. Not only could the active member own stock,

he could add to his holdings. Each investor was independent, not limited by what other investors did. Ora Labora structure advanced individualism at the expense of cooperation. This in turn led to competition and conflict and to the tyranny of the majority.

2. Underfunding & Indebtedness

Naïve enthusiasm resulted in a serious miscalculation of what could be required for start-up needs for at least a year. There was complete inattention to supply costs, including equipment to harvest logs and prepare the soil for cultivation. Lacking any financial reserves after the founding families purchased the property, paid for passage for themselves and for their livestock to their new home site, the society was confronted with the need of money to secure a loan for a steam operated sawmill. As previously stated Ora Labora never got beyond being a consumer economy. The result was an unending search for funds which became an unending request for loans from the Harmony Society. On May 1, 1866, the Harmony Society in response to yet another request for financial assistance wrote that “The trustees do not feel free to help further because the Colony should help itself.”⁴⁴

If a cause for Ora Labora’s failure was under-funding, this was human error, a miscalculation of the facts, whether through blind enthusiasm and/or selective attention. Enthusiasm and inattention were evident in the decision to build the aforementioned dock and to secure collateral for loans by acquiring more land. Add to this an unexpected and secondary matter that drained their resources—the need to extend hospitality to visitors, some of whom might seek to join the colony. “We had perpetual changes of comers and goers [visitors, inquirers, and probably opportunists], who all lived on the common store for a while and left to shift for themselves.”⁴⁵

3. Undermanned

The question of manpower has two components: the number of physical bodies that were available to complete designated jobs and whether the workers’ had the knowledge, skills, and experience those jobs required. As hard working as the able-bodied men were, on the whole they lacked the necessary skills for taming the wilderness and creating income-producing businesses. Aside from having a shoemaker and several ministers, the majority were unskilled

laborers and farmers. Baur observed that “our members, mostly mechanics, who were tired of city life, were unacustomed [sic] to pioneer life in the woods, yet they did the very best they could under the circumstances.”⁴⁶

This is to say that the workers were willing to make a concerted effort and by trial and error to learn on the job. The men knew little if anything about draining swamp land or coping with the different types of soil, including the sandy land adjacent to the bay. Even for those who had experience working on farms, they had no experience in working virgin land. And, just as they had no knowledge of ice and currents in a Great Lake, they had no knowledge of chemistry or geology, making it impossible to benefit from the salt deposit on colony land. Finally, when addressing the question about an adequately manned community, it is not simply a matter of numbers but of the physical, skill, and knowledge capabilities. Ora Labora was from its beginning to its conclusion undermanned, that is to say, it had an insufficient number of healthy able-bodied men to simultaneously build a physical communal settlement, clear and drain the land, and establish income-producing businesses that could pay its operational and obligatory expenses.

Inasmuch as physically strong male labor was in short supply from the outset, the Civil War’s need for healthy and physically fit men had an effect on Ora Labora. As mature members were called to service, the colony’s income-producing laborers were temporarily absent from the settlement. Although the conscripts could buy replacements or appeal that they not be enlisted because of reasons of hardship, no one from Ora Labora thought these options appropriate, especially since they wanted to prove their patriotism to their new homeland. They wanted to establish themselves as Americans. For all that was positive about Ora Labora’s willingness to support the war effort, it came at the expense of the lost labor, which simply added to the commune’s insolvency.

Emile Baur wrote to the Harmony Society trustees on July 3, 1865 that “Brothers Faul and Froebe have returned from military service. For the last seven weeks the entire colony has been down with fever with an average of only four men available for work.”⁴⁷ Failure to recruit strong young men, the loss of manpower due to the military draft, and the impact of illness on the labor supply illustrate the lack of manpower.

Even if they had the manpower and produced a surplus, the problem simply shifted to available markets, decent roads, and good transportation.

This was true of their logging/lumber business. And, it would have applied to the selling of farm products. Although Ora Labora's official name stated that it was an agricultural association, its main source of revenue was from logging, including ancillary businesses: lumber and shingle production. Agricultural production remained secondary for two reasons. Clearing and draining virgin wilderness land was not only labor intensive but it required skills and experience the colonists did not have. Second, although the community owned a number of cows and chickens, "the nearest market for butter and eggs was fourteen miles away...."⁴⁸ The distance is significant because of the lack of good roads to connect the colony with possible markets. Numbers, physical and knowledge abilities, and geographical location were interrelated factors. All contributed to the colony's economic woes.

Chores, maintenance work, and farm tasks were done by women, children, youth, and the elderly. They too were part of the workforce. Still, they could not replace the labor supplied by able bodied, healthy males. Men fitting that description were involved in logging and construction.

4. Location

As indicated in point three, those who began Ora Labora took advantage of opportunities to acquire land in Michigan. Michigan even encouraged German immigrants to settle in the state. The search team recommended land adjacent to Saginaw Bay with access to the Great Lakes, virgin fertile but often swampy, and with a salt deposit. What is unknown is whether the team had any prerequisites for good land with plenty of sweet water, mill seat, access to ports and good roads. In essence, what was purchased may have had good potential but without adequate manpower, equipment, and monies for development, that potential could not be realized.

At what point in a community's existence are these lessons learned? A quick comparative observation is that Ora Labora was like another German-American commune—Teutonia in Ohio. This short-lived group had a nice farm. They even erected a store on their road, but to little avail since the road was not well traveled and the store was not near any settlements. It foundered as a consequence. On the other hand the Shakers searched for land with a checklist: quality of the land for farming, near a town and transportation center, good mill seats for establishing a milling business, etc. At the outset, the colonists at Ora Labora may have gotten land, but not land of great utility.

A Closing Observation & Cautionary Tale: Found in a Picture

This cautionary tale is about assumptions researchers are tempted to make when dealing with archival collections in research libraries. Uncritical acceptance of document and photograph information can be misleading. With that said, I was delighted with a picture which was brought to my attention by Robert Conway's 1995 research paper. It was identified as the "only known photograph of the Ora Labora colonists."⁴⁹ In keeping with Ora Labora's 1862-1868 existence, Conway concluded that "the disproportion of women to men suggests that the Civil War draft may have indeed sapped the work force of the community. The low number of men suggests that the picture was taken during the later years of Ora Labora, possibly 1867, when only about twelve families lived at the colony." If his assumptions were wrong, then his interpretative conclusions would lack merit.

On a recent visit to the Harmonist archives at Old Economy Village, I shared my interest in the picture with Sarah Buffington, curator of collections. Viewing the photograph in light of her knowledge of period dress and hairstyles, she suggested that the photograph was circa 1890. Furthermore, she thought she recognized one of the individuals in the picture, a robust and bearded laborer near the center of the picture. Not being able to place the face, Sarah decided to review photographs of farm workers in the photo archives of the Harmony Society. To her delight, she found the man. And, the photograph was identical with the one in the Bentley Library's Ora Labora collection. Equally revelatory was the fact that the picture contained no Ora Labora individuals; it also included no Harmonists, only hired farm workers, circa 1890.

When I was able to review all the photographs in the Bentley Library's collection, I realized that all the photographs were Harmonist, not to mention that all were identified as Harmonist, except for the wedding picture of Emil Baur. Knowing this, why assume that one group picture out of the lot of Harmonist ones was of Ora Labora members?

Two cautionary points seem clear. First, notes on pictures may not have been written by knowledgeable persons. Second, photographs contain a wealth of information, but how much of the detail and what details in a photograph determine what the viewer will see. Conway saw the sex ratio in a picture in terms of the Ora Labora identification which overlapped

the Civil War era; and Sarah Buffington saw that the dress and hair styles were not of the 1860s but appropriate for the 1890s. Before researchers identify and interpret photographs, they need to make themselves aware of their unconscious assumptions about what influence its source and the topic have on their perception of what is seen. An important difference in understanding the contents of a photograph begins with the assumptions, orientations, and the interests of those viewing, or “seeing,” a picture. Different mindsets lead to different conclusions.

In this instance, the discovery of the identical photograph among the Harmonist photographs would appear to support the interpretation of Mrs. Buffington as reliable and verifiable. It also needs to be pointed out here that John Duss, who along with his wife were the last two Harmonist trustees, was in correspondence with Emil Baur. And, since Baur visited Economy on several occasions during John’s trusteeship, would it be reasonable to assume that Baur acquired them on one such a visit?

Editor’s note: the aforementioned photograph is printed on the next page.



Hired farm workers at Economy, Pennsylvania, circa 1890.

Manuscript Group 185: Harmony Society Papers, Business File.

Courtesy of Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Old Economy Village Archives.

Notes

1. Its location was near present-day Bay Port. For readers familiar with the mitten shape of Michigan, Wild Fowl Bay is on the western side of the mitten's thumb. The bay is off Saginaw Bay which connects with Lake Huron.
2. When Baur as President of Ora Labora secured financial support from the trustees of the Harmony Society. Neither could have anticipated the amount nor the duration of that support.
3. Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated December 26, 1887. The year was not 1887 but 1886. Following this brief letter, Emil Baur, on February 5, 1887, wrote again to Webber. That letter contained Baur's historical sketch of the Ora Labora Colony.
4. Currently I am working to identify Ora Labora material in that massive collection, along with preparing an annotated listing of all Ora Labora-Harmony Society correspondence.
5. The financial relationship between the two communal groups adds insight into the economics of communal life. Trustee John Duss at the end of the nineteenth century proclaimed that the Harmony Society was in dire financial straits. Given the Harmony Society's reported wealth, many questions have been raised as to Duss's motives and evidence for his statement. If Duss was correct, Ora Labora played a role in creating that problem.
6. Preachers were assigned territories in which there were stations or centers of German immigrants which the preacher was to visit on a regular schedule, these scheduled visits formed the circuits they traveled on horseback. Wilhelm Nast was assigned "to ride horseback over a circuit of some three hundred miles and was expected to cover his twenty-five preaching appointments once in every five weeks." Carl Wittke, *William Nast: Patriarch of German Methodism* (Detroit, Mich.: Wayne State University Press, 1959), 44.
7. Carl Wittke, "Ora et Labora: A German Methodist Utopia," *Ohio Historical Quarterly* 67, no. 2 (April 1958): 133. Nast, like Baur, was from Württemberg, also son of a Luthern pastor, as well as a convert to Methodism. Nast, like Baur, studied theology at the University of Tübingen. However, Nast rejected the rationalistic orientation of theologies that detracted from simple biblical and heart-felt authority in matters of faith. Nast was twenty-four years Baur's senior, which can account for why Baur considered Nast his mentor.

Nast is the nexus between several persons of interest in communal history. He not only converted Baur to Methodism; he also connected

Wilhelm Keil (1812-1877), who founded communal societies at Bethel, Mo., and Aurora, Ore., in 1844 and 1855 respectively. Another Methodist who came under the influence of Wilhelm Nast was Charles Nordhoff (1830-1901), “a distinguished journalist and author,” who wrote *The Communistic Societies of the United States from Personal Visit and Observation ...* (1875). Nast’s life-long relationship with Nordhoff began when the Nast family took the orphaned Charles into their family. See obituary of Wilhelm Nast in the *Omaha World-Herald* (published as *Morning World-Herald*, May 17, 1899; and *True Republican* (Sycamore, Illinois), May 20, 1899. See also Carol J. Frost, *The Valley of Cross Purposes: Charles Nordhoff and American Journalism, 1860-1890* (United States: Xlibris, 2017), 1. Frost states that “in 1844, at the age of fourteen, Charles Nordhoff ... ran away from his Ohio home to become a sailor. He was an orphan, apprenticed by then to a printer, the ward of a German Methodist bishop.” Carl Wittke in his biography of Nast (see p. 195n4) states, “When his father died, young Nordhoff was entrusted to Nast and worked as a printer’s devil [apprentice] on the *Apologete*.” Nordhoff and the Nast family maintained a familial relationship, regardless of how he came to leave his home with the Nast’s. (See also Peter Hoehnle, “Personal Visits and Observations: Charles Nordhoff’s Remarkable Tour of American Communal Societies,” *American Communal Societies Quarterly* 13, nos. 3 & 4 (July & October 2019): 188-237; and the Nast Family Papers and Records of the German Methodist Church at the Cincinnati History Library and Archives.)

8. Did Baur learn of the Harmony Society and Economy Village from Nast? Wilhelm Nast knew about the Harmonists and consciously sought out George Rapp during a time in his life when he struggled with spiritual doubts and suffered emotional distress. Rapp resorted to a commonly used therapeutic practice of the time, engaging the distressed person in outdoor physical activity. Rapp sent Nast into the fields with fellow Wurttembergers to dig potatoes. Nast who was an academic, and by then had been an instructor of German and classical studies at West Point, did not respond well to Rapp’s therapeutic approach. His response was to unceremoniously leave Economy. Knowledge of this encounter with the Harmony Society comes from Nast’s letter of apology to George Rapp dated June 22, 1833. After asking Rapp’s “pardon for my improper running away,” Nast also recounts that “Mr. Pastor Kammerer told me you had shown a willingness to assist me financially. I do not know how it is that I have met with so much kindness, unless the hand of God be in this.” Nast added these words: “If you would support me with a little to pay off a small debt, I would thank you and try to return it as soon as possible.” (Ms. letter in the Harmony Society Archives, Ambridge, Pa.)

9. "They called their new town Oekonomie (Economy), meaning 'a place of orderly, managed affairs.' This is a term used by pietistic societies for the 'divine economy' that they hoped to establish on earth—that is, a Christian, communal, pacifistic society." Daniel B. Reibel, *Old Economy Village: Pennsylvania Trail of History Guide* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2002), 17.
10. Karl Arndt, comp. & ed., *George Rapp's Re-established Harmony Society: Letters & Documents of the Baker-Henrici Trusteeship 1848-1868* (Bern: Peter Lang, 1993), 665-67.
11. *Ibid.*, 667-68.
12. Helen Board, *Bertha Baur: A Woman of Note* (Philadelphia: Dorrance and Co., 1971), 23. It is unclear as to which city's slums Wanda Morse refers. The only urban center Baur appears to have known was that at Pittsburgh, Pa.
13. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Undated History, Ora Labora ms., p.1; Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated February 5, 1887. This letter provides a date for the Undated History in the Ora Labora Collection at the Bentley Historical Library, as well as establishing Emil Baur as its author.
14. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ora Labora Collection ms., 1863 Constitution, p. 3.
15. Carl Wittke, "Ora et Labora: A German Methodist Utopia," 132.
16. From the 1850s German immigrants "established what is called 'ethnic Americanization.' They became American citizens, yet still maintained their ethnic heritage. For Germans, this meant one was no longer a German, but rather a German-American. Americanization, therefore, did not mean Anglicization." Don H. Tolzmann, *German Heritage Guide To The State Of Ohio* (Milford, O.: Little Miami Publishing Co., 2005), 9.
17. Carl Wittke, *William Nast: Patriarch of German Methodism* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1959), 78.
18. *Ibid.*, 133.
19. *Ibid.*, 85. There has been no way to determine how many of those who joined Baur were recruited as a result of their having reading about his proposed colony in the *Apologete*. However, the geographical diversity of the recruits indicates that the paper was instrumental in recruitment. Apart from promoting Baur's plan, the paper did periodically include an article about Ora Labora, becoming a source of primary information about the colony.
20. Structure refers to the arrangement or relationship of the interdependent component parts of a social system or an organization. The social structure of any society is made up of institutions, which here refers to the relatively stable patterns of behavior. The basic institutions in society are the family,

economic, political (governance), and religion—and are separated by their distinct functions of purposes and associated behavioral patterns, usually described by roles and statuses. The cultural values of the society or group are reflected in the normative character of these behavioral patterns.

21. It is important to distinguish between Ora Labora's communal usage of the joint-stock company structure from how communal groups used such a structure when they closed out their original communistic economic structure. Peter Hoehline in his article "Personal Visits and Observations: Charles Nordhoff's Remarkable Tour of American Communal Societies," 228, makes my point this way: "Amana followed the Oneida Community's lead and formed a joint-stock corporation which continues to function." As these communal societies broke up, the issue was how to distribute the assets to individuals who were part of the communal society. Those individuals were given shares in the communal holdings, those collective holdings then were operated as a for profit organization. If the joint-stock corporation model proved useful in distributing the assets of a communal society, it proved to be less effective in establishing and maintaining communal society operations, including those of Brook Farm, and Ora Labora.
22. Daniel B. Reibel, *Old Economy Village: Pennsylvania Trail of History Guide* (Mechanicsburg, Pa.: Stackpole Books, 2002), 8-9. Brook Farm (1841-1847), associated with Fourierism, was Emil Baur's model for organizing Ora Labora. As to Baur's actual knowledge about Fourier and his philosophy nothing is known.
23. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Undated History, Ora Labora ms., pp.1-2; Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated February 5, 1887.
24. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ora Labora Collection ms., 1863 Constitution, pp. 3-9. If possible it would be interesting to study the ideal as set out in the Constitution and the real in application and actual practice.
25. Ibid., 25. The Bylaws form the second and last part of the manuscript.
26. Ibid., 3, 5.
27. Ibid., 9.
28. Article 7 speaks to the same issue. It, however, adds that the Society also has to approve "wages and salaries." It does not spell out who constitutes the Society—all active members? See footnote 32.
29. The dock was 220 feet long, not 800. See Letter from Emil Baur to Romelius Baker and Jacob Henrici, dated October 15, 1863, in Karl J. R. Arndt, *George Rapp's Re-established Harmony Society: Letters and Documents of the Baker-Henrici Trusteeship, 1848-1868*, 685-87.
30. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Undated

History, Ora Labora ms., p.1; Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated February 5, 1887. These same facts, including the erroneous dates, are included in the “Undated History” manuscript in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

31. Carl Wittke, “Ora et Labora: A German Methodist Utopia,” 139. Wittke’s source for this information came from the August 21, 1865 issue of the *Christliche Apologete*.
32. Robert Conway, “The Failure of a German Communal Settlement in Civil War Michigan: A History of the Christian German Agricultural and Benevolent Society of Ora et Labora,” Independent Research Project, Department of History, Columbia University, January 19, 1995, p. 65. The number of families stated here is fifteen, while the number for the same time is stated as twelve in his discussion of what he refers to as the only photograph of people at Ora Labora. See clarifying comments on pp. 20-21.
33. Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated February 5, 1887. These same facts, including the erroneous dates, are included in the “Undated History” manuscript in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
34. Culture refers to how the material and immaterial products of human creativity form a group’s collective identity and by how their social acceptance shape and give meaning to social relationships. See pages 5-6 on immigrant acculturation and the use of German language at Ora Labora and in German Methodism.
35. In terms of Ora Labora’s big picture, distinct from the descriptive facts of a more personal and experiential narrative, what the members of Ora Labora were unaware of was just how much their communal model and their thoughts and actions were controlled by mid-nineteenth-century values: democracy, capitalism, and individualism. Even with Baur’s friendship with the Harmony Society, he did not “see” that the Harmonist “collectivism mindset” was in contrast to his “individualism mindset.” Economy was based on Christian communism in which personal self-interests were expected to conform to the collective interest. George Rapp was an opponent of individual selfishness because it was anti-communistic. It was incompatible with communal vitality and stability. That individualism and self-interests were incompatible with communism was evident in the Harmonist-Count Leon schism. The charismatic Count Leon’s appeal to the selfish or personal interests of young Harmonists led to a large segment of them joining him in the formation of a new community.

36. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ora Labora ms., Typescript of Report, 1862-1868 [being the Board Minutes], p. 17 [top left], p. 22 [top right]. I am indebted to Robert Conway in his 1995 paper, p. 26, for bringing this example to my attention.
37. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ora Labora ms., 1863 Constitution [including Bylaws], p. 25.
38. Ibid.
39. Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated February 5, 1887 [1886?]. See point two of causes of failure.
40. Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated December 26, 1887. The year was not 1887 but 1886. Following this brief letter, Emil Baur, on February 5, 1887, wrote again to Webber. That letter contained Baur's historical sketch of the Ora Labora Colony.
41. Robert Conway, "The Failure of a German Communal Settlement in Civil War Michigan: A History of the Christian German Agricultural and Benevolent Society of Ora et Labora," 53.
42. Carl Wittke, "Ora et Labora: A German Methodist Utopia," 138.
43. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Ora Labora ms., Typescript of Report, 1862-1868 [being the Board Minutes], (English Translation), pp. 239-40 (also identified as 245-46 and 94-95).
44. Karl J. R. Arndt, comp. & ed., *George Rapp's Re-established Harmony Society*, Karl Arndt's preface to his transcription of the letter Romelius Baker and Jacob Henrici to Emil Baur, 1 May 1866, p. 797.
45. Hamilton College Library, Communal Societies Collection, Ora Labora ms., Emil Baur Letter Book, 1885-1889, Letter from Emil Baur to W. S. Webber, dated February 5, 1887. The year should be 1886, since the entry precedes his letter to Webber written on February 5, 1887. This comment does not appear in the "Undated History" manuscript in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
46. Ibid.
47. Karl J. R. Arndt, comp. & ed., *George Rapp's Re-established Harmony Society*, Karl Arndt's preface to his transcription of the letter from Emil Baur to Romelius Baker and Jacob Henrici, 27 October 1865, p. 773.
48. Carl Wittke, "Ora et Labora: A German Methodist Utopia," 137.
49. Robert Conway, "The Failure of a German Communal Settlement in Civil War Michigan: A History of the Christian German Agricultural and Benevolent Society of Ora et Labora," figure 5, p. 84. The photograph is part of the Ora Labora archives in the Bentley Library at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.