

The Amana Society
By Peter Hoehnle
Amana Heritage Society
General Works that include Amana

Hinds, William Alfred. *American Communities*. New York: Corinth Books, 1961.
(Reprint of 1878 edition.)

Hinds' account of Amana, while somewhat critical, is a decent study of the community as it appeared in the late 1870s.

Nordhoff, Charles. *The Communistic Societies of the United States: From Personal Observations*. New York: Dover, 1966. (Reprint of 1875 edition.)

Nordhoff's description of Amana is easily the finest account of the community published in the nineteenth century. His German background likely facilitated his understanding of the community and, aside from minor omissions and slight inaccuracies, his account is quite valuable.

Pitzer, Donald E., ed. *America's Communal Utopias*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997.

Jonathan Andelson's chapter on Amana draws upon the author's copious research on the community and is as fine an introduction to community history and mores as is currently available.

Books about Amana

Barthel, Diane. *Amana: From Pietist Sect to American Community*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1984.

Barthel's study relies almost completely on secondary sources, and, as a result, displays little original thought or insight, and is primarily a summation of the conclusions made by earlier authors. Although available at the time the book was written, the author chose not to make use of valuable manuscript and oral history sources. The author's conclusions generally are not supported by appropriate citations.

Bourret, Joan Liffing-Zug, ed. *Life In Amana: Reporter's Views of the Communal Way, 1867-1935*. Iowa City, Iowa: Penfield Press, 1998.

A useful collection of journalistic account of the Amana community, whose major flaw is a lack of editorial comment and historical contextualization.

Hoppe, Emilie. *Seasons of Plenty: Amana Communal Cooking*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1994.

Ostensibly a cookbook, Hoppe's work, drawing on several years of extensive research, is the most complete treatment of women's roles in communal Amana.

Lankes, Frank J. *The Ebenezer Community of True Inspiration*. Buffalo, New York: Kiesling Publishing Company, 1949.

Although antiquarial, Lankes' work is the only complete treatment of the Ebenezer period of the Society's history, an era that Amana scholars have traditionally, and inexplicably, avoided until

recent years.

Liffring-Zug, Joan. *The Amanas Yesterday: A Religious Communal Society*. Iowa City: Penfield Press, 1975.

In print for over three decades, this work presents a valuable collection of historic Amana images, coupled with short essays by Amana residents and observers about aspects of communal life.

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

This was the first scholarly treatment of the community in English, although some of its scholarship is suspect. Beyond its use as a snap shot of Amana at the turn of the century, this work offers little that is unavailable in other, more reliable, sources.

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

Rettig's study, although published thirty years ago, is still the most complete treatment of the Society following its reorganization in 1932. Especially valuable are the extensive appendices of primary source material.

Scheuner, Gottlieb. *Inspirations Historie, vol. 1714 – 1728*. Translated by Janet W. Zuber. Amana: Amana Church Society, 1977.

------. *Inspirations Historie, vol. II, 1729 – 1817*. Translated by Janet W. Zuber. Amana: Amana Church Society, 1978.

------. *Inspirations Historie, vol. III, 1817 – 1850*. Translated by Janet W. Zuber. Amana: Amana Church Society, 1987.

Scheuner's accounts represent the official chronicle of the Amana community and, as such, are invaluable resources for information concerning the German and Ebenzer periods of the community. As an internal history, the works are uncritical, but skillfully assembled and written never the less.

------. *Barbara Heinemann Landmann Biography and E. L.*

Gruber's Teachings on Divine Inspiration and Other Essays. Translated by Janet W. Zuber. Amana: Amana Church Society, 1981.

The materials in this small book provide valuable resources for understanding the religious underpinnings of the Amana Society. Includes Landmann's biography (actually a dictated autobiography), coupled with significant essays by the sect's cofounder on Inspiration.

Shambaugh, Bertha M. H. *Amana: The Community of True Inspiration*. Iowa City, Iowa: State Historical Society of Iowa, 1988. (Reprint of 1908 edition.)

Shambaugh's work, by default, has remained the standard study of the community for nearly a century. A keen observer of Amana life (as well as the creator of an invaluable photographic record of the community), Shambaugh's work provides valuable insights into the nature of the communal system. As is to be expected, however, Shambaugh's work suffers from sentimentality and is often overly sympathetic. This work remains valuable, as well, as an

interesting example of early twentieth century historiography by a talented young woman whose husband, Benjamin, stood at the forefront of this field during this period.

Yambura, Barbara Selzer and Eunice W. Bodine. *A Change and a Parting: My Story*

Amana. Iowa City, Iowa: Penfield Press, 2001. (New edition of book first published in 1960.)

Yambura's work is the only extended published memoir of life in the communal period, albeit at the very end. Somewhat fictionalized, this work is still a reliable reflection of the experiences of other young Inspirationists of this era. The new edition is illustrated with photographs and has been carefully reedited to improve the work's accuracy on matters historical.

Scholarly Works

Andelson, Jonathan G. "Communalism and Change in the Amana Society, 1855 – 1932." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1974.

Without question the finest study of the Amana Society in any format, the absence of a published version has been eased, somewhat, by Andelson's voluminous articles and presentations on the subject.

DuVal, Francis Alan. "Christian Metz: German-American Religious Leader and Pioneer."

Ph.D. dissertation, State University of Iowa, 1948.

The only English resource devoted to the major nineteenth century leader of the community, DuVal's work also provides a readable, if uncritical, narrative account of communal history under Metz' direction.

Hoehnle, Peter A. *The Amana People: The History of a Religious Community*. Iowa City, Iowa: Penfield Books, 2003.

To date, this is the only published account of the entire history of the Society, from Germany to the present day. Heavily illustrated, it provides a suitable introduction to more in depth sources.

----- "A Machine in the Garden: The Woolen Textile Industry of the Amana Society, 1785 – 1942." *Annals of Iowa* 61 (Winter 2002): 24 – 67.

In actuality, this study is less about textile production and more a short revision of the standard account of Amana's communal history. Winner of the 2003 Throne Aldrich Award from the State Historical Society of Iowa.

----- "Community in Transition: Amana's Great Change, 1931–1933."

Annals of Iowa 60 (Winter 2001): 1 – 34.

The only published scholarly treatment of the reorganization of the Amana Society based on original sources.

Moore, Frank M. "The Amana Society: Accommodation of Old World Beliefs in a New World Frontier Setting." Ph.D. dissertation, Nashville: Vanderbilt University, 1988.

A decent treatment of the Amana Society following the death of Christian Metz, which neatly refutes many of the assertions made by Diane Barthel in her work on the community. This work is also the most in-depth discussion of Inspirationist religious beliefs.

Schnieder, Ulf-Michael. "Die wahren 'Propheten-Kinder' Sprache, Literature und

Wirkung der Inspirierten im 18. Jahrhundert." Unpublished Ph.D. dissertation,

University of Goettingen, Germany, 1992.

The best treatment of the German period of the Community of True Inspiration. Sadly, unavailable to English speaking audiences.

Webber, Philip E. *Kolonie-Deutsch: Life and Language in Amana*. Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1993.

The only book length treatment of the unique Amana German dialect, this book also provides a comprehensive bibliography of general sources related to the community.