

**A SELECTIVE and ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY:
SOURCES [Since 1970] on the ONEIDA COMMUNITY (1848-1881)**

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The purpose of this selective and annotated bibliography is to provide interested persons with some sense of the scholarship on the Oneida Community since 1970. In addition, the last page offers some suggestions for topics that researchers might like to explore further. *In no way is this bibliography intended to be exhaustive. To some extent, it reflects the preferences and interests of the author, Marlyn Klee.*

Because of the availability of on-line catalogs, only the dates (not publishers, places of publication, etc.) are given for most sources. That should be adequate information in order to begin research.

Good published Oneida Community bibliographies reflecting sources before about 1970 can be found in Klaw (1993), Kern (1981) and Foster (1991).

I. Manuscript Collections

A. Oneida Community Collection, Special Collections Department, Syracuse University Library.

This collection contains letters, essays and notes, testimonials, advertisements, miscellaneous materials and many photographs—all originally owned by OC members and handed down in their families. With the opening, in 1993, of this collection, donated by various OC descendants, many new sources became available to scholars. URL: <http://libwww.syr.edu/digital/collection/oneida/photos/ocphotos.htm>

Email: src@sy.edu [for queries to Special Collections Research Center]

B. Evan Rupert Nash Collection, Special Collections, Green Library, Stanford U.

This under-utilized collection was donated by the Nash descendants of OC members who left the community shortly before the Break-up of 1881, settling in Santa Ana, CA. This dissident group was led by J.W. Towner, who had unsuccessfully challenged the leadership of John H. Noyes. Among many items, the collection contains letters to or by members of the Nash family about their lives at the OC and at the Wallingford branch.

URL: <http://www-sul.stanford.edu/depts/spc>

Email: speccol@submail.stanford.edu

C. Oneida Community Mansion House Collection, Oneida, N.Y.

The OCMH collection contains some miscellaneous written materials, as well as many material artifacts (e.g., women's dresses, furniture, business products of the OC) and an extensive photographic collection donated by the descendants of Stephen Leonard. The photography collection is not yet catalogued, and is therefore, unavailable to researchers. When visiting the Mansion House, it is worthwhile to browse in the library, which has been in continuous use since the Community period.

Website: www.oneidacommunity.org

Email: ocmh@oneidacommunity.org

Address: Oneida Community Mansion House, Oneida, N.Y. 13421, tele: (315) 363-0745

D. Manuscripts, Kinsey Institute Library of Indiana University, Bloomington, Ind.

The Kinsey Institute holdings consist of letters and notes compiled in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries by physicians/sexologists, Robert Latou Dickinson and Anita Newcomb McGee, who were interested in the OC practices of complex marriage and male continence. McGee interviewed and corresponded with a number of male former OC members.

URL: <http://www.iucat.iu.edu>

II. Publications of the Oneida Community and by Oneida Community Members (selective, published before 1970)

Because the OC was self-conscious about its public image, it produced many materials, most of them written by or under the supervision of John Humphrey Noyes. These included weekly newspapers: *The Circular* (1851-70), *Oneida Circular* (1871-76) and *American Socialist* (1876-1879) which rendered a favorable version of Community beliefs and activities for public readers. The newspapers are now available on microform. The OC also produced various

Handbooks, Annual Reports, etc.

In addition, Noyes and/or the Oneida Community itself produced a number of pamphlets to explain various aspects of OC practices: e.g., *Male Continence* (1877); *Home Talks* (1875); *Salvation from Sin: The End of Christian Faith* (1876); *Essay on Scientific Propagation with an Appendix Containing a Health Report on the Oneida Community* (1875); and *Mutual Criticism* (1876). Noyes wrote several substantial books, including *Bible Communism* (1853) and *A History of American Socialisms* (1870). In 1923 and 1931, George Wallingford Noyes produced two books (and planned four more which he was unable to complete) that detail John Humphrey Noyes' spiritual development.

When they were adults, two stirpicult children wrote about growing up in the OC : Pierrepont B. Noyes, *My Father's House: An Oneida Boyhood* (1937) and Corinna Ackley Noyes, *The Days of My Youth* (1960). Harriet M. Worden's *Old Mansion House Memories, By One Brought Up In It* (1950) was privately published by her descendants. For a short time Worden was editor of the *Oneida Circular*. This book includes her account of the notorious "doll massacre" during which the young girls had to throw their dolls into the fire because they were "worshipping graven images".

An unusual source by an OC member is: George Noyes Miller, *The Strike of a Sex: A Novel* (New York, Wesnage Printing House, 1890, 4th ed.) which is a birth control tract in story form based on the author's OC experience.

For those interested in the trap business of the OC, a relatively rare source is: Sewall Newhouse, *The Trapper's Guide: A manual of instructions for capturing all kinds of fur-bearing animals, and curing their skins; with observations on the fur-trade, hints on life in the woods, and narratives of trapping and hunting excursions* (Wallingford, Conn.: Oneida Community, 1867), a "2nd edition with new narratives and illustrations, edited by J.H. Noyes and T. L. Pitt". Newhouse invented the traps which proved to be the economic salvation of the OC and which provided the income that built the comfortable Mansion House complex. Noyes worked hard to keep Newhouse happy and within the fold (for example, his smoking outside in the sheds was tolerated, although officially all tobacco use was banned in the OC.).

Two insider accounts of the health of OC members are: Theodore R. Noyes, M.D., "Health Report of the Oneida Community Children," (OC publication, 1878) and Hilda Herrick Noyes and George Wallingford Noyes, "The Oneida Community Experiment in Stirpiculture,"

Scientific Papers of the Second International Congress of Eugenics, 1921, in *Eugenics, Genetics, and the Family*, 1(1923): 374-386.

Two outside physicians who had access to OC women and to OC stirpicult data, respectively, are: Ely Van de Warker, M.D., "A Gynecological Study of the Oneida Community," *American Journal of Obstetrics and Diseases of Women and Children*, 27 (August, 1884) 8: 755-810., and Anita Newcomb McGee, "An Experiment in Stirpiculture," *American Anthropologist* 4 (October 1891):319-25.

III. Biographies of John Humphrey Noyes

Two biographies of Noyes, very different in character, have been written. The first is an authorized one: Robert Allerton Parker, *A Yankee Saint: John Humphrey Noyes and the Oneida Community* (1935). Parker enjoyed the confidence of the then-keeper of the OC archives, George Wallingford Noyes, JHN's nephew. This biography, therefore, contains some information based on sources that were probably destroyed after GWN's death in 1941. It is especially good on JHN's formative years and the development of his ideology of Bible Communism. Interestingly, four early chapters are named for women who shaped Noyes' ideas: his mother, his first true love (who spurned him), his wife, and his favorite lover in the OC.

The other biography, a psycho-historical work using ego psychology as its theoretical framework, is Robert Thomas, *The Man Who Would Be Perfect: John Humphrey Noyes and the Utopian Impulse* (1977). Fascinating, although not to everyone's taste.

IV. General Overviews of the Oneida Community

The best introductory survey treatment of the OC is generally recognized to be Maren Lockwood Carden, *Oneida: Utopian Community to Modern Corporation*, originally published in 1969 and reissued in 1998 by Syracuse University Press. Some descendants shared their privately-held materials and family memories/interpretations with Carden, so that she was able to analyze new information and to give a measured sociological perspective on the OC and its business successor, Oneida Limited, which was at the time (late 1960s) directed primarily by OC descendants, whom she interviewed. Her interview notes are now available in the OC Collection at Syracuse University.

A more recent survey that utilized the newly-assembled collection at Syracuse University Library is Spencer Klaw, *Without Sin: The Life and Death of the Oneida Community* (1993). Very well done and a good read.

V. Selective, Recommended Sources for the Oneida Community (Published after 1970)

- **+ author is an OC member (a designation used even when someone else edited)**
- **# author is an OC descendant**

Primary Sources

Crawford and Stearns, Syracuse, New York, *Historic Site Structure Reports, vols. 1-4*, (1999-2002) deal respectively with the 1862 Mansion House, The Tontine, The South Wing, and the New House. These exhaustive reports, prepared for OCMH, detail the architecture of the three main wings and several annexes to the complex now called the “Oneida Community Mansion House.” These reports are invaluable because they discuss, room by room and wing by wing, the changing spatial/social needs of the OC over time. Many photographs, drawings, blueprints, etc. For now, these reports seem to be available only in the Mansion House library.

John B. Teeple and the Oneida Community Historical Committee, *The Oneida Family: Genealogy of a 19th Century Perfectionist Commune* (1985). This book traces up to five generations of OC founders and descendants, many of whom intermarried. More than a genealogy, it gives backgrounds, occupations, and a good sense of the complex and enduring familial ties of the “OC Family.” Well-worth consulting.

Constance Noyes Robertson, the founder’s granddaughter, was primarily a novelist. Late in her life, she compiled, edited, and wrote introductions/commentary to OC materials (which were mainly gleaned from published sources like the weekly newspapers of the OC), resulting in three books: *Oneida Community: An Autobiography, 1851-1876* (1970); *Oneida Community: The Breakup, 1876-1881* (1972); and *Oneida Community Profiles* (1977). Noyes Robertson fiercely guarded the respectability of the OC legacy and revealed very little that was new in these books, (even omitting material offensive to her without elisions in direct quotes) although they are very good sources for those who cannot easily get access to the publications of the OC itself.

She concludes that religion was the glue that held the OC together; once the second generation became more worldly than their elders had been, the OC could not survive.

+ Jane Kinsley Rich, ed., *A Lasting Spring: Jessie Catherine Kinsley, Daughter of the Oneida Community* (1983). Based on the diary of a woman who grew up in the OC; much interesting material, some of it from the point of view of an OC child and of a young woman. Kinsley later became a gifted and entirely original braided rug artist, whose works have been donated to the OCMH Museum.

+ Robert Fogarty, ed., *Special love/special sex: an Oneida Community diary* [Victor Hawley] (1994) is a transcription of Hawley's secret diary relating his work life, leisure activities, and his personal campaign to convince his special love, Mary Jones, to leave the OC and begin a new life with him on the outside. Very good introduction by Fogarty, and lots of detail about OC life in the last years of its existence, from the point of view of an anguished young man.

+ Robert Fogarty, ed., *Desire & Duty at Oneida: Tirzah Miller's Intimate Memoir* (2002) is a remarkable personal diary, covering about one and one-half years when she was in her thirties, in the turbulent sexual/social/maternal life of JHN's niece and favored lover. Excellent introductory material and analysis by the editor.

+ Lawrence Foster, ed., [from material compiled by George Wallingford Noyes], *Free Love in Utopia: John Humphrey Noyes and the Origin of the Oneida Community* (2001) An excellent introduction by Foster; this volume is taken from documents opened in 1993 at the OC Collection, Syracuse University.

Secondary Sources: Books

Dolores Hayden, "The Architecture of Complex Marriage," in *Seven American Utopias: the Architecture of Communitarian Socialism, 1790-1975* (1976): 186-223. A quite wonderful book, with excellent text, and reproductions of blueprints, layouts of OCMH.

Although differing somewhat in emphases, these worthwhile books cover similar ground. Each reflects the new interdisciplinary scholarship of the post-1960s generation: Richard De Maria, *Communal Love at Oneida: A Perfectionist Vision of Authority, Property, and Sexual Order* (1978); Louis J. Kern, *An Ordered Love: Sex Roles and Sexuality in Victorian Utopias—the Shakers, the Mormons, and the Oneida Community* (1981); Lawrence Foster, *Religion*

and Sexuality: Three American Communal experiments of the Nineteenth Century (1981), and Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia: Communal Experiments of the Shakers, the Oneida Community, and the Mormons* (1991).

Secondary Sources: Articles (A Sampling)

Michael Barkun, "The Visionary Experiences of John Humphrey Noyes," *Psychohistory Review* 16 (Spring 1988): 313-334.

Marlyn H. Dalsimer, "Bible Communists: Female Socialization and Family Life in the Oneida Community", in Mel Albin and Dominick Cavallo, eds., *Family Life in America, 1620-2000* (1981): 30-46.

Focuses primarily on the socialization of girls in the OC, and contrasts its values/goals with those of the nineteenth-century middle-class family.

Robert S. Fogarty, "Oneida: A Utopian Search for Religious Security," *Labor History* 14 (Spring 1973): 202-27.

Contains data about occupations of the OC joiners.

Marlyn Klee-Hartzell, "'Mingling the Sexes': The Gendered Organization of Work in the Oneida Community," *Syracuse University Library Associates Courier*, vol. XXVIII, no. 2 (Fall, 1993): 61-85.

This article gives data, census figures, descriptive accounts, etc. about the essentially sex-segmented world of women's work in the OC.

Marlyn Klee-Hartzell, "Family Love, True Womanliness, Motherhood, and the Socialization of Girls in the Oneida Community, 1848-1880," in Wendy E. Chmielewski, Louis J. Kern, and Marlyn Klee-Hartzell, eds., *Women in Spiritual and Communitarian*

Societies in the United States (1993):184-200. A discussion of ideology and practice in the OC regarding desirable female attributes.

Marlyn Klee-Hartzell, "The Oneida Community Family," *Communal Societies* 16 (1996): 15-22. Analyzes the OC as a patriarchal institution.

Marlyn McGary Klee, "Interpreting the Oneida Community and its Legacy: Competing Agendas and Audiences," (2001), available at <http://www.ic.org/icsa/conference.html>.

An overview of the conflict between socio/sexual/religious interpretations of the OC versus the business needs of Oneida, Ltd. in the post-Community period, as it played itself out among descendants, and scholars.

Tara M. McCarthy, "The Medium of Grace: Mutual Criticism in the Oneida Community," *Communal Societies* 18 (1998): 92-106.

John E. Murray, "New Anthropometric Look at the Status of Women and Children in Oneida Community, 1848-1881," in John Komlos, ed., *The Biological Standard of Living on Three Continents* (1995).

Comparing them with contemporary rural cohorts, Murray concludes that Oneida women were healthier and stirpicult children were taller than their peers. Yet, based on data collected by OC physicians, he detects a "failure-to-thrive syndrome" in stirpicult babies after weaning and separation from their mothers. Murray also raises the possibility of coercion into sex for preteen girls.

Spencer C. Olin, Jr., "Bible Communism and the Origins of Orange County," *California History* 58 (Fall 1979): 220-233.

Only publication on OC dissidents who settled in California.

Ellen Wayland-Smith, “The Status and Self-Perception of Women in the Oneida

Community,” *Communal Societies*, (1988) 8:18-53.

Uses privately-held women’s writings to support her analysis that women in the OC were relatively emancipated and generally satisfied with their lives.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The evolution of Noyes’ religious beliefs and their application to the socio-sexual practices of the OC have been pretty well covered (although there is always more to learn, new perspectives to apply, and sources that are not yet public which will hopefully be available in the future). OC architecture has been rather thoroughly researched. Yet many aspects of the OC need further investigation. Some topics might be:

1. A business history of the OC—its products, its accounting, its income, etc. The OC was extraordinarily successful from a financial point of view, yet no one was written an economic history of the OC, perhaps because the sources have not been found? Maybe these are stored somewhere in the offices of Oneida, Ltd., awaiting a highly motivated researcher? Maybe these were destroyed in “The Burning”?
2. The hired hands of the OC in its later, prosperous years, many of them young girls from the immediate neighborhoods, e.g., in the silk-spooling factory.
3. Evolution of women’s dress in the OC
4. Food and food production in the OC
5. Tourism as a component of the OC economy.
6. Educational system of the OC, both children and adult education. What and how did they learn?
7. What were the OC members reading? The Mansion House has a softly-lit room filled with books from the OC period (off the present Library premises). Who was reading what, and how did it affect their daily lives, if at all? In other words, a library analysis of the Oneida Community.

8. How did poverty/privation and (later) prosperity affect the development of the OC?
9. The OC as a destination for single parents looking for a place to get help raising their children. This would be a wonderful topic for many communal societies.
10. Transmission of communal commitment from the founding first generation, to the second generation, using the OC as an example. Also pertinent to other communities.

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