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The Countercultural Back-to-the-Land Movement

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Abstract

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The countercultural back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s was the third wave of an antimodern tradition that stretched back to the late nineteenth century. This study places the hippie back-to-the-land movement within this larger context and follows the intergenerational exchange between the counterculture and second generation back-to-the-landers such as Ralph Borsodi, Mildred Loomis, and the School of Living organization in the mid-1960s. The resulting narrative offers a complex picture of exchange as an older generation introduced hippies in Berkeley to decentralism, eugenics, and a form of anti-statist environmentalism. The counterculture, however, was the product of the Cold War prosperity and the shifting politics of the New Left. The overwhelmingly white, middle-class counterculture did not adopt eugenics. Instead, it formulated a novel back-to-the-land ideology that combined decentralism and pastoralism with an emerging white identity politics that appropriated from non-white traditions, especially those of Native American groups, that were viewed as

premodern models for a post-modern future. This study follows three case studies – Twin Oaks in Virginia, Alpha Farm in Oregon, and Heathcote in Maryland – to track the movement as the 1960s counterculture transformed into the New Age movement of the 1970s and 1980s. By drawing on newsletters and other archival materials, this study explores how back-to-the-landers sought to fashion alternative political cultures that avoided the practice of voting, novel economic systems that empowered women, and intercommunal organizations that offered labor-sharing services and New Age social gatherings. Like other antimodern movements such as the Arts and Crafts movement, the back-to-the-land movement of the 1960s and 1970s primarily served the racial and class interests of participants and ended up reinforcing dominant cultural trends such as the rise of post-World War Two consumerism, the shift towards a politics of the personal, the rightward turn of American politics in the 1970s, and the settler-colonial appropriation of Native culture. Though the countercultural back-to-the-land movement offered individual personal transformation and influenced the Organic movement, the environmental movement, and the personal computing movement, it failed to attract a more diverse coalition and could not offer a radical alternative to Cold War society and culture.

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DEDICATION

To Lily, Hazel, and our family.

INTRODUCTION

Swaying together singing “We Shall Overcome” was no longer enough. The tanks lumbering through my neighborhood, clanking down my street brought home the futility of confrontational tactics. We needed a new plan, one that was plausible and released us from the politics of mutual hate. If we couldn’t change the world, we would change ourselves and build communities....In Vermont, New Mexico, Virginia, and Oregon – any place where land was available and people sparse – students dropped out, looking for a more peaceful revolution. The back-to-the-land movement showed us a way we could love ourselves, each other, and the dirt that fed us.

After graduation [in 1970], my new husband and I, along with ten of our friends, headed west like generations before us. Our covered wagon was a Chevy van. We abandoned indoor plumbing, electricity, supermarkets, and the benefits of our graduate Ivy League degrees for one-hundred-and-sixty acres in the backwoods of the Pacific Northwest, seeking the sweetness of childhood without sacrificing adult perks.¹

– Margaret Grundstein, *Naked in the Woods*, 2015

By 1970, Margaret Grundstein, like countless other liberal young adults, had concluded that they could not achieve radical social change through collective urban protest. Who could trust in the democratic system when tanks drove down streets, the government sent young men thousands of miles to kill Vietnamese and Cambodians, the Ohio National Guard killed students at Kent State, and reactionaries assassinated beloved movement leaders? If the options available to radicals included the cultural protest of placing daisies in gun barrels or following in the Weather Underground's militant footsteps, many, drawing on a rich American pastoral tradition, instead fled to the countryside. Once there, they assumed, they could get down to the vital work of individual transformation by peeling back the layers of socialization that they believed were

¹ For some works I use Kindle editions that do not lend themselves to page numbers – a necessity during the COVID pandemic. Margaret Grundstein, *Naked in the Woods: My Unexpected Years in a Hippie Commune*, Kindle Edition (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2015), Location 195.

ultimately responsible for the conformity, hypocrisy, and inequality in 1960s America. They thought being on the land with kindred spirits, communing with each other and nature, would create the conditions for an entirely “New Age” of peace and ecological harmony.

Grundstein was one such utopian, and her life up to 1970 is typical of many who went back to the land in the late 1960s.² She was born in Detroit during the mid-1940s to a white middle-class family. Her mother was a homemaker who, in Grundstein’s words, “basked in the reflected light from her spouse” and focused on domestic activities.³ Though Grundstein did expect to find a husband in college, she did not want to follow in her mother’s footsteps as a housewife. Instead, she hoped to pursue an academic or public service career like her father. Grundstein’s father was a public administration professor at Wayne State University in Detroit, and he wanted his daughter to go into law, an unrealized goal in his own life. By 1969, she expected to remain as affluent as her parents. Recalling her mood in 1969, she wrote that “for me, achievement was a given, academic or professional, it didn’t matter. Just be smart, analytic, and comfortably compensated.”⁴ Grundstein inherited this socio-economic certainty from her parents, who also shaped her liberal political worldview. She grew up in a liberal household, though by the late 1960s her parents supported Richard Nixon. Her mother had been an alternate delegate for the 1960 Democratic convention, and Grundstein remembered growing up in a racially progressive household with a series of international students who introduced her to

² For other representative memoirs see the following: Stephen Diamond, *What the Trees Said: Life on a New Age Farm* (New York: Delta, 1971); Eleanor Agnew, *Back from the Land: How Young Americans Went to Nature in the 1970s, and Why They Came Back* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2004); Raymond Mungo, *Total Loss Farm: A Year in the Life* (Seattle: Pharos Editions, 2014); Peter Rabbit, *Drop City* (New York: The Olympia Press, 1971); Kate Daloz, *We Are As Gods: Back to the Land in the 1970s on the Quest for a New America* (New York: PublicAffairs, 2016).

³ Grundstein, *Naked in the Woods*, Location 351.

⁴ *Ibid.*, Location 247.

Indonesian culture. By the mid-to-late 1960s, however, she was no longer sure that she wanted her parents' lifestyle or to follow in their turn to the political Right.

Unlike most would-be back-to-the-landers, Grundstein's turn away from New Left politics occurred in graduate school, at Yale, rather than during her undergraduate studies. After her admission to the Urban Planning program at Yale in 1968, she gravitated to new forms of protest that were beginning to circulate across college campuses; forms of protest that signaled a profound shift on the American Left. On her first day at Yale, she was astonished to encounter members of The Hog Farm piling out of a colorful hippie school bus. The Hog Farm was a recently founded traveling commune that grew out of Ken Kesey's Band of Merry Pranksters, a cultural phenomenon at the hippie counterculture's vanguard in the late 1960s.⁵ The experience of interacting with, in her words, "a ragtag band, a tribe of hippies, wild hair flying, bare feet dancing," altered the course of her life.⁶

Along with exposure to Hog Farm members, she was also affected by attending the Members of the Living Theatre's performances. This countercultural theater group was a holdover organization from the Beat era. By the late 1960s, it was famous for shocking and provoking audiences in its play *Paradise Now*.⁷ The play, the title of which was a reference to Milton's *Paradise Lost*, presented audiences with the contradictions of modern society and encouraged them to envision an ideal world where they could live peacefully and spontaneously.

⁵ Indeed, the Merry Pranksters' antics were popularized by a widely popular work of non-fiction written by a reporter who followed the band. See Tom Wolfe, *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*, Reprint Edition (New York: Picador, 2008).

⁶ Grundstein, *Naked in the Woods*, Location 247.

⁷ To view a contemporary rendition, see *Paradise Now: The Living Theatre in Amerika DVD Trailer*, accessed May 21, 2020, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jF7_BdHi_NA; For a discussion of the Living Theatre see Bradford Martin, *The Theater Is in the Street: Politics and Public Performance in 1960s America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2004), chap. The Living Theatre: Paradise and Politics in the Streets.

In Grundstein's case, they were successful: she cites her attendance at multiple renditions of *Paradise Now* in 1968 as key to her plunge into the counterculture and the back-to-the-land movement.

Grundstein admired how these counterculturalists chipped away at the conformity and hypocrisy of the culture that she grew up within. She sought to emulate them. In particular, the Living Theatre's nude scene in *Paradise Now* made her question contemporary social and moral conformity. Members of the troupe would disrobe while listing a "litany of repression," such as "I am not allowed to smoke Marijuana, I am not allowed to take my clothes off, you can't live if you don't have money, I don't know how to stop the war," and then asked the audience to join them as they danced and sang around the theater.⁸ Not wanting to feel like one of the "uptight jerks," she joined in and took a step towards joining the counterculture.⁹ In her autobiography, Grundstein describes the mood of the times: "within me and around me change was the verb, spontaneously erupting both culturally and politically. Freedom Riders rode south...The Ku Klux Klan murdered activists...inner cities erupted. Radicals, liberals, black nationalists, hippies, professors, women's groups, and war veterans surrounded the Pentagon."¹⁰

Grundstein soon became involved in protests calling for more students of color within the Yale School of Architecture, going so far as to create an alternate admissions process and sending letters of acceptance, on Yale letterhead, to Black applicants. When the school responded by sending letters of rejection to the same students, she, like countless other young liberals, became disillusioned with the efficacy of direct-action protests. Her boyfriend at the time, an Indonesian student named Hakim who was an organizer in the local Black community,

⁸ Grundstein, *Naked in the Woods*, Location 268.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Location 273.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, Location 273.

was becoming increasingly harried and disillusioned as well. During this period, Bobby Seale, the prominent leader of the Black Panthers, was arrested; New Haven activists planned protests; the federal government deployed tanks to their city streets. Margaret and Hakim were deeply affected by these events, and, inspired by the aforementioned “mood” of 1970, they began seriously discussing leaving the city after graduation. Musing that “perhaps the rhetoric of the time was right: change yourself instead of everyone around you,” they began to gather friends from New Haven who were also excited to move west, go back to the land, and focus on personal liberation.¹¹ In the summer of 1970, the group left New Haven to found an intentional back-to-the-land community in Oregon. Over the course of the 1970s, the group, like many others, worked through social and economic obstacles before eventually disintegrating in the late 1970s. For Grundstein, this back-to-the-land journey was a crucible. Her memoir presents a vivid portrait of a back-to-the-land woman who learned how to till soil and survive harsh winters and collaborates with other women to overturn sexist attitudes within the communities that she lived.

Margaret and Hakim’s experiences and their decision to go back to the land were not exceptional: they were part of a generational revolution that occurred on and around university campuses like Yale in response to the tumultuous historical context of the 1960s. College campuses in the 1960s were fertile ground for members of the Baby Boom generation to express political and cultural dissent from post-World War Two American society as they considered the world they lived in and their post-college lives. As such, disaffected liberal students were heirs to the Beats and other social critics of the 1950s. By the early-to-mid 1960s, this younger generation questioned cultural institutions – from the old political parties to the Protestant church

¹¹Ibid., 534.

– which they perceived as cold and alienating.¹² Over the course of the 1960s, they fashioned new cultural and political forms as a response.

Beginning early in the decade, politically engaged white young adults broke away from the Old Left and protested a political system that disenfranchised Black people, a Cold War political economy that threatened nuclear war and perpetuated global inequality, and a socio-economic system that prized affluence and conformity over meaningful, satisfying work and sustainable consumption. This political movement became known as the New Left, and its principal organization was the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), which was organized around free speech and racial equality. New Left groups were involved with the Civil Rights movement in the early 1960s and represented some of the many predominantly white groups allied with the Black freedom movement.¹³ Over the course of the 1960s, New Left groups, responding to the escalation of the Vietnam War and the draft, shifted focus to anti-war protests.

By 1966 and 1967, in conjunction with the anti-war movement, a growing segment of disaffected youth were drawn to the rich cultural ferment bubbling out of the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco and Greenwich Village in New York.¹⁴ Known as the hippie movement, or, more

¹² For the way hippies perceived mainstream society see William Rorabaugh, *American Hippies* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 9; Much of the hippies' dissatisfaction had been expressed by the earlier Beat poets. For more see Morris Dickstein, *Gates of Eden: American Culture in the Sixties* (New York: Liveright, 2015), chap. Prologue: Allen Ginsberg and the Sixties; For an examination of the entanglement of Cold War ideology and evangelical Christianity see Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), chap. Praying: God Bless America.

¹³ For general history of the New Left and an examination of how New Left founders interacted with the Civil Rights movement of the early 1960s see James Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1994), 56.

¹⁴ For a historical analysis of the Hippie counterculture in these areas see Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 44; This bi-coastal cultural ferment, especially the Living Theatre group (based in New York) and the Digger commune (in California) are also thoroughly explored in Martin, *The Theater Is in the Street*, 62-73.

generally, as the counterculture, this oppositional culture agreed with the New Left's critiques of America.¹⁵ However, members of the counterculture concluded that meaningful social change would only occur at the personal or community level rather than on a national scale. This sentiment only hardened following the violence outside of the 1968 Democratic National Convention in Chicago and Richard Nixon's election. They believed that contemporary movements for social and political change like the SDS had been unable to correct American culture's fundamental flaws because they failed to address greed, racism, and conformity. Marking a profound shift on the Left away from collective political activism, they therefore turned inward and set about experimenting with new forms of music, psychedelic drugs, and non-normative social arrangements in the hopes that the emerging "Love Generation" could transform itself and bring about a new era of peace and equality. This was the cultural and political moment that captivated Margaret and Hakim, disillusioned as they were by their experiences with urban and university protest, which in turn informed their decision to go back to the land.

Though there are no definitive numbers on how many young adults followed this path, throughout the late 1960s and 1970s there was a surge of back-to-the-land migration as young

¹⁵ The term hippie counterculture presents historians with a disorienting kaleidoscope of cultural practices. This makes the movement difficult to narrate, as "hippie" and "counterculture" are terms that lack the specificity required to properly contextualize their rural pursuits and often inject pejorative connotations into historical narratives. This study uses the term "counterculture" because it avoids these pejorative connotations. It is more effective at conveying the goals, practices, and belief system of back-to-the-landers. Going back to the land, pursuing individual transformation, and creating alternative societies were all seen as ways of countering contemporary American culture and politics. Moreover, counterculture is a more all-embracing term as many counterculturalists did not think of themselves as hippies, associating hippies with the negative connotations of Haight-Ashbury life. Though "counterculture" can be overly broad, this study uses it as a narrow category for a particular subset of the Baby Boom generation who turned away from traditional forms of social protest and sought inner transformation.

adults, by the hundreds of thousands, homesteaded and founded intentional communities.¹⁶ Once on the land, counterculturalists like Grundstein set about creating what they perceived to be novel, agrarian societies that could liberate individuals from Cold War society's repression and provide more “authentic” settings for self-actualization and create new self-sufficient communities.¹⁷ Individuals interested in going back to the land relied on an emerging network of back-to-the-land publications such as Stewart Brand’s *Whole Earth Catalog*, John and Jane Shuttleworth’s *Mother Earth News*, Richard Fairfield’s *The Modern Utopian*, and the *Foxfire* books. These publications helped potential back-to-the-landers by offering catalogs of hip technology, how-to essays on farm management, and space to find other like-minded individuals

¹⁶ There is little agreement on how large a section of American society engaged in rural community formation or back-to-the-land homesteading in the 1960s and 1970s. Timothy Miller has asserted that there were between 750,000 to 1,000,000 commune dwellers in the 1970s and Jeffrey Jacob and Elanor Agnew put the number of homesteaders close to a million. Timothy Miller, *The 60’s Communes: Hippies and Beyond* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), xix–xx; Jeffrey Jacob, *New Pioneers: The Back-to-the-Land Movement and the Search for a Sustainable Future* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1997), 3; Agnew, *Back from the Land*, 5; As Dona Brown has pointed out this suspiciously round number was first put forward in 1979 by sociologist Terry Allan Simmons who speculated that there were a million back-to-the-landers in the United States based on the 15,000 he studied in rural British Columbia. Dona Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2011), 206; It is doubtful that there will ever be a convincing estimate of who went back to the land in the 1960s and 1970s, but it was a significant national movement of city dwellers that shaped the larger society. One 1977 study by the Stanford Research Institute, which David Shi relies on in *The Simple Life*, estimated that “from four to five million adults were wholeheartedly committed to leading a simple life and that double that number” acted on core countercultural beliefs about appropriate technology and environmental sustainability. David Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 268.

¹⁷ Various scholars have noted how American agrarianism informed the back-to-the-land movement in the 1960s and 1970s. See. Shi, *The Simple Life*, 6–7; Allan C. Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind: The Movement Toward Decentralist Thought in Twentieth-Century America* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2000), chap. The Agrarian Elegy of Wendell Berry; Bennett Berger, *The Survival of a Counterculture: Ideological Work and Everyday Life among Rural Communitards, 2nd Edition* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), chap. American Pastoralism and the Commune Movement.

to join them on the land. They also offer an ample record for use by historians. By the late 1960s then, there was a distinct countercultural back-to-the-land movement with thousands of practitioners supported by an expanding information network.

This countercultural quest for the good life outside of cities and away from mainstream society was rooted in the radical politics of the 1960s as well as in a much larger back-to-the-land tradition dating back to the 1890s. Grundstein's was the third generation of back-to-the-landers in modern America. Often spurred by economic and political turmoil, Americans have turned again and again to rural space and the natural world over the course of the twentieth century. In going back to the land, many hoped to counter modern American society's trajectory by offering alternatives that were at times reformatory and radical.¹⁸ These earlier generations wrote influential books and formed organizations, many of which influenced the third generation in the 1960s. Indeed, some older practitioners were still alive in the 1960s and 1970s and directly interacted with and fostered the younger generation's pursuit of the back-to-the-land endeavor.

The first generation of back-to-the-landers emerged in the period between the 1890s and 1910s as a response to the destabilizing effects of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and southern European immigration. These individuals championed going back to the land as an antimodern reform and – drawing on common republican moralisms about urban degeneration and rural self-reliance – assumed that immigrants and native-born alike could achieve self-sufficiency producing wealth on rural land on the outskirts of cities. Their overarching visions included providing white urbanites with self-sufficient homesteads and enacting economic reform and societal change across America through the Single Tax. The Single Tax was a late-Gilded Age concept that gained popularity amongst some Progressive reformers that would have

¹⁸ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 5–8.

outlawed land speculation and encouraged single-family homesteads. Bolton Hall was the most prominent back-to-the-land advocate in this early period, and his writings found a ready audience among white, middle-class professionals and craftspeople who were economically vulnerable.

The second generation of back-to-the-landers, who interacted directly with the first, emerged in the 1920s and 1930s. They championed decentralism and protested industrial capitalism and the federal government's growing power in the 1930s and 1940s. As a result, they, like other Old Left reformers, promoted subsistence homesteading as an answer to the plight of urban workers during the Great Depression and New Deal period. Of this generation, Helen and Scott Nearing, Ralph Borsodi, and Mildred Loomis were influential writer-practitioners who survived into the 1960s and 1970s. Like many white Americans at the time, these influential writer-practitioners were proponents of positive and negative eugenics – and some even championed eugenics after World War Two. They believed that by going back to the land and practicing “genetic hygiene,” white Americans could avoid the degenerative influence of urban immigrants and the “factory system.” Members of the second-generation were also deeply concerned by the effects of mid-century industrialization and militarization on the natural world and worried that modern progress was leading to overpopulation and environmental degradation. Indeed, Borsodi and Loomis – the founders of the School of Living – espoused a distinct form of libertarian environmentalism in the 1940s and 1950s in response to World War Two, nuclear weapons development, and India’s population growth. As such, they were able to effectively communicate with a younger generation who were coming of age during the Cold War, who also worried about environmental issues, and who were in search of alternatives.

Second generation back-to-the-landers were remarkably influential on the third generation and collectively became known as the “grandparents of the counterculture.”¹⁹ Their books circulated widely in the 1960s and 1970s, and at least one countercultural publication, Richard Fairfield’s iconic *The Modern Utopian*, became a part of the School of Living network. Thus, while third-generation practitioners like Grundstein responded to a specific post-World War Two socio-cultural context, they also engaged with members of the second generation, who were still alive and networking into the 1970s.

Studying why and how historical actors went back to the land and the types of alternatives they experimented with allows us to view larger shifts in American society from a different vantage point – from the perspective of those who tried to opt-out. More specifically, the countercultural back-to-the-land movement offers students of the past an essential window into a vast antimodern tradition as well as insight into the counterculture, whose influence continues to shape American society.²⁰

¹⁹ These individuals were not always collectively known as the grandparents of the third generation, however John Shuttleworth variously described them as such. For references to the Nearings see Rebecca Gould, *At Home in Nature: Modern Homesteading and Spiritual Practice in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005), xiv; John Shuttleworth called Loomis the grandmother of the counterculture. See Mildred Loomis, *Alternative Americas* (New York: Universe Books, 1982); and Bill Sharp, “Mildred Loomis, Grandmother of the Counterculture,” *The Green Revolution*, Fall 2017; For the way Borsodi was framed to the movement see John Shuttleworth, “Dr. Ralph Borsodi: Legendary Back-to-the-Land Figure,” *Mother Earth News*, April 1974, *Mother Earth News Digital CD-ROM Archive*.

²⁰ In framing the back-to-the-land movement as part of a larger antimodern dissent tradition dating back to the turn of the century I rely on Vivien Ellen Rose’s work on Mildred Loomis, Gould’s exploration of homesteading as a secular spiritual practice, and on T.J. Jackson Lears’s study of antimodern movements like the Arts and Crafts movement at the turn of the twentieth century. Since Jackson Lears’s 1981 work scholars of the back-to-the-land movement have been grappling with his thesis that antimodern movements like the Arts and Craft movement were white middle-class reactions to the perceived contradictions of modernizing American society – i.e., the blind faith that technological and material progress was leading to a better society when the reality of inequality in Gilded Age America only grew – that ultimately served the social and

This study situates the countercultural back-to-the-land movement within the larger back-to-the-land tradition and explores how the third generation differed from the first and second. This framing enables us to make sense of why members of the counterculture reacted to Cold War American life by leaving cities. This study explores how members of the counterculture interacted with and were guided by influential second generation back-to-the-landers like the Nearings, Borsodi, and Loomis in the mid-to-late 1960s. Influenced by such interactions but responding to a profoundly different historical context, members of the counterculture formulated their own response to the seismic socio-cultural shifts in the 1950s and 1960s, generating a rural movement that aimed to subvert America's urbanized and centralized post-World War Two trajectory. Like members of the second generation, countercultural back-to-the-landers sought to create rural and alternative social, economic, and political structures that would counter the effects of industrialization on labor conditions, human health, and economic systems and remedy the alienating influences of Cold War inequality on society and politics. Unlike earlier generations, members of the third generation – coming of age during the rise of second-

racial interests of back-to-the-landers and reinforced bourgeois values rather than offering truly radical alternatives. Rose follows Jackson Lears closely. Gould, however, argues that while modern homesteading shared a number of similarities with the Arts and Crafts movement (in particular the way the movements approached fulfilling labor), it also diverged in the sense that modern homesteaders did not reinforce the trend toward consumerism (she argues that “by being engaged in the production of food rather than artifacts, homesteaders...tend to resist the slide into consumer culture”). Gould also took exception to Jackson Lears's more pessimistic attitude that all antimodern movements served primarily as therapeutic, and even narcissistic, personal endeavors. This study tends to agree with Jackson Lears's argument and analysis but combines it with scholarship of the counterculture and moves it forward in time to show the complexities of mainstream cultural accommodation and resistance in the countercultural back-to-the-land movement. Vivien Ellen Rose, “Homesteading as Social Protest: Gender and Continuity in the Back-to-the-Land Movement in the United States, 1890-1980” (PhD Dissertation, State University of New York at Binghamton, 1997), 7–8; Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 197–98; T. J. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace: Antimodernism and the Transformation of American Culture, 1880-1920* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 95–96.

wave feminism and a period of intense racial conflict both at home and abroad – did not subscribe to eugenics. Many third-generation back-to-the-landers questioned traditional gender roles that relegated women to domestic labor. Many third-generation authors, influencers, and communes had their own utopian and egalitarian visions for society and sought to inspire broader changes through example. As such, the third wave’s development into a more communal, egalitarian, and racially liberal movement over the course of the late 1960s and 1970s mirrored larger shifts in American society, in particular shifts among liberal Americans.²¹

In tracking the development of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement over the course of the 1970s and 1980s, I argue that while the movement drew upon fundamental liberal political, economic, and racial shifts during this period, it was, as a rural antimodern enterprise, also conservative and unprogressive. Though members of the third generation experimented with radical practices – ranging from group marriage to group ownership of property – they did so within the confines of their own landholdings and, more importantly, went back-to-the-land as a retreat from radical collective activism.²² Moreover, third wave back-to-the-landers still relied on

²¹ Characterizations of the third generation as unique should not be overstated. In seeking to create functioning rural utopias that could be antimodern beacons, in Arthur Bestor’s phrasing “patent office” prototypes, to the rest of society, the countercultural back-to-the-land movement was part of an even larger American utopian tradition that stretched back to the backwoods utopias of the early republic. For more on this long history see Arthur Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian Origins and the Owenite Phase of Communitarian Socialism in America 1663-1829* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 230–32.

²² In commenting on whether the movement was radical or not this study situates the countercultural back-to-the-land movement within the larger political history of the Left in the twentieth century. While the vanguardism of the Old Left was certainly limiting, the Old Left’s politics – i.e., labor organizing, class struggle, and Marxism – was considerably more radical – meaning it offered a clear and sharp break with the contemporary socio-political order – than the New Left and the countercultural back-to-the-landers who left urban activism as the New Left crumbled. Moreover, this study frames radicalism in the context of how actual back-to-the-landers used the term. As we shall see, countercultural back-to-the-landers, inspired by Scott Nearing’s 1965 call for radicalism in *The Conscience of a Radical*, saw themselves as the most

mainstream society for money, public education of their children (for those that did not homeschool), and other goods and services. As such, the movement primarily served participants' social and racial interests rather than offering a truly radical alternative to mainstream culture.

In their attempts to create alternative and more egalitarian, cooperative, and harmonious societies, third generation back-to-the-landers did not abandon market capitalism or democracy. Instead, they sought to modify – from their perspective, humanize – existing power systems and, in so doing, reinforced dominant cultural trends such as post-World War Two consumerism. From the development of hip consumer capitalism to the widespread adoption of consensus decision-making, the movement mimicked larger shifts on the Left that bolstered America's shift to a neoliberal, consumer-driven economy in the post-World War Two period. Furthermore, some back-to-the-landers, believing that American society was doomed to collapse in the face of imminent social and environmental catastrophes, even ended up turning to libertarianism and survivalism by the end of the 1970s – mirroring, and perhaps contributing to, American society's right-ward shift in the 1970s and 1980s.

Finally, over the course of the 1970s, members of the third generation developed a novel form of whiteness as the counterculture transformed into the New Age movement. This reconfiguration of whiteness was part of a larger shift in white identity during the 1970s. On the other end of the political spectrum, white conservatives revived “purer” white ethnic traditions as a response to the perceived homogeneity of white suburban identity. The third generation, shaped by the Civil Rights movement and New Left politics, chose a different path.

radical element of the counterculture. Many truly believed that their rural communities and lifestyles represented a fundamental departure from post-World War Two trends such as consumerism, alienation, conformity, and environmental degradation.

Countercultural back-to-the-landers borrowed from a variety of traditions – from Native American to Hindu to West African – that they viewed as egalitarian, communal, and environmentally conscious, ideals they found lacking in Cold War America to create alternative rural communities and organizations. This novel white identity – though aimed at fostering multiculturalism – was defined in relation to non-white cultures, following a long and profoundly problematic settler tradition in America. Indeed, the third generation’s evolving white identity – at odds with the second generation’s eugenic racist worldview – was based on its interactions with, and often simplistic understandings of, non-white groups.

Moreover, most members of the counterculture did not rely on actual non-white cultural mediators in their search for alternative social and cultural practices. Unsurprisingly, though the third generation was sympathetic to non-white movements of self-determination, they failed to attract people of color into their communities in the 1970s. On a basic level, then, the countercultural back-to-the-land movement – in drawing upon a conservative American pastoral tradition that prized rural self-sufficiency and in seeking to foster liberal consensus, multicultural harmony, and New Age identity – represents a complex, and at times contradictory, social movement.

Like the counterculture’s contribution to liberalizing attitudes towards sex, drugs, and alternative lifestyles, countercultural back-to-the-landers experimented with social, economic, racial, and technological relations in ways that continue to resonate in the present. To begin to study this legacy it will be necessary to ground our discussion of the third generation by understanding its underlying socio-economic makeup. Luckily for historians, the first scholars who became interested in the counterculture were sociologists in the 1970s and 1980s, whose works are useful for understanding the countercultural back-to-the-land movement.

Demographic data collected by contemporary sociologists paints a detailed portrait of young white counterculturalists. While there has been no reliable sociological survey of rural back-to-the-land communities, it is possible to approximate a demographic profile by combining research on urban countercultural communes with studies of rural homesteaders. Indeed, combining the in-depth surveys conducted by Jeffery Jacob on back-to-the-land homesteaders in the 1980s – a portion of which (close to 10 percent) had previously lived on rural communes in the 1970s – and the extensive survey of urban countercultural communities conducted by Angela Aidala and Benjamin Zablocki in the mid-1970s offers insight into the social makeup of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement.²³ Both studies demonstrate that the movement was composed of white young adults. The median age of counterculturalists was between 20-25 in 1970, though Aidala and Zablocki note that 78 percent were between the ages of 20-30 in 1974, with 15 percent over 30.²⁴ Margaret Grundstein, who was 27 in 1970, was somewhat older than her counterparts, but not considerably.

The movement was also overwhelmingly white and unaccustomed to agricultural work.²⁵ According to Aidala and Zablocki, less than 1 percent of survey participants stated that they were non-white. These white counterculturalists were not raised in rural settings, and according to

²³It should be noted that although Aidala and Zablocki surveyed urban communities, many such communities had back-to-the-land aspirations. Indeed, one of the case study communities in this project, Twin Oaks, began as an urban commune in Washington D.C. in the mid-1960s before purchasing land in rural Virginia. It is also important to note that Aidala and Zablocki tried to publish this article a decade earlier, but ran into criticism from reviewers who argued that their sweeping statements on the demographics of the national counterculture too broad when based on a relatively smaller sample-size. A later revision, further surveys, and emphasis on family and marriage practices led to publication in *Marriage & Family Review* in 1991. For a discussion of Jacob's methods, his reliance on *Countryside* magazine (a journal for homesteaders), and how he analyzes homesteaders' rejection of communalism see Jacob, *New Pioneers*, 1997, 27–33, 187.

²⁴ Jacob, 38; Angela A. Aidala and Benjamin D. Zablocki, "The Communes of the 1970s: Who Joined and Why?" *Marriage & Family Review* 17, no. 1–2 (1991): 94,

²⁵ Aidala and Zablocki, "The Communes of the 1970s," 92.

Jacob, 73 percent had no farm experience before going back to the land.²⁶ The general profile, then, of a member of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement conforms to common perceptions that this was a young, white, urban movement.

The common perception also holds that movement participants were middle-class college dropouts; however, sociological data suggests that the movement was somewhat more heterogeneous. According to Aidala and Zablocki, 48 percent of respondents reported growing up in a middle-class household, which was only slightly higher than the 46 percent nationally.²⁷ Additionally, one fourth of those surveyed reported having fathers in blue-collar jobs, and there were almost as many children of factory workers and truck drivers (9 percent) as children of lawyers, physicians, and engineers (13 percent) among those surveyed.²⁸ Significantly, after breaking down the parental occupations, it becomes clear that the majority of those who claimed middle-class status were drawn from lower-status professions such as “musicians, social workers, nurses, teachers, and teaching assistants,” rather than from higher-ranked professions.²⁹ Jeffery Jacob’s study of back-to-the-land homesteaders supports the assertion that countercultural back-to-the-landers were not drawn from the upper-middle class’s ranks. Jacob discovered that almost one-third of the movement’s families of origin contained parents who had not graduated from high school, whereas only 7 percent of back-to-the-landers did not have a high school degree.³⁰

Along with this class positioning, counterculturalists’ educational backgrounds were diverse, though they were more educated than the American population as a whole. Although

²⁶ Jacob, *New Pioneers*, 34.

²⁷ Aidala and Zablocki, "The Communes of the 1970s," 94.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 96.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

³⁰ Jacob, *New Pioneers*, 37–38.

many of their parents had pursued knowledge occupations, by the early 1970s 6 percent of those surveyed by Aidala and Zablocki had not graduated from high school, and only half had college diplomas.³¹ Surveys conducted by Jacob in the early 1990s show a continuation of these statistics, and in 1992 25 percent of back-to-the-landers had not completed college, 15 percent had bachelor's degrees, and 19 percent had graduate-level education experience.³² Indeed, some, like Grundstein, had graduate degrees and grew up in middle-class families, while others were the first in their families to graduate from college.

The demographic picture painted by sociologists reveals a narrow, though internally heterogeneous movement. Back-to-the-landers were overwhelmingly white but came from somewhat different class backgrounds. They were educated but had little experience living on the land. That lack of experience hampered many communities, which failed to sustain their back-to-the-land endeavors financially, let alone attain rural self-sufficiency. Some, however, did manage to survive and left important archival documentation. This work draws heavily from these long-lived communities because the extensive documentation they left behind offers glimpses into how the third generation emerged, interacted with the second generation, and experimented with egalitarian politics, hip capitalism, and the pursuit of a New Age. This study draws on three influential communities as case studies: Heathcote in Maryland, Twin Oaks in Virginia, and Alpha Farm in Oregon. Though these three communities are not representative of the totality of the movement, they highlight the types of basic socio-political experiments back-to-the-landers pursued and how the movement changed over the course of the 1970s. Their longevity and historical footprint are therefore significant and useful.

³¹ Aidala and Zablocki, "The Communes of the 1970s," 94.

³² Jacob, *New Pioneers*, 38.

The first case study community is the School of Living's Heathcote community, founded in 1965 in Maryland. The School of Living was a second-generation organization founded by Ralph Borsodi and Mildred Loomis in the 1930s. It is still an active organization as of 2021. Heathcote was modeled on an earlier New Deal community that Borsodi and Loomis had experimented with during the Great Depression, a community that had consisted of homesteaders who bought into a Single Tax-style land-trust and had complete control over their two-acre parcels of land. The community embodied the School of Living's second-generation, decentralist, libertarian ethos in which productive homesteaders sought mutual aid in a loose community of like-minded individuals. Borsodi and Loomis founded Heathcote as a demonstration homestead community for a younger generation that was becoming increasingly dissatisfied with American society. Through successful outreach in the underground press, members of the School of Living, particularly Loomis, attracted members of the counterculture who flocked to Heathcote in 1967 to live and attend seminars. These third-generation back-to-the-landers created a hybrid community at Heathcote; a community based on consensus, libertarianism, and communal – rather than homestead – living. Over the course of the 1960s and 1970s, Heathcote remained the headquarters of the School of Living and published the group's newspaper *Green Revolution*. As an inter-generational community Heathcote offers a way to track elements of continuity and change in the larger movement as well as highlight what made the third generation unique.

The second case study community is Twin Oaks in Virginia, one of the largest, most successful, and iconic back-to-the-land communities to emerge from the third generation and the

counterculture.³³ The early founders of Twin Oaks met in Washington, DC, at a communal house named Walden House in 1965. They then moved away from the city in 1967 and settled on a rural farm in Louisa County, Virginia which they named Twin Oaks after two prominent oaks on the property. The community formed around the utopian behaviorist movement that grew up around the writings of B.F. Skinner, in particular *Walden Two*. Skinner posited that a new age of peace and harmony could be ushered in if people followed a rigid behavioral engineering system meant to root out competition, jealousy, and violence. Like the School of Living's advocacy of eugenics, back-to-the-land followers of behavioral engineering expected that a well-maintained, rural community that disciplined members who exhibited competitiveness, egoism, and aggression could shape individuals and bring in the New Age. Therefore, Walden Two communities like Twin Oaks created systems of social coercion designed to bring about proper countercultural behavior and reinforce the power of the manager-elite that ran the community's largely undemocratic system of government.

Early residents of Twin Oaks followed behaviorism closely and believed that it would help them remake themselves and their community into a more loving and authentic space. The community's success and longevity stemmed, in part, from its use of a labor credit system – a system based on Edward Bellamy's 1888 work *Looking Backward: 2000-1887*, which Skinner expanded upon in his 1948 *Walden Two*. The labor credit system at Twin Oaks ensured that all members worked and enabled individuals to pursue meaningful labor, particularly women interested in farming, construction, and leadership. The community was also successful because its cottage industry products, handmade hammocks, were picked up by Pier One Imports in the

³³ Large in this context means between 75 to 100 members by the mid-1970s. Most communities, including Alpha Farm and Heathcote, contained between 10 and 20 full-time members at any given time. Membership counts did not include visitors who often stayed for months at a time.

mid-1970s, ensuring that the community was financially viable. Members of Twin Oaks were also directly connected to earlier generations. For several years, the School of Living's *Green Revolution* was printed at Twin Oaks, and it is apparent that members of Twin Oaks and Heathcote socialized. Indeed, back-to-the-land practice at Twin Oaks offers an important window into studying how the counterculture interacted with and modified earlier back-to-the-land ideas and practice.

The final case study community is Alpha Farm, which countercultural Quakers founded in 1971 near Deadwood, Oregon. The community was part of a Quaker splinter group formed in 1971 and known as the Movement for a New Society, which broke away from the mainstream church after becoming dissatisfied with its response to the Vietnam War. According to Alpha Farm's founder Caroline Estes, the community was the product of a religious experience at the American Friends Service Committee convention in 1971. During a meeting with other members of the Movement for a New Society she experienced a movement of the Spirit and concluded that true social transformation could only occur after individuals went back to the land and worked on the root causes of inequality and hate. She and a group of friends found land in rural Oregon and moved there in 1971 from Philadelphia. The community grew slowly over the course of the 1970s, relying on a series of business ventures such as a bookstore and café that brought them into contact with the local community. Like members of Twin Oaks, residents of Alpha Farm went back to the land to pursue personal growth and ensure economic self-sufficiency. It was also an influential community. Caroline Estes traveled the country leading seminars on consensus decision-making, even traveling to Twin Oaks to help them make decisions on their children's programs. A frequent subscriber to the School of Living's *Green Revolution*, Alpha Farm also advocated for decentralism and founded an influential

intercommunal organization ComeUNITY, which organized intentional communities in the Pacific Northwest.

Taking these three case studies together – and citing examples from other influential back-to-the-land communities – this study examines the complex ways in which the second and third generation interacted and tracks how the third wave changed over the course of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. The study of these communities and their relationship with earlier generations also offers important historiographical contributions. The current scholarship on the back-to-the-land movement connects 1970s back-to-the-land practice with earlier practitioners, such as the Nearings’ secular spirituality of homesteading and Borsodi and Loomis’s popularization of decentralism. Less work, however, has been done on the countercultural underpinnings of back-to-the-land practice in the 1970s.

Scholarship on the back-to-the-land movement has generally divorced back-to-the-land experiments in the 1970s and 1980s from their countercultural origins in the 1960s, fearing that a focus on the counterculture – its frivolity, instability, and seeming lack of focus – detracts from analyzing continuity between generations. Scholars such as Dona Brown, Jeffery Jacob, and Rebecca Gould have framed the third generation as responding to post-World War Two economic and political upheavals, but minimize the impact of the 1960s counterculture on the 1970s back-to-the-land movement. Brown has argued that it is more precise to associate the third generation with “the *end* of that era [the sixties] or with the beginning of the” 1970s and “not in a moment of apparent triumph for the counterculture but in disillusionment,” another economic crisis (in the form of the oil embargos), and the collapse of the counterculture.³⁴ Along these lines, Brown argues that framing the movement as part of the 1960s obscures continuity with

³⁴ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 205.

earlier generations and that a more insightful narrative would begin with the third generation's unique environmental sensibility and the establishment of *Mother Earth News* in 1970, a prominent third-wave publication notable for its focus on homesteading and environmentalism. Brown has even argued – citing the difference between Joni Mitchell's "Got to camp out on the land" lyric at the 1969 Woodstock festival and its modification to "Got to get back to the land" in a 1970 studio recording – that "going back to the land" only became part of the broader counterculture's awareness after 1970.³⁵ While scholars of the movement agree that the 1970s back-to-the-land movement was rooted in the counterculture, they begin their narratives not in the mid-1960s but in the early 1970s.

In many ways, Margaret Grundstein's experiences confirm some of Brown's assessments. Grundstein was disillusioned with political and social protest in 1970 and decided to go back to the land with her closest friends. The wider counterculture, however, did not collapse in the early 1970s and, more importantly, going back to the land was a core part the counterculture's mid-to-late 1960s utopianism long before the economic and political upheavals of the early-to-mid 1970s. To take Grundstein seriously, we cannot overlook her experiences in the mid-to-late 1960s or the way direct interactions with second generation back-to-the-landers shaped the 1960s counterculture. Grundstein's decision to go back to the land was rooted in her experience in the counterculture, and the environmental sensibility she espoused had its origins

³⁵ It is also noteworthy that Mitchell's 1969 "Woodstock Anthem" also called for hippies to "go back to the garden," a common refrain in many countercultural songs of the period. Jefferson Starship, the successor band to Jefferson Airplane, included the call as well as the Grateful Dead in the late 1960s and early 1970s. While back to the garden does not have quite the same implication as back to the land, it does represent a wider sense that hip individuals needed to get away from urban and suburban space. Indeed, the Grateful Dead's 1969 "Saint Stephen" referenced hippies who went "in and out of the garden," a clear nod to back-to-the-land communities like Morning Star Ranch. *Ibid.*, 205-206.

in her middle-class suburban upbringing, but it was not unique to the third generation. The School of Living had advocated an antimodern, anti-statist form of environmentalism since the 1940s. Moreover, dismissal of the 1960s counterculture has led scholars to overlook important sites of contact and continuity between the second generation and the counterculture in the mid-to-late 1960s, in particular the interactions between the School of Living and the counterculture. As such, this study places the reawakening of the back-to-the-land movement earlier than previous scholarship, in 1966 when the School of Living incorporated Richard Fairfield's iconic – and widely distributed – countercultural publication *The Modern Utopian*, rather than in 1970 when *Mother Earth News* was founded.

Examining how our three case-study communities adopted earlier back-to-the-land ideas and practices along with new countercultural practices suggests new historical insights. More specifically, this work provides the basis for substantially shifting narratives of the counterculture, the end of the 1960s, the shift towards conservatism in the 1970s, and the transformation of the 1960s counterculture into the 1980s New Age movement. Along with these shifts, this work will also bring new insights into the racial and gendered characteristics of the back-to-the-land movement by exploring how the third generation's elitism and racial vision borrowed from the second generation while adding new elements of appropriation through Indian play. It is these latter elements, rather than environmentalism, that made the third generation unique.

The third wave's reconfiguration of race and gender only makes sense if rooted in the counterculture's history. The third generation coincided with the rise of second-wave feminism, and back-to-the-land women actively sought to carve out space for themselves and root out the patriarchal elements of American society and the counterculture. Twin Oaks, for example, was

especially focused on tearing down the patriarchy, going so far as to remove all gender pronouns in the community and installing a labor system that would ensure that women had equal access to traditionally male roles. Along similar lines, the third generation's complex borrowings of Native culture and how it used such appropriation to legitimize its resettlement of rural land necessitates placing it in the context of white, countercultural, identity formation in the 1950s and 1960s.³⁶

While the second generation was openly elitist and advocated eugenics – they called on only the white, “quality-minded,” “leading lights” in American society to go back to the land – the third generation came of age during a fundamentally different historical context. As liberal whites in the 1960s, many had participated in Civil Rights protests. They envisioned society as inherently pluralistic and multicultural, as opposed to a “melting pot,” and celebrated racial diversity.

Partaking in a long American tradition of settler appropriation of Indianness as an oppositional identity, white back-to-the-landers wore beads in their hair, lived in tipis, sought out native spiritual teachers, and created intercommunal organizations of “tribes” in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Such practices were new within the back-to-the-land movement, and deemphasizing the counterculture makes it more challenging to study and contextualize these practices.

In advocating for the reintroduction of the counterculture into narratives on the back-to-the-land movement, this study draws on the work of historians of the 1960s and the communal movement. William Rorabaugh's work on American hippies and political conflict in 1960s Berkeley has shown that while 1960s radicalism appeared unprecedented at the time, it had roots in socio-political changes in the 1950s and the Beat counterculture. Rorabaugh's framing of the

³⁶ In making these assertions about the counterculture's appropriation of Native culture this work draws on the scholarship of Philip Deloria and Sherry Smith. See Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999); Sherry L. Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

counterculture as particularly preoccupied with individualism, authenticity, and community provides the basis for this study's approach to countercultural ideas and practices. While this study of the back-to-the-land movement modifies Rorabaugh's argument that the counterculture lacked a firm ideological basis, it does adopt his framing of the counterculture as a 1960s phenomenon: its links to 1950s antecedents, the connection between contemporary back-to-the-land practice and 1960s protest, and how the 1960s shaped modern America.³⁷

This work also draws on the writings of another prominent scholar of the 1960s, Timothy Miller, to contextualize and frame the communal back-to-the-land movement, in particular the role of preexisting communal groups in shaping the hippie counterculture. Miller's three-volume work on communes in the United States has shown significant continuity between 1960s communes and earlier antecedents in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as the way communal movements like Walden Two shaped the communal counterculture.³⁸ Miller has also conducted a massive oral history project focused on 1960s communalists in the late 1990s, and the histories support assertions made by Rorabaugh about how the 1950s and 1960s shaped would-be back-to-the-landers. Both scholars provide important insights on how to contextualize the counterculture in post-World War Two America. From this vantage point, this study argues

³⁷ Rorabaugh has argued that the counterculture lacked a systematic ideology because participants disdained established educational institutions. See Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 11.

³⁸ Miller's work has in many ways guided the direction of the research in this study. His first volume in 1998, *The Quest for Utopia in the Twentieth Century*, referenced overlap between the School of Living and the counterculture as a significant episode in the development of the third generations aspirations, arguing it would appear in a second volume. His second volume, *60's Communes*, only briefly mentioned Heathcote as the first hippie commune before moving on and left a gap in our understanding of this generational interplay. Miller, *The 60's Communes*, 8–10; On earlier communal antecedents see Timothy Miller, *The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth-Century America: Volume I: 1900-1960* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), xii–xviii.

for the counterculture's reinsertion into narratives of the back-to-the-land movement and how it interacted with an older generation of radicals and reformers.

To shift these narratives and include the second generation's interactions with the younger generation, the following study is composed of two parts. First, Chapters 1 and 2 follow the long history of the back-to-the-land tradition in America and the movement's reemergence in the mid-to-late 1960s. Chapter 1 highlights the complex elements of continuity that bridged the third generation with the first while at the same time providing crucial context for understanding the counterculture's reactions to post-World War Two American society. Chapter 2 narrows in on the prominent role of Richard Fairfield, his interactions with Mildred Loomis beginning in 1966, and how his underground newspaper, *The Modern Utopian*, provided the School of Living a powerful platform to reach the counterculture in the late 1960s. As such, Chapter 2 tracks the slow emergence of the third generation over the course of the late 1960s and early 1970s and sheds light on important similarities and differences between the generations.

The second part of this study analyzes the third generation's communal experiments in the 1970s and how back-to-the-landers tried to create alternative political, economic, and social structures to foster egalitarianism, cooperation, and environmental harmony between each other and the outside world. Chapter 3 takes the third generation's political experiments seriously and focuses on how members of Heathcote, Alpha Farm, and Twin Oaks created egalitarian political cultures that eliminated the practice of voting as a way of avoiding division. For Heathcote and Alpha Farm members, this entailed adopting consensus decision-making, whereas members of Twin Oaks created a rigid behaviorist system of planners and managers. Not all members of the third generation, however, took this path. Some, such as Stewart Brand and John Shuttleworth, gravitated towards right-leaning libertarianism by the end of the 1970s, though each exhibited a

considerably different political worldview. Chapter 4 turns to the development of hip capitalism at Alpha Farm and Twin Oaks and explores how each community sought to create an economics of equality that would ensure community survival while at the same time enabling members, in particular women, to pursue meaningful work. Chapter 5 shifts focus to how countercultural back-to-the-landers in the 1970s turned away from 1960s leftist activism and inward towards creating intercommunal organizations geared toward mutual aid, labor sharing, and, eventually, New Age socializing. Chapter 5 provides an endpoint for the countercultural back-to-the-land movement since, by the 1980s, it became part of the New Age movement.

Chapter 1.

The Back-to-the-Land Tradition in the Twentieth Century: From Progressive Reform to Hippie Protest

*Where one had made riches by mining,
Perceiving that hundreds grew poor,
I made up my mind to try farming,
The only pursuit that was sure.*
– Francis Henry, “The Old Settler,” 1874

*Shall I go off and away to bright Andromeda?
Shall I sail my wooden ships to the sea?
Or stay in a cage of those in Amerika??
Or shall I be on the knee?
Wave goodbye to Amerika
Say hello to the garden.*

*So I see – I see the way you feel
And I know that your life is real.
Pioneer searcher refugee
I follow you and you follow me.*
– Jefferson Starship, “Let’s go Together,” 1970

The countercultural back-to-the-land movement of the late 1960s and 1970s was not an unprecedented rejection of urban life or modern society; rather, the movement was part of a much larger, far longer, antimodern tradition that stretched back to the late nineteenth century. Just as industrialization, urbanization, and immigration were reaching a fever pitch at the turn of the century, the first calls for “overcivilized” Americans to go back to the land were issued. During this period, antimodern reformers such as Bolton Hall, Gustav Stickley, and David Greyson implored white middle-class urbanites and newly arrived immigrants to live on subsistence homesteads and learn artisanal crafts to weather contemporary economic and cultural upheavals. As the turmoil at the turn of the century gave way to the prosperity of the 1920s and

the Depression of the 1930s, a second generation of back-to-the-land writers and practitioners emerged. This second generation built upon the first's antimodern sensibilities and focused on the idea that going back to the land was a eugenic enterprise that would reinvigorate the white race. Second generation writer-practitioners such as Ralph Borsodi, Mildred Loomis, and Helen and Scott Nearing also developed new critiques of centralization in response to the New Deal state and the profound reconfiguration of American politics and economics during World War Two and the early Cold War. By the 1960s and 1970s, then, there was a rich antimodern back-to-the-land tradition.

Hippie communards and homesteaders drew upon – often quite selectively – their earlier predecessors, either through reading their works or via direct interactions with surviving second generation back-to-the-landers. As such, an examination of the long history of the back-to-the-land movement, its key ideas, and its most influential writers and a breakdown of what was and was not passed down to later generations is crucial for making sense of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement. At the same time, however, reframing the third generation as a product of the counterculture will necessitate contextualizing how the counterculture was rooted in critiques of Cold War culture, post-World War Two affluence, and the legacy of the Beats and other 1950s social critics. While the third generation shared a number of similarities with early back-to-the-landers, the social, cultural, and political atmosphere of the 1950s and 1960s was profoundly different than turn-of-the-century America. The aim of this chapter, then, is to contextualize both the larger back-to-the-land tradition in the twentieth century and how the third generation was a response to profound changes in post-World War Two American society, the political climate of the Cold War, and the radicalization of students on college campuses in the 1960s.

This chapter is divided into two historical threads: one trailing back to the early 1900s to the first generation of reformers to call for Americans to go back to the land, and the other tied to the history of the counterculture. This dual context serves three purposes. First, exploring the long history of the back-to-the-land movement is crucial for understanding the interactions between the second and third generation in the mid-to-late 1960s, and grounds analysis of the third generation's activities within the context of a continuous movement. Moreover, studying previous back-to-the-land waves sheds light on one of the movement's central contradictions. Antimodern dissent traditions like the back-to-the-land movement often served to reinforce the dominant culture – and served the racial and class interests of its white middle-class participants – rather than offering a radical alternative to modern culture.³⁹

Secondly, this framing will establish the necessary groundwork for succeeding chapters to delve into specific sites of intergenerational contact and continuity, and explore key areas of political, economic, and cultural differences between the generations. Finally, this framing reinserts the third generation's countercultural context into our analysis of the movement in the 1970s and helps to explain why not all elements of the back-to-the-land tradition were retained by the younger generation. Indeed, many elements of the previous generations' ideology were, by the late 1960s, not appealing to the third generation. For example, the third generation found the School of Living's racism and classism unappealing and instead defined their liberal white identity via selective mimicry of non-white traditions. Similarly, many back-to-the-land women rejected the first and second generation's austere, Victorian sensibilities, especially as they related to spheres of domesticity.

³⁹ In this framing of the movement's contradictions, and insights into turn-of-the-century movements, I follow T.J. Jackson Lears's work on antimodernism. Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 57-58.

Providing the countercultural context also helps to explain what was wholly new about the third generation. The third generation's antimodernism was rooted in reactions to post-World War Two American affluence and suburbanization, Cold War political and cultural conformity, and a sense that individuals could no longer seek meaningful labor or pursue authentic experience in cities and suburbs. Like previous generations, members of the counterculture went back to the land in the hopes of finding freedom in self-reliance. However, unlike previous generations, they were concerned that economic stability and white middle-class affluence would preclude meaningful self-actualization and community formation. Moreover, rejecting urban and suburban spaces, they sought out remote rural areas of the country – a noteworthy departure as earlier generations had viewed suburbs as the perfect space for Americans to go back-to-the-land. The resulting countercultural back-to-the-land experiments, both communal and on homesteads, reflect this context, from the strict behavioral engineering of Twin Oaks in rural Virginia to Lou Gottlieb's (in)famous community outside of San Francisco named Morning Star Ranch. Before diving into the history of the counterculture, however, it is important to understand the history of earlier generations who decided to opt-out of mainstream American society.

Back to the Land at the Turn of the Twentieth Century: The First Generation

The first wave of Americans advocating a return to the land responded to the tremendous social, cultural, and economic upheaval of the late Gilded Age and early Progressive era.⁴⁰ As

⁴⁰ While this work draws mostly on Brown's work on the first generation and figures such as Bolton Hall, Gould's work, though focused primarily on spirituality, is also informative. Indeed, Gould has demonstrated how first-generation writers such as John Burroughs spoke to the discontentment of urban audiences at the turn of the century. See Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 134; Brown, *Back to the Land*, 5.

indicated in the very phrase *back to the land*, the movement attracted urban audiences who were uneasy with the pace of modern life and, in particular, the effects of urbanization, immigration, and industrialization on the socio-cultural position of the white middle-class – a group that, according to Brown, consisted of “clerical workers, sales workers, and high-status (but poorly paid) professionals, along with skilled workers.”⁴¹

The rapidity of urbanization was staggering during this period. In 1890, 63.9 percent of the United States population was rural; by 1910, only 53.7 percent lived outside of cities.⁴² Some of this decline can be ascribed to the swiftness of urban demographic growth, fueled by international and rural migration – the former being a significant development as southern and eastern European immigrants flooded into American cities following the 1882 exclusion of Chinese immigrants. The decline of rural populations was also linked to changes in American agriculture. By the late 1800s, as industrial agriculture opened up new land for production and larger farms expanded, small farmers increasingly found work in urban areas.⁴³ By 1910, less than a third of American workers were farming, down from 43 percent in 1890.⁴⁴ For many turn-of-the-century urban reformers, this migration was a recipe for social unrest, political radicalism, and racial degeneration. They feared that an influx of Catholic immigrants would soon outbreed “native” Anglo-Saxons and that a concomitant decline in birth rates among the middle and upper classes would lead to “race suicide.”⁴⁵ For back-to-the-land advocates, the remedy to such threats

⁴¹ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 5.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 23.

⁴³ For an important study on turn-of-the-century industrial agriculture see Deborah Fitzgerald, *Every Farm a Factory: The Industrial Ideal in American Agriculture* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 5–9.

⁴⁴ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 23.

⁴⁵ Daniel J. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics: Genetics and the Uses of Human Heredity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998), 74.

was to encourage immigrants and native-born alike to settle on the outskirts of cities – far enough away from cities to be virtuously independent but close enough to be properly socialized and to sell crafts and food products to urban consumers.

As people moved to cities and industrial agriculture was displacing farmers, there was also a series of devastating economic boom-and-bust cycles that left urban workers reeling and searching for alternative, more self-sufficient lifestyles. One of the worst economic downturns occurred in 1893. After the Sherman Silver Purchase Act's failure, key railroad companies overextended, and there was a run on banks. The ensuing depression marked the Gilded Age's end and was particularly brutal for urban laborers, skilled workers, and even some professionals. Between 1893 and 1895, the urban unemployment rate at times reached 20 percent. The economy then recovered, only to be sent into another recession in 1907.⁴⁶ For many back-to-the-land advocates at the turn-of-the-century, the logical solution to such economic instability was a return to subsistence homesteading which, they believed, would insulate homesteaders from the whims of the larger market economy. Coupled with this economic instability was a growing uncertainty concerning urban industrial life itself. In a society quickly becoming more stratified and interdependent, with looming, impersonal corporations in control of the day-to-day life of many, rampant labor unrest, the rise of a new urban consumer culture, and a series of urban epidemics, many urban dreamers turned to pastoralism, rural self-reliance, and radical utopias.

The first generation of Americans who decided to go back to the land in the 1890s and early 1900s were grappling not only with urbanization and economic instability but also with larger existential questions related to the trajectory modern progress and the role of rural land in

⁴⁶ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 28.

shaping virtuous citizens.⁴⁷ As T. J. Jackson Lears has observed, antimodern movements like the back-to-the-land movement and the Arts and Crafts movement were “half-conscious” reactions to modern culture's limitations and contradictions that drew on American pastoralism and republican moralism.⁴⁸ The first wave of the back-to-the-land movement was a direct response to the sense among white, middle-class urbanites – particularly those in the Northeast – that modern culture was sapping their vigor, decreasing their autonomy, precluding “authentic” experience, and leading to an epidemic of neurasthenia. Neurasthenia was a mental affliction that arose in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, characterized by anxiety, lethargy, and a feeling of powerlessness.⁴⁹

Central to the back-to-the-land impulse was the republican idea that urban space – in which citizens often rented rather than owned land – was a recipe for dependence, decadence, and vice. Idealizing Jefferson’s yeoman farmer, first-wave writers and reformers asserted that productive work on rural land was a crucial safety-valve for American society that would reinvigorate native-born Americans and enable the nation to absorb newly arrived immigrants and thus avoid the social unrest occurring in Europe.⁵⁰ Such urban unrest – and the growing popularity of socialism, anarchism, and communism – was a direct threat to the class interests of well-to-do back-to-the-land advocates such as David Greyson and Bolton Hall. Indeed, the threat of European radicalism was compounded by the perceived racial inferiority of southern and eastern European immigrants.

⁴⁷ For an examination of this through the figure of John Burroughs see Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 110–11.

⁴⁸ Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 26.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 50.

⁵⁰ On the Jeffersonian ideal see Shi, *The Simple Life*, 77–78; Berger, *The Survival of the Counterculture*, 100; Brown, *Back to the Land*, 45–47.

One example of this republican moralizing appears in back-to-the-land writings of Ray Stannard Baker, known under the pseudonym David Greyson, in particular his 1907 work *Adventures in Contentment*. Published at the height of another recession, *Adventures in Contentment* was suffused with republican anti-urbanism and praise for rural life. Indeed, for Greyson, it was impossible to attain the “higher life” in cities because the city’s “carnal graces” tempted individuals in a growing consumer culture and trapped them in a web of interdependence, in his words “slavery of the spirit” and body.⁵¹ This latter concern was all the more dire for turn-of-the-century readers who faced imminent public health concerns such as tuberculosis and cholera – diseases linked to urban crowding and poor sanitation. In the first generation’s republican framing, the availability of “free” land – i.e., homesteads – to white settlers was, therefore, a necessary outlet for individuals and communities to cultivate rural values and healthy lifestyles that were seen to be more beneficial to individuals and society as a whole.⁵²

Greyson’s writings reflect the uncertainty back-to-the-landers – and especially movement leaders – faced in turn-of-the-century America. The trajectory of American civilization, by this settler logic, was inextricably tied to its unique access to “open” land in the West and its ability to use that land to transform Europeans into Americans through westering and pioneering. In 1890, however, the U.S. Census declared that the frontier, defined as a space with fewer than two people per square mile, had closed. Fredrick Jackson Turner captured the sentiment of the times in his now-famous paper presented to the American Historical Association in 1893 titled “The

⁵¹ David Greyson, *Adventures in Contentment* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap Publishers, 1907) 4, 244-6.

⁵² For more on how the first generation viewed land and pursued the simple life see Shi, *The Simple Life*, 203.

Significance of the Frontier in American History.” The supposed closing of the frontier coupled with the social, cultural, and economic turmoil of the late Gilded Age provided a powerful inducement for urban back-to-the-land dreamers and writers to “return” to an imagined rural, agrarian past which would transform them into more virtuous, more vigorous, and more secure Americans.

At this point, it will be useful to explore the contours of the first generation and the complex ways that the back-to-the-land impulse pervaded other radical and Progressive groups of the period. This approach will ground our discussion by focusing on how actual back-to-the-landers generated a distinct antimodern ideology and how they tried to put it into practice. Furthermore, it will provide a reference point for what elements of the first generation’s ideas influenced the second and third generations. The first generation’s ideology was crafted in the personal lives of its thinkers, who then wrote about their experience, and from overlapping movements and various Progressive causes. Between 1890 and 1910, the first generation also established intentional communities on both the East and the West Coast of the United States, that influenced important second generation back-to-the-landers.

Along with mapping out the first generation, it is important to recognize how these back-to-the-landers represented a coherent social movement. The sociologist Jeffery Jacob, in his study of back-to-the-landers in the 1980s, defines a social movement as “large-scale collective behavior directed toward promoting or resisting social change. Unlike other forms of collective action like fads or trends, social movements possess at least a rudimentary organizational structure and well-developed ideologies, espoused by an intellectual vanguard with recognizable

public identities.”⁵³ This definition, however, must be stretched to encompass the back-to-the-land movement, as it was not always collective or well-coordinated.

As we have seen, the first generation of back-to-the-landers resisted social-cultural changes in the early Progressive era by turning to pastoralism, promoting economic self-sufficiency, and viewing rural land settlement as vital to creating virtuous citizens. At the same time, they drew on well-developed – and often quite radical – ideologies such as producerism, the anarcho-communism of Kropotkin, and Georgian economics in their critique of American society, formulating a coherent back-to-the-land ideology. The first generation was also led by a publicly recognizable intellectual vanguard that included Bolton Hall, the pastoral writer David Greyson, and the leader of the Arts and Crafts movement Gustav Stickley. The first generation, however, lacked a coherent organizational structure, and existed alongside as well as within similar and allied movements, such as the Country Life movement, the radical labor movement, the Single Tax movement, and the agrarian Populist movement.

The back-to-the-land movement’s lack of organization and clear boundaries between allied causes makes narrating the movement difficult. To study the first generation, then, it will be useful to delve into the life of Bolton Hall, one of the first key writers and practitioners of the movement, to see how he influenced and was influenced by reform movements of the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century.

Bolton Hall has been credited with founding the back-to-the-land movement itself. Born in Ireland in 1854, he moved with his family to New York as a teenager and graduated from Princeton in 1875. His father was the minister at the Fifth Avenue Presbyterian Church, which

⁵³ Jacob, *New Pioneers*, 5.

was one of the wealthiest congregations in the city.⁵⁴ Though the Halls were immigrants, their socio-economic standing – and northern European origin – was far above that of the majority of newly arrived southern and eastern European immigrants in the late 1800s. Hall was a prominent figure in the vibrant New York trade economy and, like many upper-middle class urbanites, was becoming increasingly uneasy about immigration, industrialization, and urbanization. In the early 1880s, he received a law degree from Columbia University and went to work in Gilded Age New York for companies involved in international commerce. In mid-1880s, however, after his export company McCarty and Hall declared bankruptcy, Hall turned against urban life and increasingly questioned America's modern trajectory. Ultimately, he championed going back to the land as a Progressive reform to mitigate the effects of industrialization and urbanization on immigrants and native-born alike.

At this time, he also began to look for rural land to cultivate, though in somewhat contradictory fashion his primary occupation as an antimodern reformer and writer tied him to urban space. As Gould and Brown have correctly asserted, economic self-sufficiency was the primary rationale that many, including Hall, cited for the need to leave urban spaces.⁵⁵ For Hall, however, self-sufficiency was as much pragmatic as it was utopian, and we must take his visions for remaking society seriously in order to understand the character of the first generation and its ideological legacy.

Hall's emphasis on the self-sufficiency of small landholdings drew from the evolving republican language of producerism in the late 1800s.⁵⁶ As Rosanne Currarino has pointed out,

⁵⁴ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 39.

⁵⁵ Indeed, both scholars view Hall as the most important early popularizer of the back-to-the-land movement. See Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 176–77; Brown, *Back to the Land*, 29.

⁵⁶ Brown, 4.

the late nineteenth century – when American society industrialized and wage work began overtaking self-employment – saw the coexistence of two distinct forms of producerism: Proprietary and Industrial. According to Currarino, the old form of “proprietary producerism emphasized the connections among social legitimacy, self-sufficiency, and the ownership of productive property.”⁵⁷ This older producerist mentality and value system, which Hall drew on in his back-to-the-land vision, had roots in the founders’ republicanism, which held that being or becoming an independent producer, was necessary for a virtuous citizenry.⁵⁸ The late 1800s were drastically different from the late 1700s, and the rise of industrial wage labor left many Americans uneasy. As a response to the rise of industrial wage labor, a new language of industrial producerism arose within the Populist movement and among radical labor organizers such as the Knights of Labor that at times echoed back-to-the-land sentiments. Under this new form of producerism, productive property expanded to include labor, allowing urban artisans and workers to frame themselves as independent producers alongside farmers.⁵⁹ While the Knights of Labor sought independence through union organizing, back-to-the-landers like Hall instead gravitated to the similarly radical Single Tax movement as a way to redistribute land and return workers to a proper relationship with their products. It is noteworthy that both versions of producerism have remained potent rhetorical devices and ideological cornerstones for cultural and political dissenters throughout the twentieth – and even into the twenty-first – century.

During the late 1800s, both producerist visions were tested, and it appeared to Americans like Hall that there was no longer a link between republican virtue and economic success as

⁵⁷ Rosanne Currarino, *The Labor Question in America: Economic Democracy in the Gilded Age* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2011), 13.

⁵⁸ Currarino, *The Labor Question in America*, 13.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

American society became more stratified and economically unstable.⁶⁰ Indeed as Hall's business was foundering in 1882, the American economy contracted into a three-year recession and Hall gravitated to producerism, the Single Tax, and antimodern reform efforts. As a result, the first-generation combined elements of proprietary and industrial producerism in the late-1800s and formulated their own vision for an ideal society. This ideal back-to-the-land society, it was hoped, could secure individual producers' economic independence by employing intensive agriculture, which was in line with proprietary producerism, and ensure that there was an even playing field for small landholders, thus achieving the goals of industrial producerism.

Beyond producerism, Hall was especially influenced by Peter Kropotkin's writings at the turn of the century, particularly Kropotkin's focus on cooperative mutual aid and intensive agriculture.⁶¹ Kropotkin, who had been forced out of Russia in the mid-1800s, settled in England in the late 1880s and articulated an anarcho-communist philosophy of mutual aid that posited that, in contrast to the Social Darwinists' theory of competition, cooperation was the mechanism that propelled human progress. Kropotkin's writings and ideas were conveyed to an American audience in the first decade of the twentieth century, and his form of anarcho-communism took root among progressives, socialists, and other radicals.

Kropotkin's work made its way into newly founded back-to-the-land publications because, drawing from his experience with English radicals of the time, Kropotkin argued that nations and regions should become more agriculturally self-sufficient and less dependent on international trade.⁶² This decoupling from the international economy would be possible, according to Kropotkin, because experts had so far underestimated the amount of food that could

⁶⁰ Ibid., 15.

⁶¹ Shi, *The Simple Life*, 203; Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 173–77.

⁶² Brown, *Back to the Land*, 35.

be produced through scientifically guided, intensive agriculture. Such scientific and technological optimism was a common sensibility of the period and underlay various utopian endeavors, including the back-to-the-land movement.⁶³ Indeed, this last sentiment most intrigued Bolton Hall, who was desperate to achieve self-sufficiency at the turn of the century and help create a new society founded on rural mutual aid and efficient, intensive farming.

Kropotkin's writings, disseminated in the pages of Stickley's *The Craftsman* in the early 1900s, also dovetailed with the Single Tax movement that Hall championed and which had led his father to disinherit him in the 1880s. The Single Tax movement was an outgrowth of the economist Henry George's 1879 work *Progress and Poverty*. In this highly influential antimodern work, George argued that poverty and modern material progress were intertwined and that material progress led to a sense of cultural malaise – a message that resonated with Hall.⁶⁴

By the early 1900s, antimodern reformers like Hall advocated the Single Tax as a radical way for small landholders to level the playing field. In the late 1800s, George concluded that the root cause of all social inequality and injustice resided in land speculation and the private accumulation of land. To remedy the rapidly growing inequalities of Gilded Age America, George proposed a single tax on the total profit generated from holding land, or what he termed the “unearned increment.”⁶⁵ This unearned increment, however, did not apply to individual

⁶³ Faith in a “gospel of technological progress” that would serve nation-states was a hallmark of an entire genre of utopian literature that Howard Segal has explored. Indeed, though Segal does not engage with the back-to-the-land movement or with Kropotkin his work demonstrates the myriad ways in which technological/scientific progress became a language for utopians and reformers to imagine alternative futures. See Howard Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture: Twentieth Anniversary Edition* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2005), 98-102.

⁶⁴ Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture* 77.

⁶⁵ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 40.

improvements made by owners.⁶⁶ It was meant to tax and remove the practice of land speculation and ownership from society, thus ending monopolies such as the railroads that owned vast amounts of land across the country.⁶⁷ Under a Single Tax system, land could not be owned fee-simple; instead, it was always held in trust. Individuals could lease land from trusts and own the value of all improvements made to land through their own labor. Like Kropotkin, George envisioned a remade society with small landholders controlling their own means of production. Unlike Kropotkin, however, George was a free-market advocate, though on a smaller scale and a more level playing field.

Though popular, the Single Tax movement struggled to explain the complexity of the utopian scheme to new adherents at the turn of the century. Interestingly, one enterprising Single Tax advocate named Elizabeth Magie created a board game in 1903 that she called The Landlord's Game to explain how land speculating and monopolies hurt society and individuals. Magie's game contained two sets of rules, one for monopolists and another for anti-monopolists. Playing the game under the former set of rules encouraged monopoly and cutthroat competition, whereas the latter rewarded all players when one player landed on an owned property, demonstrating the promise of the Single Tax. The Landlord's Game was used to convey Single Tax philosophy effectively and was used by second generation back-to-the-landers such as Scott Nearing when he taught at the Wharton business school. Incidentally, Magie's game was stolen by Charles Darrow in 1935, who did away with the radical anti-monopolistic rule-set. He renamed the game Monopoly. In fact, Darrow made millions of royalties when he sold it to Parker Brothers, which turned the game into one of the twentieth century's most iconic board

⁶⁶ Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 174.

⁶⁷ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 40.

games. Magie claimed in a 1936 interview that after lawyer and patent fees, the game cost her more to create than it ever generated – a clear example of capitalism defeating radical reform.⁶⁸

The turn of the century was a period of intense labor unrest, with farmers joining together to form an agrarian Populist movement to resist monopolies and promote producerism, and the Single Tax idea gained traction amongst antimodern reformers like Hall. In 1907, after a lull in organizing after 1890, advocates of the Single Tax formed the American Single Tax League in New York. Bolton Hall was elected president and used his position to promote the tax and the back-to-the-land movement, which was gaining traction in the first decade of the twentieth century. Indeed, the back-to-the-land movement and the Single Tax movement must be understood as overlapping social movements because the first wave believed that removing land speculation from the economy would empower more urbanites to settle outside of cities where they could farm and find self-sufficiency. As we shall see in Chapter 2, the Single Tax movement remained a cornerstone of the back-to-the-land movement into the 1960s as members of the second generation published information on the Single Tax in countercultural publications.

Bolton Hall's antimodern back-to-the-land ideology was informed by his involvement with the Single Tax movement as well as his advocacy of back-to-the-land producerism and Kropotkin's theories of human evolution, all of which involved his vision to secure self-sufficiency outside of cities. Over the course of the first decade of the twentieth century, he went about translating his ideas into action. In 1907, Hall published his most influential back-to-the-land work: *Three Acres and Liberty*. Though there had been back-to-the-land experiments before

⁶⁸ For more see Mary Pilon, "Monopoly's Inventor: The Progressive Who Didn't Pass 'Go,'" *The New York Times*, February 13, 2015, accessed October 15th, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20201001141305/https://www.nytimes.com/2015/02/15/business/behind-monopoly-an-inventor-who-didnt-pass-go.html>.

1907, and the back-to-the-land genre had begun in 1857 with Edmund Morris' *Ten Acres Enough*, Hall's work became widely popular in Progressive and radical circles because the book laid out a clear back-to-the-land ideology and supported it with in-depth, instructive information on farm management.

All of these threads can be seen in the opening pages of *Three Acres and Liberty*, where Hall stated that "Scientific methods of agriculture have revealed possibilities in the soil...People in every city are longing for the freedom of country life, yet hesitate to enter into its liberty because no one points the way. Most sociologists agreed that the great problem of our day is to stop the drift of population toward cities."⁶⁹ Drawing further on the work of contemporary sociologists, Hall argued that modern overcrowded cities were the main sites of moral, social, and economic "degeneration" and "disintegration" as "farmer's sons" and immigrants alike struggled to make ends meet.⁷⁰ He even argued, relying on the work of Kropotkin, that "the law of the survival of the fittest has wiped out races and nations who have ignored this fundamental law, that all men must progress together."⁷¹ To ensure such progress – and forestall the threats of labor radicalism and racial degeneration – Hall retreated to a common republican moralism and concluded that a return to farming would reinvigorate native-born Anglo-Saxons and Americanize recent European immigrants; thus ensuring that white Americans would progress together.⁷² It is essential to recognize that Hall's reference to "all men" was circumscribed. For instance, Hall touted land in rural Delaware for a host of reasons but made sure to note that "the population is mostly native, five-sixths white, one-sixth colored" and that the majority of whites

⁶⁹ Bolton Hall, *Three Acres and Liberty* (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 3.

⁷⁰ Hall, *Three Acres and Liberty*, 279, 380.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 380.

⁷² For reference to Anglo-Saxons see *Ibid.*, 315.

were of “Anglo-Saxon descent,” thus making it attractive for white middle-class urbanites and European immigrants.⁷³

According to Hall, three acres and the scientific know-how to harness the land's productive capabilities was all that any independent white producer needed to achieve self-sufficiency. Such reliance on modern science – and his underlying racial and class anxieties to frame the back-to-the-land endeavor – is a primary example of how the first generation's antimodernism reinforced the dominant culture of the times while at the same time serving the movement's white middle-class interests. Further proof of this process can even be found in how far away Hall encouraged readers to settle outside of urban areas.

Unlike subsequent generations, Hall considered rural land on the outskirts of cities as ideal for securing liberty and ensuring proper socialization. It was far enough away to create the simple life but not so far as to degrade society. From his perspective, “it is not the growth of the cities that we want to check, but the needless want and misery in the cities, and this can be done by restoring the natural condition of living...by showing that it is easier and making it more attractive to live in comfort on the outskirts of the city as producers, than in the slums as paupers.”⁷⁴ In the context of the “closing of the frontier,” a reconfiguration of producerism, and a renewed turn to republican antiurban moralism, antimodern dissenters like Hall sought to ameliorate the effects of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and immigration on both immigrants and native-born. Viewing urban crowding as a force of social and racial

⁷³ This was not the only instance of Hall's treatment of Black Americans. Hall also touted rural Virginia and noted that before the Civil War the land had been ill managed for tobacco production but that “since the awakening of the younger generation to a better understanding of her resources, together with the withdrawal of larger numbers of the colored people into industrial occupations, no state offers more attractive inducements to the homecrofter than Virginia.” *Ibid.*, 324.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 4.

degeneration, back-to-the-land reformers called on Americans to pursue the simple life outside of cities, but not so far as to preclude commerce or socialization for newly arrived immigrants.

Given Hall's arguments and the establishment of actual back-to-the-land communities on the outskirts of cities, the first wave needs to be placed within the context of suburban development at the turn of the century. Like back-to-the-landers, early twentieth-century suburbanites sought self-sufficiency, food security, and the benefits of living closer to "Nature." Indeed, ownership of suburban land that could be cultivated for food was a valuable improvement for many urban families in the early twentieth century.⁷⁵ First wave back-to-the-landers, then, promoted suburban migration and framed early suburban back-to-the-land communities as rural enough to ensure self-sufficiency while still retaining the social and economic benefits of urban living. As we shall see in our exploration of the third wave, however, much had changed by the 1960s. By that time, the children of Cold War suburbs reacted to post-World War Two society by seeking out remote rural spaces for their own back-to-the-land experiments.

Back-to-the-land advocates like Hall were not just armchair philosophers; they also established intentional communities on the outskirts of East Coast cities. These intentional communities were experimental Single Tax colonies meant to give members the opportunity to take rural land off the market, practice intensive agriculture, and retreat from urban living's degenerative effects. As Brown and Gould have noted, there was an explosion of such colonies in the first decade of the twentieth century.⁷⁶ Fiske Warren, for instance, a wealthy manufacturer from Massachusetts, started two communities: Tahanto in Massachusetts and Halidon in Maine.

⁷⁵ Brown, *Back to the Land*, 124.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 42; Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 175.

Even Bolton Hall established a community in New Jersey, naming it Free Acres. Of these Single Tax colonies, Joseph Fels' Arden community in Delaware was the most prominent and influential back-to-the-land community at the turn of the century. Founded in 1900, the enclave consisted of leasable plots of land for back-to-the-landers to farm. Most of the East Coast Single Tax movement's leaders resided there, though many only lived there in the summers. Revealing the colonies' limitations and the class positioning of movement leaders, the community consisted of urban professionals and academics rather than the working poor. Still, the community was influential. At Arden, Elizabeth Magie's game was standardized and made into a teaching tool in 1906. It was also an essential community for the second generation. Scott Nearing lived in the community while he taught at Wharton, and he learned to farm and build with stone during his stay – the latter being a hallmark of his later homesteads. Whether or not these communities attained their back-to-the-land goals, then, they were important spaces for the first and second generation to interact.

Back-to-the-land efforts around East Coast cities were paralleled by a similar movement in the American West, though back-to-the-landers in the West were responding to somewhat different urban and economic contexts. At the turn of the twentieth century, cities in the American West were undergoing a massive expansion, flooded by a series of migrations and the development of extractive industries. While western cities relied on their hinterlands to provide raw materials and fuel their expansion, extractive industries proved to be fickle enterprises that led to economic instability, especially for itinerant laborers who moved in and out of urban areas to pursue work.⁷⁷ By the late-1800s, some westerners chose to leave western cities for self-

⁷⁷ For works focused on western urban expansion and control over hinterlands see Carl Abbott, *How Cities Won the West: Four Centuries of Urban Change in Western North America*

sufficient colonies in rural hinterlands, especially after the 1893 economic depression. While East Coast writers like Bolton Hall influenced western back-to-the-landers, many were not Single Tax advocates and instead gravitated to Kropotkin's anarcho-communism or Edward Bellamy's socialism.

One of the most successful and well-studied of these western first-wave communities was the colony at Home, Washington, on Puget Sound's then-remote Carr Inlet. The community was founded in the mid-1890s by workers from nearby Tacoma who were hit hard by the 1893 economic depression. The early founders were followers of Bellamy, whose utopian work *Looking Backwards: 2000-1887* envisioned a socialist utopia in the year 2000 that had eliminated poverty through technological innovation and nationalizing industries. Bellamy's nationalist point of view, it should be noted, was in keeping with technocratic economy theories of the day as well as a broader technological utopian movement that began in the late nineteenth century.⁷⁸ Indeed, the same nationalism permeated Kropotkin's writings and shaped his call for nations to become more self-sufficient. A central point of *Looking Backwards* was that social harmony could be achieved by ensuring that all citizens had access to meaningful labor and that labor obligations within society should be based on the popularity and onerousness of specific tasks.⁷⁹ This last idea was perhaps Bellamy's most enduring contribution to the back-to-the-land movement as it underlay B.F. Skinner's labor credit system – a system members of Twin Oaks employed in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Though Bellamy's utopia was set in an urban

(Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 2008); William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1992).

⁷⁸ For more on this movement, Bellamy's prominent role, and other utopians of the period see Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*, 47.

⁷⁹ Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: From 2000 to 1887*, Reprint Edition (Bedford: Applewood Books, 2000), 78.

environment, the founders of Home were particularly intrigued by Bellamy's focus on meaningful labor and, drawing on common republican ideas about rural land, believed that going back-to-the-land in the Pacific Northwest would ensure self-sufficiency and simple living.

While Bellamy was the inspiration for Home, most residents, many of whom were disaffected from the local radical labor movement, became anarcho-communists. Over the course of the community's more than twenty-year existence, the colony provided refuge for anarchists such as Emma Goldman. Indeed, anarchism shaped the community's structure and residents had complete autonomy on their individual plots of land.⁸⁰ It is important to recognize that Home was one of several radical utopias around Puget Sound at the turn of the century and has been situated by scholars as part of the twentieth-century communal movement as well as the radical labor movement in the Pacific Northwest.⁸¹ Home was, however, also a first wave back-to-the-land community; its founders were responding to economic and political turmoil by seeking rural self-sufficiency and their ideology was based on Kropotkin, back-to-the-land producerism, and a larger antimodern cultural movement. The community lasted until the late 1910s and dissolved for a variety of reasons ranging from Home's children wanting to leave to a particularly venomous dispute within the community between the "nudes" and the "prudes" concerning the propriety of nude bathing in the Sound.

⁸⁰ For more on the early idealism of Home's founders and how the community attracted speakers like Goldman and Bill Haywood see Justin Wadland, *Trying Home: The Rise and Fall of an Anarchist Utopia on Puget Sound*, Kindle Edition (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2014), Location 240–52, 1589.

⁸¹ There were a series of Puget Sound utopias including Home, Equality (a direct reference to Bellamy's final book), and Freeland. For an in-depth account of these regional experiments see Charles LeWarne's account, in particular his chapter on Home. Charles Pierce LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound, 1885-1915*, 2nd edition (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995), chap. Home: Nest of Anarchy or Haven of Individualism?

At the same time as radical experiments on Puget Sound were taking root, western progressive reformers, inspired by East Coast writers like Hall, were drawn to dreams of irrigation and reclamation of arid land as a new safety-valve for urban social unrest. One such reformer was William Smythe, who, though born in Massachusetts, worked as a journalist in Nebraska in the late-1800s. He became a back-to-the-land reclamation convert after covering the effects the 1893 depression on the West. Smythe believed that the federal government's funding of irrigation projects would open new land for small freeholders to practice intensive agriculture, thus reclaiming arid land for more back-to-the-landers. Like Hall, he envisioned tight-knit communities of small landholders and hoped that the work of reclamation and opening of land would lead to a society based on mutual aid. Smythe published an influential book in 1900 entitled *The Conquest of Arid America* and was the leader of the "Little Land" movement in California which established communities outside of cities on newly reclaimed land. There were, of course, connections between this western back-to-the-land movement and its East Coast counterpart. Bolton Hall's 1908 work *A Little Land and a Living* inspired the Little Lands communities in California, and one was even named Bolton Hall.⁸²

Mid-Century Back-to-the-Land Advocacy: The Second Generation

The first wave crested in the 1910s as Single Tax colonies arose around cities in the East, the Little Land colonies sprouted in the West, and a profusion of back-to-the-land books were published. Concurrently, however, developments throughout the 1910s placed a damper on the back-to-the-land impulse. First and foremost, World War I mobilization and its attendant effects on American society hampered many reform organizations, and disagreements over America's

⁸² Brown, *Back to the Land*, 45.

involvement in the war divided memberships. Indeed, pro- and anti-war factions splintered the Single Tax movement and Hall's attention during the war was divided. On the one hand, he continued to encourage back-to-the-landers; on the other, he pushed for the release of antiwar organizers like Eugene Debs and resisted the Sedition Act.⁸³ After the war, as the American economy grew and urban culture flourished over the course of the 1920s, the socio-political landscape was no longer as receptive to the back-to-the-land message.

Though there was a lull in back-to-the-land activities in the 1920s, a second generation of back-to-the-landers came of age in the 1910s and 1920s. This second wave was directly influenced by the first generation and its antimodern message. Of this new generation, four individuals were particularly influential for the *third* generation: Helen and Scott Nearing, Ralph Borsodi, and Mildred Loomis. These four individuals would meet the third generation in the 1960s and 1970s, sharing their ideas and writings. They form an important bridge between the first and third generations, but a bridge that contained missing flagstones.

All told, the second generation's back-to-the-land philosophy was revised several times by several developments: the Great Depression, the New Deal state, World War Two mobilization, and post-World War Two society in the 1950s. The second generation divided over the usefulness of Georgian economics and the relative merits of producerism and even developed a new philosophy of decentralism. They did, however, agree on one important idea. As the study of eugenics became popular in the 1910s and 1920s, prominent second generation back-to-the-landers framed the flight from cities in eugenic terms – i.e., that a return to rural life would

⁸³ Ibid., 106.

provide a positive eugenic environment to white middle-class Americans.⁸⁴ Though they tended to favor positive eugenics, most also advocated negative solutions such as sterilization – though after World War Two they stressed the importance of volunteerism for such a drastic step – of “degenerate” individuals. Following a similar exploration of the contours of the first generation, it is important to explore the influential writings and practices of the Nearings and the School of Living organization co-founded by Borsodi and Loomis and how this intellectual vanguard diverged from one another as they responded to the seismic disruption of the Great Depression and World War Two. As we shall see, much like the first generation, the second generation’s antimodern dissent also reinforced the dominant culture and its back-to-the-land advocacy, in particular its new eugenic idealism, also served the racial and class interests of movement leaders.

The first two writer-practitioners were Helen and Scott Nearing. Scott Nearing was born in Morris Run, Pennsylvania in 1883 to an upper-middle-class family who had a significant stake in the local coal industry.⁸⁵ Like Hall, Scott Nearing’s path to Progressive social consciousness and socialism in this early period was in part the result of a privileged upbringing and resulting dissatisfaction with modern culture’s enervating effects on individuals. Growing up in a booming coal town and witnessing economic inequalities in turn-of-the-century America shaped Nearing’s

⁸⁴ For more on the rising popularity of eugenics in the first three decades of the twentieth century see Kevles’ work on the subject. Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, chap. Gospel Becomes Popular.

⁸⁵ Scott Nearing and Staughton Lynd, *The Making of a Radical: A Political Autobiography* (White River Junction: Chelsea Green Publishing, 2000), 11–19; Stephen J. Whitfield, *Scott Nearing: Apostle of American Radicalism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974), 3–7, accessed October 20, 2020, <http://archive.org/details/scottnearingapos0000whit>.

antimodern worldview.⁸⁶ These experiences, coupled with his work as an academic at the Wharton School, contributed to his involvement in Progressive labor reform movements, namely reforming child labor laws in Pennsylvania.⁸⁷ Significantly, like the residents of Home, Nearing was influenced by the socialist writings of Edward Bellamy at the turn of the century and, unlike Ralph Borsodi, was a life-long advocate of centralized authority.⁸⁸ Along with reading Bellamy Nearing was also directly influenced by first-generation Single Tax advocates, which informed his own decision to go back to the land with his wife Helen in the 1930s.

Nearing's first exposure to the Single Tax movement and the back-to-the-land movement occurred when he lived at the Arden community between 1906 and 1915.⁸⁹ At Arden, he learned intensive agriculture and helped develop The Landlord's Game, which was colorized and made more playable by the residents of Arden.⁹⁰ As the war in Europe intensified, Nearing became increasingly radicalized. He began using the Landlord's Game in his economics courses. Along with his other reform activism, this led to his dismissal from the Wharton School in 1915, though he managed to pick up another position at Toledo University.

⁸⁶ It is important to note that, as Jackson Lears has demonstrated, the antimodern cultural movement at the turn of the century contained both radicals and reformers. In his words, "antimodernism, despite its role in revitalizing and transforming capitalist cultural authority, was far more than a response to the effects of market capitalism; it contained a critique of modern culture applicable to all secular, bureaucratic systems, whether socialist or capitalist." Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 7.

⁸⁷ On Nearing's Progressive reform efforts see Whitfield, *Scott Nearing*, 11–15.

⁸⁸ Vivien Ellen Rose, in her dissertation on the first and second generation, offers important insight into how the second generation was influenced by what she calls "three concomitant" antimodernist movements: The Single Tax, the Arts and Crafts movement, and the Women's movement. Rose connects Bellamy to the Georgists. See Rose, "Homesteading as Social Protest," 12.

⁸⁹ Whitfield, *Scott Nearing*, 15; Nearing and Lynd, *The Making of a Radical*, 40–41.

⁹⁰ Whitfield, *Scott Nearing*, 17.

Throughout World War One, Nearing was a vocal pacifist and spoke in public against wartime mobilization. This activism, in particular an incendiary pamphlet entitled “The Great Madness: A Victory for America’s Plutocracy,” led to charges of sedition under the Espionage Act and, though acquitted by a jury in 1919, he was blacklisted from the academic world and lost his position at Toledo.⁹¹ Around this same time, Nearing had formally joined the Socialist Party of America (SPA) and would remain involved in radical politics throughout the next decade – politics deemed the Old Left by the 1960s. As the SPA foundered in the 1920s, however, Nearing eventually joined the communist Workers Party of America, which became the Communist Party, USA in 1929. After admission to the party, he went to work for the party’s newspaper *The Daily Worker*. His membership in the Communist party was short-lived, however, as his free thinking got him into trouble again: he published a critique of Lenin’s writings on imperialism in 1930, which led to his expulsion – an event that propelled Nearing’s retreat from radical collective politics, much like countercultural back-to-the-landers forty years later.⁹²

It is worth noting, at this point, how Scott Nearing’s radicalization in the 1910s and 1920s affected his early understanding of how individuals could shape society. By 1912, he believed that it was the individual’s duty to contribute to the American “race” by modeling correct “social adjustment,” which underlay his homesteading advocacy. In many ways, the second generation’s utopian understanding of the social power of people leaving cities to pursue the “simple life,” was based on their adherence to the increasingly popular eugenics movement,

⁹¹ John Shuttleworth, “Plowboy Interview: Helen And Scott Nearing: Counterculture Authors, Speakers And Farmers,” *Mother Earth News*, October 1971, *Mother Earth News Digital CD-ROM Archive*; Helen Nearing, “The Wisdom of Helen and Scott: Plowboy Interview with Helen Nearing,” *Mother Earth News*, December 1979, *Mother Earth News Digital CD-ROM Archive*.

⁹² Nearing and Lynd, *The Making of a Radical*, 149–54; Whitfield, *Scott Nearing*, 169–71.

because they believed that a more natural setting would both cure individuals of the effects of urban degeneration and promote better breeding. Gender, it should be noted, was also inextricably tied to this worldview. Nearing believed urban degeneration was particularly detrimental to white western-European families because wage labor undercut women's eugenic roles as mothers and homemakers.⁹³ As such, Nearing's understanding of who should go back to the land and the proper relationships within families situates him as part of the eugenics movement at the turn of the century. It also highlights how the second generation's recasting the back-to-the-land movement as a positive eugenic endeavor served the interests of the movement's largely white, male, middle-class leaders – a common shortcoming of the movement as we have seen in the case of Hall.

Like countless other Progressive reformers, Nearing was particularly attracted to the emerging science of eugenics and it is important to carefully contextualize how back-to-the-landers like Nearing sought to contribute to this now infamous scientific endeavor.⁹⁴ Though the movement had its roots in the study of heredity by Sir Francis Galton and Gregor Mendel, it gained national popularity by the 1910s and 1920s. During this period, movement leaders made a concerted effort to teach Americans to be “eugenically minded” through scientific talks, high school biology classes, and even eugenic competitions at state fairs – prizes went to families with members who were physically inspected and underwent Intelligence Quotient testing.⁹⁵ Such

⁹³ While scholars have noted that the second generation was attracted to eugenics, it has so far been under-explored. Rose has noted that Nearing viewed women's reproductive work as key to eugenics but did not go further in her analysis. See Rose, "Homesteading as Social Protest," 61.

⁹⁴ Whitfield, *Scott Nearing*, 20.

⁹⁵ For more on how eugenics pervaded popular culture and education see Pauly's work on high school biology and Kevles' description of county fairs. Philip J. Pauly, *Biologists and the Promise of American Life: From Meriwether Lewis to Alfred Kinsey* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2002), 218; Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 60-62.

“positive” eugenic education also dovetailed with state-sanctioned sterilization – referred to as “negative eugenics” – of “degenerates” and those suffering from “feeble mindedness.”⁹⁶ During this period, many states – beginning with Indiana in 1907 – legalized sterilization of inmates to ensure genetic hygiene. It is also crucial to recognize that the eugenics movement appealed to white Americans like Scott Nearing during a period of rapid urbanization and immigration because it suited their dominant racial and social position. Indeed, eugenics activists – and their underlying racist worldview – would spearhead the 1924 immigration act that established a quota system and restricted immigration from countries in southern and eastern Europe and a complete ban on Asian immigrants.⁹⁷

Such was the context in which Scott Nearing championed the back-to-the-land movement as a positive eugenic endeavor for white Americans. In 1912, while living at Arden, Nearing published his first and only work on eugenics entitled *The Super Race: An American Problem*, which drew directly from Herbert Spencer and Francis Galton's work. In this work, Nearing argued that because America contained “a boundless wealth of natural resources,” was “bulwarked by the stock of dominant races,” and was so far “foregoing war,” the United States was uniquely positioned to be at the forefront of the eugenics movement.⁹⁸ Indeed, Nearing’s pacifism regarding the war in Europe was centered on the belief that peace would enable America to focus on eugenics projects. Though Nearing tended to stress the positive eugenic effects of rural living, he, like other Progressive reformers, also advocated negative eugenic practices. In his 1912 book, for instance, he acknowledged that “Negative Eugenics has been

⁹⁶ On the history of negative eugenic practices see *Ibid.*, 90-94.

⁹⁷ On eugenicists’ role in lobbying for the 1924 act see *Ibid.*, 96-98.

⁹⁸ Scott Nearing, *The Super Race: An American Problem*, 1912, 89, accessed August 10, 2020, <https://web.archive.org/web/20120801061901/http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/35417>.

well explored” and “modern knowledge” enables sterilization without the “destruction of human life.”⁹⁹ By the 1910s, he was encouraged by the fact that some states were already forcibly sterilizing “degenerates” and hoped that more would be done to educate and encourage the American super race.¹⁰⁰

For Nearing, negative eugenics would not be sufficient to stem the tide of urban white degeneration. He argued, based on his racist worldview, that what was further needed was a total change in government institutions to ensure a sizeable population of “dominant” races and a social and natural environment that could foster them. Nearing, therefore, framed the back-to-the-land movement as a positive eugenic enterprise for overcivilized white Americans. Drawing perhaps on his experiences gardening at Arden, Nearing argued that environmental factors were just as important as heredity in creating an American super race. Indeed, he employed gardening metaphors in this argument, asserting that “by sowing choice seeds in well-prepared soil, he [the eugenic gardener] ensures the excellence of his crop.”¹⁰¹ In his chapter on modeling eugenic institutions in *The Super Race*, he cited a recent social experiment in England that took 50,000 young men with criminal histories and forced them to work on farms in South Africa, Australia, and Canada. According to Nearing, had they not been conscripted into farm labor, the young men would have continued in their criminality because of their urban surroundings, whereas in a rural setting “less than two percent of them showed any tendency to revert to their former criminal practices. A little tending and transplanting into a congenial environment, proved the salvation of these boys.”¹⁰²

⁹⁹ Nearing, *The Super Race*: 32-33

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 85; on other states and sterilization laws see Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 100.

¹⁰¹ Nearing, *The Super Race*, 45.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, 49.

Nearing's radical politics and his push for Americans to go back to the land need to be contextualized by his eugenics advocacy. For Nearing, since environment was just as important as heredity, and America was uniquely blessed by climate and soil conducive to self-sufficient homesteading, more Americans of western European descent needed to be encouraged to go back to the land in order to create an American super race. While he may have championed workers' rights and hoped to usher in a new political system based on socialism, his antimodern activism served to reinforce his dominant position as a white, upper-middle-class academic. Historians have argued over how long Nearing remained interested in mainstream eugenics. Gould and Saltwater argue that his interest waned in 1916.¹⁰³ *The Super Race*, however, was republished in 1919 after World War One, and the elitism and underlying sense that individuals needed to transform themselves on the land through productive work remained central to Nearing's philosophy into the 1960s and 1970s.

In the course of espousing these ideas in the 1920s Nearing met Helen Knothe, a Theosophist who was intrigued by his ideas and soon became his lifelong homesteading and writing partner. Helen Knothe was born in 1904 to a prosperous middle-class family in New York that was deeply involved in the Theosophist Society there. The society was an offshoot of nineteenth-century Spiritualism and focused on esoteric teachings and elements of eastern mysticism from Russia and Tibet.¹⁰⁴ This religious background shaped Knothe's life and it is important to recognize that the Theosophists' spiritualism was yet another allied antimodern

¹⁰³ On their debate see Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 293n29; Whitfield, the earliest historian to study Nearing's life, has noted Nearing's interest in eugenics, but downplayed his racial worldview and argued that his anti-immigrant advocacy was rooted in Nearing's worries about urban crowding. Whitfield, *Scott Nearing*, 21.

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Killinger, *The Good Life of Helen K. Nearing* (Burlington: University of Vermont Press, 2007), 8.

tradition that arose at the turn of the century in response to the perceived failures of modern Protestantism.¹⁰⁵ She was a life-long vegetarian and pursued a number of spiritually guided activities such as palm reading and dowsing for water, the latter of which became popular again in the 1970s amongst the counterculture. She was also a highly talented violinist, and after she graduated from high school in 1921 she traveled across Europe, India, and Australia to train.

During her travels, Knothe became more deeply involved with European Theosophists and was briefly engaged to Jiddu Krishnamurti, one of its leaders. After finishing her violin studies in Sydney in 1927, Knothe traveled back home, where she settled with her parents in Ridgewood, New Jersey. While working part-time for her father, she reached out to Scott Nearing to see if he would be interested in speaking to their Unitarian congregation about his anti-capitalist economic proposals. Knothe was familiar with Nearing, whom she had met in the early 1920s while he was married to his first wife, Nellie Seeds. By 1928, however, Nearing had separated from his first wife, and Helen and Scott began a relationship. Helen found Scott's ideas exciting, particularly his focus on individual transformation through engaging with nature, which resonated with her own Theosophist spirituality.

Scott and Helen Nearing, who did not formally marry until Seeds died in 1947, decided to go back to the land themselves in the early 1930s. Since Scott had been blacklisted from the academic world and drummed out of the Communist party by this point, the couple relocated to rural Vermont, as the country experienced the effects of the Great Depression. In an interview with John Shuttleworth in 1971, Nearing recalled that he refused to become a destitute urban

¹⁰⁵ For more on this, in particular the way many protestants turn to Catholicism, see Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, chap, *The Religion of Beauty: Catholic Forms and American Consciousness*.

radical, saying his peers lived “out of a garbage can in various parts of Manhattan.”¹⁰⁶ Instead of following that path, according to Nearing, “[I] decided to make my living by what I call bread labor . . . making the things necessary to feed, clothe and house the population.”¹⁰⁷ In this turn away from urban life and radical politics, Nearing retained his socialist conviction that a true revolution could only occur through a central authority's concerted effort. Unlike the older Georgist radicals, Nearing assumed that a central federal government would be necessary to bring about social justice and racial hygiene. While it is unclear what Helen thought of Scott's eugenics advocacy and socialism, she too sought liberation outside of New York and looked forward to spiritual growth closer to nature.

The Nearings decided to wait out the economic depression and the rise of anticommunism in the 1930s and 1940s by becoming self-sufficient on their Vermont homestead where they could create an environment for their own spiritual and moral quest. Recalling their homesteading vision in 1971, Nearing stated that “it was more advisable, from this point of view, to set up a self-contained homestead society than to try to fit into a market economy.”¹⁰⁸ Like other back-to-the-landers of the period, they were encouraged by the adoption of subsistence homesteading in the New Deal and created a loose-knit community of homesteaders in rural Vermont in the 1940s. They eventually moved to rural Maine in 1952, after the hills around their Vermont homestead were cleared for ski slopes. Like in Vermont, they were joined by a handful of other homesteaders but never established a formal community. Unlike other second-wave

¹⁰⁶ Shuttleworth, “Plowboy Interview: Helen And Scott Nearing: Counterculture Authors, Speakers And Farmers,” *Mother Earth News*, September 1971, *Mother Earth News Digital CD-ROM Archive*.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

back-to-the-landers, the Nearings never mobilized or built organizations. Instead, they opted to stay on their homestead, practice “bread labor,” and write influential books.

Scott Nearing was selectively truthful when he gave an interview for *Mother Earth News* in 1971 concerning what he and his wife produced on their homestead and how it was funded. The Nearings’ “bread labor” was supported by significant inheritances from Scott’s father and a former friend of Helen’s from the Theosophical Society, who left her 35,000 dollars in 1934. With this money, the couple was able to purchase their homestead and other properties, including two adjoining lots in Jamaica.¹⁰⁹ Such wealth demonstrates the social positioning of the Nearings and how the back-to-the-land endeavor spoke to and rested upon white, upper-middle-class privilege. Furthermore, on their homesteads, the couple pursued several lucrative activities that connected them with the market economy and the emerging post-World War Two consumer culture. For instance, on their Vermont homestead, the couple harvested maple sugar for sale. The sugaring business, in which Scott tended trees and Helen produced syrup and made baked goods, was prosperous and fit well within the couple’s gendered division of labor. This division of labor fit within the Nearings’ Victorian sensibilities, though it became more complicated when the couple began co-authoring books.¹¹⁰ While the sugaring business was profitable, the couple soon discovered that writing about their back-to-the-land experiences was even more so, and elevated their national profiles.

The Nearings’ first coauthored work was *The Maple Sugar Cookbook* in 1950, which was based on their sugaring business. The work, which became popular with readers of *Mother Earth*

¹⁰⁹ Killinger, *The Good Life of Helen K. Nearing*, 47–48.

¹¹⁰ When Helen was asked in 1971 about work-sharing on their homestead, she stated bluntly that “Scott does most of the directing of the outside work and I direct most of the inside work. But I help him largely outside and he helps me a great deal inside.” Shuttleworth, “Plowboy Interview: Helen And Scott Nearing: Counterculture Authors, Speakers And Farmers.”

News and the third generation as a whole by the 1970s, provided a history of maple sugar production in America. The book also explored the back-to-the-land tradition and its relevance to 1950s America. The Nearings even cited Bolton Hall's *Three Acres and Liberty* to describe how the movement emerged after periods of intense political and economic upheavals.¹¹¹ Their book was infused with the back-to-the-land producerism and rural asceticism that became the hallmark of the Nearings' writings. Publishing and going on lecture tours solidified the couple's status as nationally recognized back-to-the-landers. It also brought in enough money to help support the couple's homesteading lifestyle and pay for the publishing of more works, most of which were self-published because mainstream presses did not accept them. Indeed, over the course of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, the couple published an array of writings that clearly expressed their second generation back-to-the-land vision.

This brings us almost to the third generation. Before examining the third generation, considering how the second generation directly influenced the counterculture, and exploring what was unique about the third wave, it is important to add two more second-generation voices to our narrative. These individuals, more so than the Nearings, took active roles in teaching the third generation. Indeed, it is a central contention of this work that the Nearings have been overemphasized in the back-to-the-land movement's historiography. While the Nearings were widely popular in the 1960s and 1970s – they attracted numerous pilgrims to their Maine homestead – their influence was more philosophical than practical. As we shall see, Ralph Borsodi, Mildred Loomis, and their School of Living organization took a more active role in teaching the counterculture, and in particular the communal counterculture – another demographic that has been downplayed in recent scholarship. Furthermore, these two individuals

¹¹¹ Rose, "Homesteading as Social Protest," 246.

also generated a novel philosophy of decentralism, which would go on to influence the antimodernism of the counterculture and figures such as E.F. Schumacher.

Like Scott Nearing, Ralph Borsodi was influenced by the first generation through the Single Tax movement and developed his own antimodern sensibilities through face-to-face interactions with the older generation.¹¹² Borsodi was born in 1886 into a wealthy Jewish-Hungarian immigrant family, which, though eastern European in origin, had immigrated before the massive influx in the late nineteenth century. His father, William Borsodi, was a New York City publisher, marketing consultant, and Single Tax advocate who was close friends with Bolton Hall and even wrote the introduction to Hall's *Little Land and a Living*.¹¹³ Hall was a frequent dinner guest in the Borsodi household. According to Borsodi, exposure to Hall's antimodern back-to-the-land vision was "the first time I was at all conscious of the fact that there was another way of living."¹¹⁴ With these first-generation connections, Ralph Borsodi became a lifelong Single Tax advocate and he even chaired the New York State Committee of the Single Tax Party in 1918.¹¹⁵

Borsodi also had an early interest in going back to the land. He lived on a rural plot of land in Texas in the early 1900s – an area Hall specifically touted in *Three Acres and Liberty* – before coming back to New York City, where he followed in his father's footsteps and became a successful marketing consultant for Macy's by the 1910s. The Texas experiment failed when Borsodi ran into trouble financing his venture, and this experience hardened his sense that property ownership and speculation were chief obstacles to land reform. Similarly, his

¹¹² Ibid., 16.

¹¹³ John Shuttleworth, "Plowboy Interview: Dr. Ralph Borsodi: Legendary Back-to-the-Land Figure," *Mother Earth News*, March 1974, *Mother Earth News Digital CD-ROM Archive*.

¹¹⁴ Shuttleworth, "Plowboy Interview: Dr. Ralph Borsodi: Legendary Back-to-the-Land Figure."

¹¹⁵ Allan Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind*, 56.

experience consulting with Macy's led him to distrust consumer trends and industrial America's economic trajectory. These two experiences, with their levels of financial success in opposition to the spiritual fulfillment that he found in each, solidified in Borsodi's mind that modern American culture was off course, and he spent the years preceding the Great Depression writing a series of highly successful works critiquing modern socio-economic trends. Many of these works, particularly his 1928 *This Ugly Civilization*, were widely read into the 1970s and were cited in other second-generation works such as the Nearings' *Living the Good Life*.

In the 1920s, Borsodi drew inspiration and insights from his own experiences running a homestead and, like the Nearings, began writing. In 1920, in response to an urban housing shortage in New York, Borsodi and his family rented and moved to a rural homestead two hours north of the city in Rockland County. They named their homestead Seven Acres in a nod to Hall. During the first summer, Borsodi's wife Myrtle presented him with an economic question that, according to him, led to a series of important back-to-the-land writings. Myrtle, who had grown up on a farm in Iowa, was busy canning vegetables from their garden during their first summer, and Borsodi pondered whether her canning labor was worth the couples' time. He concluded that canning – especially if new technologies aided a homemaker – was 20 to 30 percent more efficient than products canned within a factory setting and dealt with the ramifications of this insight for American society in two works: *National Advertising* and *The Distribution Age: A Study of the Economy of Modern Distribution*.¹¹⁶

In both works, Borsodi came to conclusions that would shape his back-to-the-land advocacy into the 1970s, especially his attitude towards centralization in government and industry. According to his experience in the marketing world, in the 1910s large corporations

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 56–57.

like Macy's were shifting to a new business model in which factory-produced products were no longer meant solely to satisfy customers' practical needs. Instead, corporations had shifted to an economy that was based on manipulating consumer's needs and that relied on a high level of consumer debt. As a result, almost 70 percent of factory goods' price, such as canned vegetables, was generated from storage, transportation, and marketing.¹¹⁷ This system, he argued, was untenable and contributed to two further socio-economic evils: centralization and monopoly, which "*raise prices, crush diversity, handicap the small producer, and favor extreme centralization.*"¹¹⁸ In laying out these socio-economic critiques, Borsodi expressed a mix of antimodern sentiments that were common at the turn of the century among reformers, particularly the turn to republican moralisms about dependency and decadence.

Unlike Nearing or the Bellamyites, Borsodi did not find hope in the radical possibilities of socialism and communism. Rather than adopting the centralism and elevation of the proletariat inherent in communism, Borsodi took issue with all centralizing forces in society and called for decentralization. He advocated a series of libertarian and antimodern reforms, in particular the Single Tax, to radically alter the economy so that corporations like Macy's could no longer hinder small producers on homesteads. It is important to recognize, however, that behind Borsodi's seemingly radical ideas lay a common limitation of antimodernism. For all of Borsodi's rejection of centralization, his rural vision for a back-to-the-land society rested on important modern technological developments. Indeed, Borsodi assumed that modern electrification would enable homemakers to outcompete Macy's yet took for granted the centralized power grids – and behind-the-scenes bureaucracy – that made such improvements

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 57.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 57.

possible. As such, Borsodi's call for decentralism was part of the broader trend of antimodern movements reinforcing, rather than meaningfully tearing down, dominant culture.

For Borsodi, an adoption of decentralism by the federal government was needed to combat the trend of centralization. In particular, it needed to get rid of the tax breaks, subsidies, land rights, and other privileges to corporations that perpetuated centralism. Under Borsodi's formulation, back-to-the-land decentralism was a philosophy that could short-circuit the industrial factory system by elevating individual homestead producers. It would encourage homesteading land-trust associations to form and buy land since land speculation would be outlawed under a Single Tax. In Borsodi's utopian vision, once Americans returned to the land and practiced mutual aid in European peasant-style villages composed of individually owned homesteads, a decentralized society would flourish and reshape American life. Over succeeding decades, Borsodi would expand on his philosophy of decentralism and join other social critics, such as Lewis Mumford, to become a leading decentralist during the 1930s. Indeed, it is important to recognize that Borsodi was by no means the only social reformer to embrace decentralism alongside modern technological progress. As Howard Segal has noted, Lewis Mumford and the later E.F. Schumacher also reacted to the perceived limits of modern progress by championing "intermediate" technologies made possible by centralized technological innovations.¹¹⁹ Furthermore, Borsodi's brand of decentralism also merged with European Distributists by the 1960s and he directly influenced Schumacher, whose 1973 work *Small is Beautiful* was widely successful in the 1970s. Borsodi's height of mainstream influence, however, peaked in the 1930s.

¹¹⁹ Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*, 150-153.

Four years after the Borsodi family moved into Seven Acres, they bought a larger piece of property on eighteen acres named Dogwoods, where Borsodi would remain until after World War Two and where he published more influential back-to-the-land writings. Following his writings on distribution and decentralism, he went about fleshing out this back-to-the-land philosophy into a holistic antimodern ethic. In 1928, Borsodi published *This Ugly Civilization*, followed in 1933 by *Flight from the City*. These two works gave Borsodi a national following. Both were widely read and well-received, landing positive reviews in the *New York Times* and the *Nation*. They were also important for injecting antimodern back-to-the-land ideas into mainstream society and introducing the New Deal architects such as Harry Hopkins to subsistence homesteading, leading to a series of government-funded homestead projects in the 1930s.

In both works, Borsodi continued to argue that the factory system, aided by the artificial influence of large corporations and an impotent central government, was responsible for social inequality and economic instability, both of which were of keen interest to Americans in the early 1930s. In these works, however, he dug further into what, for him, were the deleterious effects of centralism on individuals; he developed a decentralist agrarian philosophy of life. Borsodi began *This Ugly Civilization* with an argument that combined his faith in technological progress with an attack on factories and argued that American civilization “is in many respects indescribably uglier than the civilizations that have preceded it...instead of using machines to free its finest spirits for the pursuit of beauty, [it] uses machines mainly to produce factories.”¹²⁰ He placed the source of social and moral decay in the centralized industrial system and pushed for families to leave for the country, where they could educate their own children and model

¹²⁰ Ralph Borsodi, *This Ugly Civilization* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1929), 7.

proper gender relations. In his words, the trouble with urban factories was that they sought “to root out individual devotion to the family and the homestead and to replace it with loyalty to the factory.”¹²¹

Like Scott Nearing, Borsodi believed that the factory system was responsible for destroying modern families because it individualized them and brought them into a manipulative economic system. The factories, he argued, were particularly detrimental because they forced women out of their traditional role as homemakers, which, drawing on a common republican moralism, he asserted was morally and economically necessary for family life. Thus, the factory system was accountable for “transforming the individuals thus produced into malleable mobs who produce and consume, work and play, live and die, all for its glory.”¹²² Following this logic, Borsodi attributed a variety of 1920s moral and social issues to the factory system, including the rise of promiscuity, use of contraceptives, the incidence of abortions, the destruction of family life, and reliance on centralized educational institutions to educate children. Like Nearing, then, Borsodi viewed traditional gender roles as key to a new society based on rural homesteading.

Borsodi’s conservatism towards women’s roles sharply contrasted with the activism of many Progressive reformers – such as Margaret Sanger – who were active at the same time. It also highlights how the second generation’s antimodernism was a complex mixture of radicalism and conservatism. In response to the perceived social and moral slide in the 1920s and 1930s, Borsodi called for American families to go back to the land and establish homesteading land-trust communities that were based on the radical theories of Henry George. Once back on the land, these families would be forced to produce for most of their own needs and rely on close

¹²¹ Borsodi, *This Ugly Civilization*, 417.

¹²² *Ibid.*, 417.

neighbors for the rest, thus resurrecting a more stable, agrarian, Jeffersonian society that Borsodi believed had existed in America in the early nineteenth century. Borsodi's philosophy, then, was both radical and conservative. In seeking a "return" to simpler times while pushing for antimodern reforms like the Single Tax, Borsodi formulated a distinct back-to-the-land ideology rooted in nostalgia and his reading of contemporary social science. These complex messages resonated with Americans during the tumultuous period of the Great Depression, which proved to be the first opportunity for Borsodi to translate his back-to-the-land ideas into action.

Unlike the Nearings' inward turn in 1930, Borsodi and his followers were outwardly engaging in creating new communities and hoped that New Deal leaders would adopt their decentralist policies. In 1932, at the height of the depression, a group of social reformers in Dayton, Ohio, influenced by *This Ugly Civilization*, reached out to Borsodi about a planned homestead community they were creating to house displaced urban workers, one-third of whom were out of work in Dayton. The proposed community would be modeled on the earlier Single Tax colonies and Borsodi's homestead land-trust proposals. Borsodi, seeing great promise in the enterprise and the New Deal's response, told the Dayton society that "I know Harry Hopkins, who is Franklin D. Roosevelt's right-hand man, and I think I can get some money from Washington."¹²³ The Dayton project was fast-tracked and enjoyed brief success with ten of the proposed thirty homesteads under construction by leaseholders by early 1933 – yet another example of the complex and contradictory nature of antimodernism since the New Deal represented a fundamental political shift towards centralization and the development of social safety-net programs.¹²⁴

¹²³ Shuttleworth, "Plowboy Interview: Dr. Ralph Borsodi: Legendary Back-to-the-Land Figure." *Mother Earth News*, March 1974, *Mother Earth News Digital CD-ROM Archive*.

¹²⁴ Rose, "Homesteading as Social Protest," 143–44.

Like the Nearings' attempt to create community in Vermont, however, Borsodi was not temperamentally suited for communal life. He was a fierce individualist and chafed at government oversight.¹²⁵ It is no surprise, then, that a series of conflicts with local residents arose. After Dayton residents complained about an African American couple taking up residence on a homestead, Harold Ickes sent a representative to monitor the community and its governing board. Following an investigative report, Ickes threatened to pull funding from the project if it was not federalized, and Borsodi left abruptly with renewed pessimism that working with centralized institutions could bring about his utopian vision. After this period, Borsodi became a libertarian and grew increasingly anti-government over the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s.

While the Dayton project fizzled and diminished Borsodi's faith in a government-supported back-to-the-land movement in the 1930s, the experiment gained him an even larger following. It brought into the fold an individual who became his most ardent disciple and, much later, his most effective evangelist to the 1960s counterculture. Mildred Jensen Loomis, who John Shuttleworth later called the "grandmother of the counterculture," was born on a farm on January 5th, 1900 near Blair, Nebraska.¹²⁶ In the 1920s, after graduating from college, she first encountered urban poverty while working as a secretary for a church in Sioux City, Iowa.¹²⁷ In the late 1920s, Loomis received an offer of employment in Dayton, Ohio from a local weekday religious education program, where she worked until she was laid off during the Great Depression. At this point, Loomis was also in the middle of a Master of Education program at Columbia University, and it was there that she first encountered Borsodi. Loomis, along with

¹²⁵ Ibid., 12.

¹²⁶ Kevin Kelley, "Grandmother of the Counterculture," *The Green Revolution*, December 1984, 1. School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder. The Center for Communal Studies Archive, University of Southern Indiana. (CCS Archive)

¹²⁷ Kelly, "Grandmother of the Counterculture," 2.

other women active in reform projects around Dayton, reached out to sociologists at Columbia in 1930 for help understanding how to house displaced urban labor in Dayton. In response, they were sent a copy of *This Ugly Civilization*, which had been published the year before. The group read the work and visited Borsodi at his Dogwoods homestead. Mildred was initially put off by Borsodi because his lifestyle at Dogwoods reminded her too much of her early life on a farm in Nebraska.

While Loomis was encouraged that her friends in Dayton had connected with a leading social thinker, she decided to move to Chicago to be a social worker. She soon became disheartened by the inefficiency of social agencies and was fired from her job for giving a local newspaper interview critical of the government's response to the Depression. Loomis decided to move back to Dayton, where she became an ardent supporter of Borsodi after attending one of his lectures in 1933. She and her husband John, whom she met at Dayton, moved onto the Liberty Homestead Project, the New Deal experiment's official name. According to Loomis in 1967, the Dayton project foundered because Washington insisted that it have direct supervision of the project, and she insisted that Borsodi had "always been adamant on centralization of government."¹²⁸ Loomis was engaging in some revisionist history by 1967, but it is true that after Borsodi left the project dwindled. He had, however, gained Loomis as a lifelong supporter and co-founder of various back-to-the-land endeavors. Indeed, by the 1950s and 1960s, when Borsodi frequently traveled to India, Loomis oversaw outreach to the third generation by merging the School of Living's main newsletter with Richard Fairfield's *The Modern Utopian*.

¹²⁸ Mildred Loomis, "A School of Living: A Search for A Way Out," *The Modern Utopian*, October 1967, 28.

She even wrote *Go Ahead and Live!* in 1965, which framed Borsodi and Loomis's ideas for the younger generation.

As the Dayton project foundered in the mid-1930s, Borsodi founded a new organization in New York called the School of Living. The purpose of the School of Living was to experiment with rural living and showcase a decentralist alternative to the New Deal, which by the mid-1930s had entered a second phase. By this point, Roosevelt's administration enacted a series of significant reforms such as Social Security and the Works Progress Administration that further centralized federal power. Borsodi, Loomis, and members of the School of Living believed that these reforms, especially safety-net programs, would not encourage poor Americans to lead self-sufficient lifestyles on the land and would infringe upon personal liberties. They did not, however, appear to have any issue with rural electrification. This decentralist reaction was due in part to Dayton's failure but also needs to be contextualized as part of the back-to-the-land movement's antimodernism. First generation writer-practitioners such as Bolton Hall had also been fierce critics of centralization and modernization, though they had also relied on modern methods of "intensive agriculture" to argue that back-to-the-land self-sufficiency was feasible. Of course, not all members of the second generation took the School of Living's decentralist turn. As we have seen in the case of the Nearings, some were comfortable with a form of centralized socialism, though they still shared basic antimodern assumptions about the importance of rural self-sufficiency.

There was a great deal of continuity between the first and second generations' antimodernism within the School of Living. In 1936, Borsodi and Loomis formally established the school on the newly created Bayard Lane Community in New York, where both lived until 1945. At Bayard Lane, Loomis and Borsodi used the intentional homestead community as a

laboratory for the wider organization, where they experimented with intensive agriculture, efficient home production, and craft manufacture, all key first-generation activities. According to Loomis's biography of Borsodi, the School of Living at Bayard Lane set about the task of creating a Single-tax style homestead community based on ethical land tenure, cooperative labor policies, and a cooperative credit system that formed the foundation of back-to-the-land decentralism.¹²⁹ School of Living families living at Bayard followed the Single Tax model and leased their two-acre land plots from the land-trust. They also agreed to use the land for homesteading and to pay an annual membership fee for voting rights. Members helped one another build their homes, agreed to prearranged prices, and had access to a cooperative credit system that charged lower interest rates than the market rate for homebuilders. The Bayard Lane community was also the site of the organization's main publishing wing, which ran various publications such as *The Interpreter*, *Balanced Living*, *A Way Out*, and the *Green Revolution* – which would continue into the 1970s and was a direct line of transmission from a second-generation organization to a third-generation audience.

Though the School of Living's practices exhibited a great deal of continuity with first-generation Single Tax experiments, members of the School of Living also developed new back-to-the-land ideas and practices. In particular, starting in the 1930s the School of Living began expressing a libertarian "anti-statist" environmental sensibility.¹³⁰ Like other conservatives in the mid-twentieth century, members of the School of Living were anxious that the federal

¹²⁹ Mildred Loomis, "The Life and Work of Ralph Borsodi," *The Green Revolution*, December 1977, 10. School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

¹³⁰ For more on the history of this mid-century, conservative form of environmentalism see Brian Allen, *Loving Nature, Fearing the State: Environmentalism and Antigovernment Politics before Reagan* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2013), 16–18.

government's intrusion into health matters, coupled with agriculture's industrialization, was a recipe for disease and disaster.

In the 1930s and 1940s School of Living members distrusted public health authorities who fluoridated water and pushed for mandatory vaccination of school-aged children. At Bayard Lane, members of the School of Living reacted to these developments by refusing to have their children vaccinated and participated in the emerging "organic" movement. Indeed, the School of Living was allied with Jerome Rodale in nearby Pennsylvania who founded the Rodale Press in 1930 and became a key leader in the modern organic food movement. The central premise of the early organic movement, which the School of Living helped spearhead, was that modern agricultural science and technology were focused on higher yields at the expense of health and nutrition, leading to the rise of unnatural diseases such as cancer which members of the School of Living believed could be cured by natural, organic diets. This was an important modification to the first generation's uncritical advocacy of intensive agriculture and modern science because members of the School of Living no longer trusted agricultural science or the federal agencies that pushed for its adoption. As we shall see, second-generation anxiety about modern America's trajectory only increased over the course of the 1940s and 1950s as important war-time developments led to nuclear testing and the green revolution in agriculture. By the end of World War Two, however, Borsodi and Loomis's Bayard Lane experiment was coming to an end.

The Bayard Lane community experiment ground to a halt in 1945, though the School of Living as an organization continued to function through the succeeding lull in back-to-the-land enthusiasm in the 1950s. According to Loomis, three problems led to the community's sale to a private homesteader in 1945. By that time, Borsodi's wife Myrtle was fighting cancer, the total mobilization during wartime had reduced the School of Living's income, and one homesteader,

who wanted to raise chickens for commercial sale, chafed at the community's restrictions and convinced enough members to allow him to expand production onto adjacent lands.¹³¹ Borsodi dissented and abruptly left the community with his wife by retreating to their Dogwoods homestead – by all accounts, Borsodi was temperamentally ill-suited to communitarian life and could not compromise. The School of Living operation, then, moved to the Loomis homestead in Ohio, named Land's End. In 1948, Myrtle died and Borsodi was invited to a new community in Florida by a group of followers who had started the Dayton project. Borsodi arrived at the Melbourne Village community in 1949 and founded a short-lived university that brought visiting faculty that included Paul Tilich, Lewis Mumford, and Louis Broomfield.¹³²

Following World War Two, the political and cultural landscape was not as conducive to the second generation's antimodernism – or for that matter, leftists of any stripe – as the inter-war years had been. Indeed, as lean years of the 1930s gave way to prosperity and consumerism of the 1950s – and as thousands of servicemen and women returned home and bought suburban tract houses – the School of Living's antimodern message was no longer widely appealing. Moreover, such economic and social transformations occurred in concert with a profound reorientation of American politics as the liberalism of the New Dealers turned into the right-leaning consensus and hard anti-communism of the 1950s. Such an atmosphere affected the broader Left as well as the School of Living and the Nearings. In fact, by the 1950s the Nearings' socialist beliefs – and their travel to the Soviet Union in the mid-1950s – made them suspect in the era of anti-communist crusades, though they were never forced to testify in congress. Borsodi also lost his wider appeal, and by the early 1950s, he had left the work of running the School of

¹³¹ Loomis, "The Life and Work of Ralph Borsodi," 11.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 11.

Living in Loomis's hands and began traveling to India, where he connected with followers of Gandhi and pushed for policies that included measures to limit population growth. Borsodi and the Nearings, then, would have to wait for a new generation of disaffected Americans to preach their radical antimodern ideas.

In the meantime, Borsodi and Loomis continued to build the School of Living organization, and it was in this period that Borsodi published what Allan Carlson has described as the complete expression of his philosophy under the title of *Education and Living* (1948). Indeed, Carlson has argued that this period represents Borsodi's shift from "prophet to crank" who increasingly advocated eugenics after World War Two, and from there, retreated into obscurity.¹³³ As we shall see in later chapters, however, Borsodi was not an obscure figure within the countercultural back-to-the-land movement, and his mid-century writing provides important insights into both the School of Living's vision of who should go back to the land in the 1950s and Borsodi and Loomis's social and racial worldviews.

The "from prophet to crank" framing also obscures the American eugenics movement's history after World War Two. As Daniel Kevles and Michael Gordin have explored in depth, the post-World War Two eugenics movement quickly undertook a surprisingly successful rebranding campaign.¹³⁴ Under Frederick Henry Osborn's leadership, the American Eugenics Society (AES) retreated from its previously unabashed racist positions. It broke ties with what Osborn called "old" eugenics organizations such as the Pioneer Fund – a eugenics organization that undertook research to prove Blacks' inferiority.¹³⁵ In the 1940s and 1950s Osborn's AES

¹³³ Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind*, 70.

¹³⁴ See Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, chap. A Reform Eugenics; Michael D. Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars: Immanuel Velikovsky and the Birth of the Modern Fringe* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 110–14.

¹³⁵ Gordin, *The Pseudoscience Wars*, 112

purged its leadership board of socialites and replaced them with leading biologists and geneticists. Perhaps more significantly, after the war, Osborn successfully labeled the “old” eugenics a pseudoscience and medicalized negative eugenics into “medical genetics,” thus demarking the study of genetics from eugenics.¹³⁶

The AES’s retreat from its previous positions was aided by an increased scientific criticism of the hereditarian determinism that had so intrigued the eugenics movement of the 1920s and 1930s – in particular criticism from within the emerging field of genetics as well as the criticism leveled by cultural anthropologists like Franz Boaz and Margaret Mead. Of course, old racist beliefs and assumptions did not fade away by simply labeling old eugenics a pseudoscience. Indeed, the idea of positive eugenics – and therefore assumptions about superiority and inferiority – was still very much alive within the post-World War Two AES. Furthermore, Borsodi was part of this process of rebranding – he would even go on to help Osborn in the 1960s when the AES and Planned Parenthood partnered to promote birth control in India. His mid-century back-to-the-land writings, especially *Education and Living*, reflect this context.

Like Scott Nearing, Borsodi wove his social and racial prejudices into his back-to-the-land ideology. Unlike Nearing, however, Borsodi’s vocal advocacy for eugenics continued after World War Two, despite the atrocities of Nazi Germany and the horrors showcased at the Nuremberg Trials. Borsodi, like the larger AES, faulted the Third Reich for being overly centralized in their “regulated breeding.”¹³⁷ Along those lines, he argued that countries undertaking eugenic principles had failed to take into account individual will by treating

¹³⁶ Ibid., 113

¹³⁷ Ralph Borsodi, *Education and Living* vol. 2 (New York: The Devin-Adair Company, 1948), 455.

individuals “as though human beings were livestock” as opposed to free-thinkers who needed to be convinced to adopt eugenics.¹³⁸ What was needed in America, according to Borsodi, was a network of satellite Schools of Living to push for decentralization and re-educate the masses in healthy, rural living and proper eugenic practices. Only through this process, according to him, could a country achieve what “Plato considered possible in his model Republic.”¹³⁹ Along these lines, he proposed a society stratified between a “quality-minded” elite, a “quantity-minded” group of overseers, and a “commoner” class. The proposed Schools of Living in the 1950s and 1960s would be run by the quality-minded people, like himself and Loomis, while at the same time employing philosophers, theologians, cultural anthropologists, physicians, and a “Sexual and Eugenics scientist” to educate the surrounding community.¹⁴⁰

Borsodi’s mature philosophy of decentralization and education, as practiced by the School of Living from the 1930s to the 1970s, must be understood as a eugenics project that elevated a select group of the “quality-minded” and encouraged sterilization and even euthanasia of “degenerates” – though in the immediate post-World War Two period such encouragement tended toward the voluntary rather than the compulsory. Indeed, the School of Living’s philosophy, in his words, “calls not only for eugenics and teaching people (such as those who insist upon swarming like flies into our congested metropolitan cities) contraception and sterilization; it calls also for euthanasia and teaching the individual when and how to die.”¹⁴¹ Borsodi’s list of who qualified as “undesirable” in the late 1940s was revealing. It included “the paupers and dependents, the hemophiliacs and other bearers of hereditary handicaps, the

¹³⁸ Borsodi, *Education and Living* vol. 2, 455.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 455.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 694.

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 649.

criminals, the prostitutes and perverts, and the irresponsible pursuers of pleasure, (even from good families)” all of which had been groups deemed degenerate since the turn of the century.¹⁴² In Borsodi’s back-to-the-land vision, these people were unfit to have children because either they represented undue burdens to the community or they degraded the family unit, which for Borsodi was the most important component of his ideal rural society. At the same time, however, it is important to recognize that Borsodi’s call for sterilization and euthanasia had retreated somewhat from the state-mandated sterilization that had been widely popular in 1920s America. By 1948 he argued that proper eugenic education, led by the School of Living, would encourage degenerate individuals to undergo the procedure voluntarily – it is notable, however, that by the late 1960s, he was again advocating compulsory sterilization (though not by a central government), a sentiment that contributed to his fraught relationship with young liberals.

That Borsodi’s list of desirables was racially coded was undeniable, and their elimination served his racial and class interests in ways that were strikingly similar to the first generation’s turn-of-the-century racism and nativism. In the 1950s and 1960s, Borsodi was vocally against miscegenation and pro-segregation. Homogeneity was Borsodi’s goal – a sentiment that mirrored larger shifts within the dominant culture of the 1940 and 1950s towards cultural consensus. In weighing the relative merits of a racially heterogenous urban society with homogenous rural communities, Borsodi concluded that “life in homogenous communities is more pleasant,” and that communities should be able to limit their memberships through redlining and covenants in order to “take into account what is good for the community now and not in some idyllic future

¹⁴² Ibid., 649.

when all men, without regard to race or creed, are brothers.”¹⁴³ This constituted a telling boundary for his utopian visions and demonstrates the limitations of Borsodi’s antimodernism.

Despite the reference to the brotherhood of man, however, Borsodi questioned whether some races should even be considered human, noting that the “marked deviations from the norm of races such as Negritos, raises the question of whether they represent actually a different species of primate.”¹⁴⁴ Given this racial assumption, it is evident from *Education and Living* that the School of Living movement ultimately advocated a decentralized, racially segregated, rural society and that his proposals for eugenic education were predicated on racial separation. It is unsurprising, then, that the second generation’s search for racial homogeneity was considerably different from the counterculture’s cultural appropriation of non-white beliefs and their embrace of multiculturalism. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 2, Borsodi and Loomis’s racial views are crucial to any narrative of the second and third generation’s complex interactions, borrowings, and disagreements because the School of Living advocated eugenics and racial difference into the late 1960s.

While Borsodi and Loomis would play a pivotal role in the reemergence of the back-to-the-land movement in the mid-to-late 1960s, the Nearings were also influential and the younger generation avidly read *Living the Good Life* and *Conscience of a Radical* in the early-to-mid-1960s. Many left-leaning students in the early-to-mid 1960s were attracted to the Maine couple’s producerism, rural asceticism, and radical socialist politics. Indeed, Scott Nearing’s critiques of the Old Left in the *Conscience of a Radical* interested many members of the New Left.

¹⁴³ Ibid., 643.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., 343.

Borsodi and Loomis, it should be noted, also tried to influence politically oriented students within the New Left in the 1960s. Loomis's 1963 book *Go Ahead and Live!* was positively reviewed in *New Left Notes*, the Students for a Democratic Society's newspaper, but does not appear to have been as widely read as work by the Nearing, at least in the early-to-mid 1960s.¹⁴⁵ Even Borsodi's 1968 *Seventeen Problems of Man and Society*, a distillation of all of his previous works, did not garner as much of a cult following as the Nearing's 1970 republication of *Living the Good Life* – due perhaps to the Nearing's more radical politics and Borsodi's dense and confusing prose. This difference was also undoubtedly linked to Borsodi's return to pre-World War Two beliefs about inequality and compulsory sterilization. In his 1968 work, he openly argued that “if a refusal to preserve sentimentally the unfit...and burden the fit by inundating the world with the feeblest, the stupidest, the most moronic, and the least responsible dregs of the population, is Social Darwinism, then Social Darwinism is Humanism and Humanitarianism of the most far-sighted kind.”¹⁴⁶ Borsodi then went on to advocate that “in cases and in situations where voluntary action cannot be expected (with criminals and with the feeble-minded and the insane), compulsion would have to be used...the Humanist...like the good surgeon...must recognize that there are times when a knife must be used.”¹⁴⁷ This was not a message tailor-made to young liberals in the 1960s, and, as we shall see, Loomis was far better at interacting with the late-1960s counterculture because she toned down her rhetoric and incorporated the younger generation's interest in egalitarian communalism.

¹⁴⁵ Rose, "Homesteading as Social Protest," 278.

¹⁴⁶ Ralph Borsodi, *Seventeen Problems of Man and Society* (Mumbai: Charotar Book Stall, 1968), 181.

¹⁴⁷ Borsodi, *Seventeen Problems of Man and Society*, 182.

Borsodi's late-1960s advocacy of state-mandated negative eugenics represents a jarring return to the eugenics movement of the 1920s and reflects how many intellectuals in the 1960s took a more conservative line in response to the socio-cultural liberalization of youth culture. The Nearings, however, suffered from no such problems and became important conveyers of first- and second-generation ideas and practices to the younger generation. Indeed, though this work seeks to shed light on the School of Living's influence on the counterculture, the Nearings were undeniably the first back-to-the-land writers to influence the New Left.

Starting in the 1950s, the Nearings published a series of books that would become bibles for the third generation. Their most consequential book from the 1950s was *Living the Good Life: How to Live Sanely and Simply in a Troubled World* which, by the 1990s, had been republished once and sold, in Helen's words, "a couple hundred thousand copies."¹⁴⁸ The work centered on their experience homesteading in Vermont and formulated a clear back-to-the-land philosophy that drew heavily on producerism, emphasizing that the pursuit of rural self-sufficiency was also a moral and spiritual quest. Individuals, they argued, could only attain the "good life" if they left behind the modern urban distractions of "complexity, anxiety, waste, ugliness and uproar" in order to cultivate "simplicity, freedom from anxiety or tension, an opportunity to be useful and to live harmoniously" via economic independence.¹⁴⁹ This independence from the market economy, they argued somewhat hypocritically, could be achieved through bread labor.¹⁵⁰ The vein of back-to-the-land producerism inherited from the first generation was clearly a part of living the good life. From their perspective, they wanted to

¹⁴⁸ Nearing, "The Wisdom of Helen and Scott: Plowboy Interview with Helen Nearing."

¹⁴⁹ Helen and Scott Nearing, *Living the Good Life: How to Live Sanely and Simply in a Troubled World* (New York: Schocken Books, 1973), 6.

¹⁵⁰ Helen and Scott Nearing, *Living the Good Life*, 6.

“make a living under conditions that would preserve and enlarge joy in workmanship and would give a sense of achievement, thereby promoting integrity and self-respect.”¹⁵¹ As we shall see in the next section, this message was consistent with other influential 1950s social critics who critiqued how post-World War Two affluence and Cold War anti-communism were leading to conformity and alienation. It also resonated with the younger generation and the book was republished in 1970, at the crest of the third wave.

While *Living the Good Life* became a third-generation bible by the early 1970s, Scott Nearing’s *The Conscience of a Radical*, published in 1965, garnered the most attention from politically oriented university students on the Left. Indeed, it is crucial to recognize that the younger generation was beginning to break away from the Old Left – meaning the pre-1960s liberalism that had informed the New Deal’s social safety-net programs and economic reforms as well as the coalition of Marxists and socialists in the 1930s that pushed for class struggle and union organizing– and shift towards a new politics of personal liberation and face-to-face participatory democracy.¹⁵² In this context Nearing’s *The Conscience of a Radical* was a hit. The work, a refutation of Barry Goldwater’s *The Conscience of a Conservative* and Chester Bowles’s *The Conscience of a Liberal*, was widely popular amongst New Left activists, particularly in how the work critiqued liberalism and conservatism.

According to Nearing, whereas liberals had many “suggestions for reforming and improving the old system” and conservatives were “truculent, dogmatic and ready to initiate war as a means of defending the old way of life,” radicals were responsible for creating new systems

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁵² Todd Gitlin, *The Sixties: Years of Hope, Days of Rage* (New York: Bantam, 2013), 57.

and being good stewards of their communities and the world's natural resources.¹⁵³ Radicals would also be responsible for “evolving humanity to play an increasingly important part in building, improving and beautifying the world.”¹⁵⁴ There was perhaps a masked element of eugenics in his calls for evolution and beautification that remained in Nearing's radical thinking in the 1960s, though it did not explicitly appear in his 1960s work and scholars agree he had moved past mainline eugenics. In any case, the hopeful and forceful tone of his prose did resonate with the next generation, which was dissatisfied with the Old Left and with their economic and professional prospects. They, like Nearing, also wanted “to extricate mankind from the crisis and to put the human race on the highroad to spectacular advances under conditions of widened opportunity.”¹⁵⁵

The second generation, as stated previously, was primarily a bridge between the first generation and the third. That bridge was composed of a conglomeration of ideas and impulses ranging from agrarianism, Kropotkin's mutual aid theories, Single Tax advocacy, and producerist ideals to anti-statist environmentalism and the School of Living's brand of decentralism. Based on these four second-generation leaders' history and writings, it is evident that first-generation ideas that survived into the 1960s, such as producerism and the Single Tax, had been modified. The second generation's ideas and practices were a complex mixture of these older impulses and a reaction to key shifts in American society and politics. As the federal government's power grew during the New Deal and World War Two period and as technological developments and geo-politics radically changed the natural world and human safety within it,

¹⁵³ Scott Nearing, *The Conscience of a Radical* (Harborside: The Social Science Institute, 1965), 13.

¹⁵⁴ Nearing, *The Conscience of a Radical*, 14.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 14.

the second generation fashioned a racist anti-modern, and at times anti-statist, back-to-the-land ideology. Indeed, it would be Borsodi and Loomis's development of decentralism and environmentalism, the Nearings' rural asceticism and producerism, along with all four's social and racial elitism, that survived into the 1960s and deeply influenced a younger generation. Significantly, these four individuals were still active, alive, and able to guide a new generation as it grew increasingly disillusioned with America's trajectory in the 1960s. The new generation, however, was the product of fundamentally different historical contexts, and it is here that we must pull on a second important historical thread.

Back to the Land During the Cold War:

The Counterculture and the Third Generation

Like previous generations, back-to-the-landers in the late 1960s and 1970s responded to seismic economic, political, and social reorganization by drawing on a well-established, antimodern, dissent tradition. In this case the post-World War Two period proved fertile ground for radicals and dissenters, who were uncomfortable with a number of things: America's role as a superpower during the Cold War, the attendant rise of conservatism, the implications of affluence on satisfying labor, the environmental impacts of suburbanization, industrial agriculture, and nuclear war. In order to set the stage for understanding the counterculture in the mid-1960s, how the third generation interacted with and was influenced by the second generation, and how the act of going back to the land served the racial and class interests of this new generation, it is important to delve into a discussion of post-World War Two American society, including its influential social critics and its proto-counterculturalists, the Beats. It is then possible to explore the back-to-the-land movement in the mid-to-late 1960s.

Post-World War Two America in the late 1940s and 1950s was a place of unprecedented prosperity for those privileged enough to grasp its fruits, as well as a period of worry, uncertainty, and conservatism as the Cold War intensified. It was in this atmosphere that the third generation was born and raised. After a brief economic downturn in the immediate post-World War Two period, returning white veterans made use of the generous provisions of the G.I. Bill to pay for college and vault themselves into careers that guaranteed a middle-class lifestyle in what they perceived to be a new age of scientific breakthroughs, limitless abundance, and economic stability.¹⁵⁶ It should be noted that, by and large, the third generation benefited disproportionately from such government programs as most minority groups were unable to take full advantage of the G.I. Bill. Along with these veteran benefits, the federal government also promised economic stability. Soon-to-be-President Dwight Eisenhower famously proclaimed in 1952 that “never again shall we allow a depression in the United States” and promised that the government would intervene to ensure economic stability.¹⁵⁷ This economic optimism was tied to Cold War concerns by a renewed reliance on individual consumption to fuel America’s economy. At the same time as Eisenhower proclaimed an end to the boom-and-bust cycles, economists such as Milton Friedman and Paul Samuelson were touting an age of endless

¹⁵⁶ In painting this broad, and somewhat hackneyed, portrait of post-World War Two American I follow the scholarship of suburban historians and, in particular, the insightful work of environmental historians who study suburbs. Environmental historians such as Adam Rome and Christopher Sellers have provided important insights into post-World War Two understandings of abundance and tracked the experiences of white and non-white suburbanites. On the G.I. Bill and how the Federal Housing Authority was crucial in post-World War Two suburbanization see Kenneth T. Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 204; Adam Ward Rome, *The Bulldozer in the Countryside: Suburban Sprawl and the Rise of American Environmentalism* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 35.

¹⁵⁷ Eric Davin, *Crucible of Freedom: Workers’ Democracy in the Industrial Heartland, 1914–1960* (Washington: Lexington Books, 2012), 376.

abundance predicated on increased consumption at home and through a series of international initiatives aimed at economic stability, such as the Bretton Woods agreement and the Marshall Plan.¹⁵⁸ Like the shifts in the marketing world of the 1910s and 1920s, Americans in the 1950s were being taught to consume beyond their immediate needs. Aided by shifts in credit lending, consumer credit rose by a staggering 800 percent between 1945 and 1957, and by the 1960s, American families were only saving 5 percent of their income compared with the 10-20 percent in other industrialized nations.¹⁵⁹

These economic trends, coupled with access to higher education, also wrought changes to America's social and urban landscapes during the Cold War. Based on increased affluence and stability, young couples began to start families, look for homes, and raise the baby boom generation in the suburbs. Indeed, this out-migration to suburbs was so significant that by 1960 suburbs contained as many people as urban areas.¹⁶⁰ This trend only increased over the course of the early-to-mid 1960s and marked a key difference between back-to-the-land generations. Whereas the first and second generation called for the creation of back-to-the-land communities on the outskirts of cities, the third, reacting in part against their suburban upbringing, sought out remote areas of rural America.

The third generation came of age in the suburbs, which is key to understanding their antiurban and anti-suburban worldview. During this period, the construction industry laid down swaths of new suburban tract homes to avoid an impending housing crisis and American universities scrambled for federal funding to create enough classrooms, both of which became

¹⁵⁸ Shi, *The Simple Life*, 249; Judith Stein, *Pivotal Decade: How the United States Traded Factories for Finance in the Seventies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), Location 244-270.

¹⁵⁹ Shi, *The Simple Life*, 249.

¹⁶⁰ Stein, *Pivotal Decade*, Location 162.

spaces for Cold War priorities to shape the lives of the baby boom generation. Indeed, the development of tract housing, coupled with a rise in automobile use and the “green revolution” in agriculture, negatively impacted suburbanites’ health and well-being. As Christopher Sellers has pointed out, the ecological sensibility that underlay the rise of the environmental movement in the 1960s and 1970s was rooted in suburban women's experience in the 1950s as they organized to protect their children from smog and pesticide use.¹⁶¹ Suburban children, then, grew up in the context of growing environmental anxieties that shaped their understandings of post-World War Two American progress.

Additionally, as Margaret O’Mara has pointed out, there was also a complex relationship between suburbanization, Cold War defense priorities, and universities in the 1950s that shaped both the nature of universities and the suburbs. Cold War fears of nuclear attacks shifted industries out of cities and into the suburbs while at the same time changing the priorities of a “historically independent scientific sector” in universities to fit the politics of the times.¹⁶² As a result, the government shaped universities and suburbs, concentrating resources and creating high-tech suburbs in specific parts of the country, particularly in the Sunbelt.¹⁶³ It was difficult for children growing up in such suburbs to avoid recognizing how the Cold War circumscribed suburban life, from anti-communism to anxiety about nuclear war.

Finally, due to these shifts, cities no longer relied on the same tax base, were unable to pay for needed projects, and were reshaped by affluent out-migration. In San Francisco’s Haight-

¹⁶¹ See for instance Sellers’ exploration of suburban mobilization against smog in Los Angeles. Christopher Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible: Suburban Nature and the Rise of Environmentalism in Twentieth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012), chap. *Anxious About the Air*.

¹⁶² Margaret Pugh O’Mara, *Cities of Knowledge: Cold War Science and the Search for the Next Silicon Valley* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), 5.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4–6.

Ashbury district, for instance, the neighborhood's primarily white-working class inhabitants migrated to outlying suburbs, leaving large dilapidated Victorian houses that would later house hippies seeking low-rent apartments.¹⁶⁴ Along with emptying some neighborhoods, suburbanization also altered urban economic landscapes. During this period, urban business sought out new ways to connect with suburban consumers through the development of shopping malls or business centers linked to urban cores such as Seattle's World Fair project in 1962.¹⁶⁵ Such flight, then, shaped the urban landscapes that members of the counterculture inhabited before they went back to the land. These processes were reflective of larger trends in post-World War Two society and culture in which the Cold War reshaped Americans' everyday lives, the landscapes that they inhabited, and the atmosphere in which children came of age.

The merging of Cold War defense priorities, suburban life, and economic prosperity had profound effects on American life's perceived character and a small but vocal minority of antimodern social critics, including Borsodi, Nearing, and countercultural Beat writers, responded. To these intellectual and literary dissenters, Cold War America did not provide adequate space for individuals – often assumed to be white – to pursue satisfying labor or personal discovery because Cold War anti-communism and suburban life valued conformity over individuality. As a result, white Americans felt discouraged from pursuing “authentic” experiences outside of the mainstream – a common refrain, as we have seen, that dated back to antimodern movements at the turn of the century. Unlike earlier generations, however, the Beats believed that “authenticity” could be captured by searching for jazz in non-white urban neighborhoods because it allowed them, in perception if not reality, to break out of white middle-

¹⁶⁴ Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 49.

¹⁶⁵ John Findlay, *Magic Lands: Western Cityscapes and American Culture After 1940* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), 215–16.

class norms. This language of self-actualization and critique of suburban life was widespread – and included prominent voices such as David Reisman and William Whyte – and was perhaps most famously elaborated upon in Betty Friedan’s 1963 *The Feminine Mystique*, where she argued that the cult of domesticity prohibited suburban homemakers from self-actualizing. Finally, the Beats and their allied social critics argued that Cold War American conditions alienated individuals from society through competition and called for new forms of community.

It should be noted, however, that characterizations that the 1950s were a period of anxiety and conformity are often overstated, and there has been considerable research demonstrating the complexities of life in the 1950s. The prominent social critics and Beats of that period, however, deserve attention because they helped to create a language of dissent that directly influenced the New Left, the counterculture, and ultimately the back-to-the-land movement.

Unlike the later hippie counterculture, Beat writers such as Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, and Gary Snyder represented a minuscule and lonesome band of bohemians who offered a “literary vision for the future” based on their personal experiences of alienation in, and dissatisfaction with, Cold War America.¹⁶⁶ The Beats resided primarily in New York’s Greenwich Village, parts of San Francisco, and in New Orleans’ French Quarter, where some experimented with speed and psychedelics and listened to and emulated alternative, more “authentic” cultural forms such as jazz. In essence, Beats pursued life on mainstream American society’s margins as a form of cultural protest against social conformity. Beats latched onto jazz for a variety of reasons, but the primary reason it attracted the Beats was that it was seen as Black, spontaneous, and improvisational, which from their perspective was the opposite of 1950s mainstream cultural forms. Works produced through these experiences, such as Kerouac’s *On*

¹⁶⁶ Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 9.

the Road or Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and *Kaddish*, offered readers a glimpse into Kerouac's frenetic life and Ginsberg's experience of alienation as a gay, Jewish poet from a communist family. These experiences, and the Beats' appropriation of non-white culture, set them apart from earlier antimodern critics such as Bolton Hall and Ralph Borsodi, who, as we have seen, took a considerably different approach to white identity formation – a topic that will be explored in later chapters. Needless to say, however, such mimicry, which presaged the counterculture's fascination with Native culture, served the Beats' interests as a largely white cultural movement.

The Beats undertook significant work undermining Cold War conformity by experimenting with new drugs, engaging with eastern philosophies, and modeling alternative lifestyles for the next generation of counterculturalists: the hippies. Indeed, as William Rorabaugh has demonstrated, the term hippie emerged from references to younger beatniks who emulated the Beats by touring Black neighborhoods in search of jazz.¹⁶⁷ The term began to gain popularity in the late 1950s and early 1960s. In 1957 the New York Times published a list of jazz slang that defined *hippy* as “Generic for a character who is super-cool, overly-blasé, so far out that he appears to be asleep when he's digging something the most.”¹⁶⁸ From this early usage, the term grew over the course of the 1960s, when it was finally applied to the counterculture at large after 1967.

While the Beats were producing potent forms of cultural protest, a growing group of prominent intellectuals in the 1950s and 1960s formulated written critiques of post-World War

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 4–7.

¹⁶⁸ Elliot Horne, “For Cool Cats and Far-Out Chicks; Here Is a Lexicon for Do-It-Yourself Hipsters of the Newest in Jazz Slang. Don't Be an Oofuso Man. Just Dig It!,” August 18, 1957, 26, accessed October 15th, 2020 <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1957/08/18/121648683.html>; Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 4.

Two industrial society, suburban developments, and Cold War conformity. As we shall see, this message resonated with a new generation of students, who soon founded the New Left political movement and other student movements. Indeed, there was a plethora of social critics ranging from the biologist Rachel Carson to the historian Theodore Roszak to other critics like Lewis Mumford, Herbert Marcuse, Murray Bookchin, and Paul Goodman. Of these social critics the last four are particularly important because they each influenced baby boomers flocking to university in the 1960s and had connections with resulting protest movements.

Mumford, a prominent decentralist alongside Borsodi in the 1930s, was hopeful that post-World War Two economic abundance and technological progress could aid Americans' quest for the good life, but he decried the culture of consumption and conformity as leading to "heightened materialism, stress, anxiety, and depression."¹⁶⁹ One example of this anxiety and alienation, according to Mumford, was the culture of conformity in government bureaucracies. Based on his ideas from the 1930s, along with seeing the rise of fascism during World War Two, Mumford established a framework for critiquing conformity in Cold War bureaucracies. In his term "Megamachines," he describes these bureaucracies as being responsible for making humans into "servo-units," who could dissociate from the moral implications of their actions and thus comfortably conform. While much of this was a direct critique of post-World War Two America, it is important to recognize the similarities between Mumford's critique of bureaucracy and the first generation of antimodern dissenters who also decried what Jackson Lears has termed the "evasive banality" of modern culture and the alienating effects of bureaucracy.¹⁷⁰

¹⁶⁹ For more on Mumford's views of the limits of technological progress see Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*, 195; Shi, *The Simple Life*, 250.

¹⁷⁰ Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 17.

Mumford was perhaps best known in the 1960s for his vehement critique of Cold War cities and suburbs as sites of alienation, a critique that resonated with the younger generation. In 1962, his *The City in History* called on urban planners to consider the natural world in creating the built environment so that humans could have organic relationships with their surroundings rather than inhabiting cold concrete. Mumford was even more vehemently opposed to suburbs, famously stating that “in the suburb one might live and die without marring the image of an innocent world, except when some shadow of evil fell over a column in the newspaper. Thus, the suburb served as an asylum for the preservation of illusion. Here domesticity could prosper, oblivious of the pervasive regimentation beyond.”¹⁷¹ Despite a more complex history, the message that suburbs bred conformity and escapism proved to be a powerful counter-narrative to the trajectory of post-World War Two society and found a receptive audience among those who had grown up in a suburban setting – though one wonders what the first generation would have thought of such anti-suburbanism.¹⁷²

A chorus of other 1950s social critics published works that took aim at anti-communist social repression, consumerism, and the industrial system’s effects on the natural environment. These were popular among young activists in the early 1960s. Herbert Marcuse, a German-born anti-capitalist philosopher, published a damning critique of social repression occurring in America and the Soviet Union in *One-Dimensional Man* in 1964. Like Borsodi and the earlier decentralists, Marcuse faulted both capitalism and Marxism with ensnaring individuals in a one-

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 155.

¹⁷² Suburbs were by no means monolithically middle-class. Furthermore, the narrative put forward by 1950s social critics tends to downplay suburbs as important sites of protest and social mobilizing. For instance, the development of a distinct ecological awareness that gave rise to the Environmental movement was rooted in suburban inhabitants', in particularly suburban women's, experience with smog and other pollutants. See Sellers, *Crabgrass Crucible*, 130.

dimensional mode of thought and consumption that served industry and government interests while repressing all forms of dissent.¹⁷³ As we shall see, Marcuse was particularly influential to the New Left because his advocacy for “the Great Refusal” from mainstream politics created a language of dissent for those seeking to build a pure democracy.

Along similar lines, Murray Bookchin and Paul Goodman offered readers language to describe their ambivalence toward post-World War Two ecological and social changes. Indeed, Bookchin’s 1962 work *Our Synthetic Environment*, published months before Rachel Carsons’ *Silent Spring*, offered a compelling critique of how capitalism was destroying the natural world through pesticides and radiation. He argued that, rather than relying on the “remedial legislation” of the federal government, concerned citizens could push for decentralization and communalism. For Bookchin, modern society already had the technology necessary to create “a new type of human community- one which constitutes neither a complete return to the past nor a suburban accommodation to the present” that would be in harmony with nature.¹⁷⁴ This ecological and social message found ready adherents among counterculture communalists and third generation back-to-the-landers by the end of the 1960s.

Finally, these social critics were effective at speaking directly to the younger generation. Paul Goodman, a social critic turned anarchist in the 1950s, became the leading philosopher of the New Left after publishing a series of writings including the best-selling *Growing Up Absurd* in 1960. That work delved into growing anxiety amongst the younger generation that their prospects for satisfying work in an age of abundance and conformity were limited. From Goodman’s perspective in the late 1950s, he asserted that “the young men are Angry and Beat.

¹⁷³ Repression was a central focus of Marcuse. See Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*, 138-139, 150.

¹⁷⁴ Murray Bookchin, *Our Synthetic Environment* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1962), 242.

The boys are Juvenile Delinquents. These groups are not small, and they will grow larger. Certainly they are suffering. Demonstrably they are not getting enough out of our wealth and civilization.”¹⁷⁵ While Goodman’s overarching critique of American society is up for debate, he was correct that this dissatisfaction would grow as the affluent children of the suburbs went to college in record numbers and grew increasingly dissatisfied with the world they were inheriting.

The first group of dissenters to emerge from this next generation's ranks were the largely white proponents of the New Left who began breaking away from the Old Left in the early 1960s. Indeed, following the splintering of the alliance between socialists and communists in the late 1930s, the emergence of the New Deal state, and the rise of the second Red Scare in the 1950s, the remnants of the Old Left were scattered and could not speak to a younger generation that found old guard socialism and Marxism – not to mention the authoritarianism of Stalinism – unappealing. As such, younger leftists gravitated to 1950s social critics like Marcuse, Goodman, and Mumford and their more personal messages about meaningful labor, social isolation, and cultural conformity.¹⁷⁶

Borrowing from these public intellectuals' ideas and sentiments, activists such as Tom Hayden formed the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) in the early 1960s. The SDS became a principal organization in the New Left political movement. This new liberal political ideology is best encapsulated in the SDS’s Port Huron Statement, which laid out the new generation’s anxiety and disillusionment with 1950s society and politics.¹⁷⁷ The 1962 statement provided a recitation of the paradoxes in post-World War Two society that the baby boom

¹⁷⁵ Paul Goodman, *Growing Up Absurd: Problems of Youth in the Organized System* (New York: Vintage, 1962), 19–20.

¹⁷⁶ Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 59.

¹⁷⁷ For an in-depth narrative of the 1962 meeting that produced the statement see Gitlin’s account. *Ibid.*, 170.

generation was beginning to confront. From Cold War America's advocacy of democracy while repressing Black civil rights, to the promise of technological progress and the specter of nuclear apocalypse, these members of the New Left were deeply distrustful of America's post-World War Two trajectory. They advocated face-to-face participatory democracy through protest as well as decision making through consensus. Their ideas were deeply affected by older social criticisms, especially Paul Goodman's framing of the generation in *Growing up Absurd* and Marcuse's Great Refusal. Indeed, the statement made clear that the younger generation was skeptical of finding meaningful work after college and disillusioned by the Old Left's conservatism. Over the course of the 1960s, the New Left would engage with various protest movements, such as Civil Rights, the Free Speech Movement, and the anti-war movement; it was effective in shaping the political and racial awareness of young liberal whites.

In the 1960s, college campuses and their surrounding environs proved to be fertile grounds for the baby boom generation to organize and search for alternatives within Cold War society and politics. Over the course of the decade, however, a clear rift on the political Left began to open between more political, protest-oriented youths such as SDS members, and those who turned to individually-focused cultural reformation and would eventually go back to the land. This rupture led to a significant shift on the Left away from larger-scale collective action – such as Vietnam war protests – to a politics of personal liberation following the New Left's disintegration in the late 1960s and early 1970s.¹⁷⁸ This process can clearly be seen on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley, in Berkeley's South Campus neighborhood, and in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of nearby San Francisco. Berkeley and the Bay Area in the 1960s contained a potent mix of radicals and cultural revolutionaries. Unlike other parts of

¹⁷⁸ This rift could at times be wide. For a sense of this divide see Gitlin's work. *Ibid.*, 303.

the country, Berkeley had been a bastion for liberals and communists in the 1950s, with the result being that SDS was never as successful there as other liberal groups were.¹⁷⁹ The university did, however, ban all political activities on campus as a result, which eventually led to one of the earliest mass campus protests for free speech in 1964 and 1965. During this same period, across the water in the Haight-Ashbury, the West Coast hippie counterculture began to emerge: Ken Kesey performed Acid Tests, Jefferson Airplane and Big Brother and the Holding Company began performing, and hippies crowded together in urban communes.¹⁸⁰

That the hippies' oppositional culture emerged in the Haight and other Beat strongholds across the country was no coincidence. The counterculture was an outgrowth of the Beat movement.¹⁸¹ Beats had moved to the Haight-Ashbury in the late 1950s as North Beach became more affluent, and many remained there and interacted with the younger generation. The Haight was also on the border of the Black Filmore District, making it easier for young white hippies to tour jazz establishments, consume black culture, and start developing a novel form of countercultural whiteness. From these social and racial contexts, the counterculture formulated its own answers to the repressions of Cold War society. Unlike the politicians pushing for protest in the streets or on college campuses, the hippies sought personal liberation via spontaneity and valued individual emotional expression over intellectual dogmatism.¹⁸² In their worldview, individual authenticity could only be found by turning inward – rooting out the causes of violence, jealousy, and hate within themselves– and creating communities whose social, political, and cultural systems enabled such inward focus. Radical individual transformation,

¹⁷⁹ Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War*, 90.

¹⁸⁰ Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 49–50.

¹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 21.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 10.

then, was the only route to reforming American culture – a clear retreat from the New Left’s collective action efforts such as Vietnam war protests.

In order to make sense of the dizzying array of counterculture practices and understand how they readily melded with preexisting back-to-the-land ideas such as producerism and decentralism to form the third generation, it is useful to briefly narrow our discussion to a single representative group: the Diggers. The Diggers emerged in the Haight-Ashbury in the mid-1960s after members of the San Francisco Mime Troupe, a theater company similar to the Living Theatre, did a piece of theater on the seventeenth-century English radical religious group of the same name. The English Diggers had advocated a philosophy of radical individualism and anarchism, calling into question the notion of private property, and pushing for extensive users’ rights. This message resonated with members of the SFMT such as Peter Berg, Peter Coyote, and Emmett Gorgan, and they set about educating and politicizing the denizens of the Haight through public performances and mutual aid outreach. Indeed, the Diggers have been labeled by historians as the “high priests of the counterculture” who acted as the “political conscience for the Haight-Ashbury,” because the group effectively dramatized the radical possibilities of wedding the counterculture’s lifestyle of personal liberation with radical Left politics.¹⁸³

Digger cultural politics revolved around educating the counterculture on how capitalism alienated the individual through competition and perpetuated inequality and violence in society. This philosophy was based on anarcho-communism, and the group lived in a communal house in the Haight where they organized their performances. More specifically, the group focused on circumventing currency by showing how trade and mutual aid could function without money – a key assumption of the Diggers being that technological progress enabled a post-scarcity world.

¹⁸³ Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War*, 144; Martin, *The Theater Is in the Street*, 87.

They famously burned money in the streets and opened Free Stores that sourced unwanted foods from grocery stores and gave it out free of charge to hippies.

The aim of the Digger's theatrical displays and mutual aid organizing was to promote a form of participatory democracy similar to the SDS's, but focused on how personal transformation – i.e., living spontaneously and sharing freely – would model an entire cultural revolution. It is important to recognize how this inward focus marked an important shift on the Left away from collective political mobilizing against the Vietnam War towards a politics of personal liberation. The Diggers' influence on this shift was substantial: the group popularized the phrase “do your own thing” and the idea that property and objects were “free because it's yours,” both of which were common countercultural phrases.¹⁸⁴ Their philosophy of radical individualism and community formation through spontaneous, and thus authentic, self-expression near like-minded individuals is crucial for understanding the countercultural elements in the third generation's back-to-the-land pursuits. Indeed, such focus on authentic self-expression was a common impulse that propelled a variety of third-generation pursuits from encounter therapy to consensus decision-making meetings. It was also a message tailor-made for the late 1960s and for the white children of prosperity. As a series of disillusioning events confronted politically active liberal youth in the late 1960s – from the 1968 riots outside of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago to Richard Nixon's election and expansion of the war in Vietnam to the massacre at Kent State – the Diggers' call for radical individualism and intentional community only gained resonance.

The Diggers must be situated within the back-to-the-land movement as they were at the forefront of the countercultural third wave. In the turbulent political climate of the late 1960s and

¹⁸⁴ Martin, *The Theater is in the Streets*, 124.

as the Haight was inundated by drop-outs and runaways during the 1967 Summer of Love, many Diggers moved to Berkeley's South Campus or to rural communes, reflecting another generational migration away from both urban space and large-scale political action – Scott Nearing, it should be recalled, also “dropped out” following the disintegration of the Old Left. Indeed, in 1967 the Diggers founded Morning Star Ranch (a.k.a. the Digger Farm) outside of San Francisco, which, though short lived, was an early rural commune. It is important to recognize, however, that the Diggers' anarchist, anticapitalist ideology, though representative of common countercultural impulses, was on the radical, ephemeral edges of the counterculture and the third wave. Back-to-the-land communities like Morning Star Ranch rarely survived into the mid-1970s because their lack of structure hindered important activities such as gardening, harvesting, or providing proper sanitation for the community. Most third-generation communities, such as the ones that make up this study, found that pure anarchism and “doing your own thing” hampered community survival and led to new forms of inequality. Indeed, while the Diggers' rejection of capitalism and political authority were common and represented key reactions to post-World War Two society in the 1960s, most third-generation communities in the 1970s did not reject capitalism nor did they eschew decision-making hierarchies in their political culture. Indeed, many ended up reinforcing dominant political and economic shifts in mainstream society.

The Diggers were by no means the only countercultural group operating in and around San Francisco in the late 1960s. Moreover, their location on the West Coast should not imply that the hippie counterculture was solely a West Coast phenomenon. The Diggers' turn to rural communalism occurred in concert with numerous other groups that shared similar ideas about individualism, authenticity, and community. Wavy Gravy, a member of Kesey's Merry Pranksters, founded the Hog Farm on rural land in California in the late 1960s and members of

Hog Farm often traveled to college campuses throughout the country in a colorful school bus where they influenced members of the counterculture like Margaret Grundstein. Likewise, Stephen Gaskin, an English professor at San Francisco State who gained a following in the mid-1960s based on his religious Monday Night Classes, went on to found The Farm in Tennessee in 1970. Such rural experiments were mirrored by counterculturalists in East Coast cities like Boston and New York. Raymond Mungo, a radical from New York who co-founded the Liberation News Service in 1967, founded one of the earliest counterculture communes in Vermont, which he named Total Loss Farm. Like the generations of back-to-the-landers before him, Mungo even turned to writing about his rural lifestyle and published *Total Loss Farm: A Year in the Life* in 1970. All three of these back-to-the-land communities aimed, like the Diggers, to carve out remote rural space so that individuals could pursue self-actualization through more egalitarian, non-hierarchical, and cooperative economic and political relationships.

Conclusion: Pulling the Threads Together

By the late 1960s and early 1970s, then, another generation, responding to political turmoil, worried about their prospects for satisfying work, and disaffected by urban and suburban life, went back to the land. This countercultural back-to-the-land movement shared a number of similarities with earlier generations, which, given their exposure to leading second-generation writers like Loomis, Borsodi, and the Neaings, is unsurprising. As we have seen the third generation, like earlier generations, was overwhelmingly white and founded intentional communities as well as homesteads. Like the first and second generation, members of the counterculture in the late 1960s drew on a republican vision of rural land as a space for Americans to cultivate themselves and their families into more virtuous citizens away from the

degenerating effects of urban and suburban life. Like first-generation back-to-the-landers such as Bolton Hall, they viewed creative labor, through farming or cottage industry, from a producerist perspective, believing they could reverse Cold War alienation if enough people went back-to-the-land and controlled their own means of production.

Like the first, the third generation also gravitated to an anarcho-communist vision of society and politics that emphasized mutual aid, cooperation, and freedom of expression. Indeed, they were influenced by Paul Goodman's anarchist critique of 1950s society and were drawn to the English Diggers, whose movement was a precursor to modern anarchism. Like the second generation, the third generation was concerned by centralization in government as well as industry. They had grown up during a period of unprecedented change in which post-World War Two defense priorities and anti-communism had reshaped American universities, businesses, and the federal government. Finally, like the second generation, they were deeply concerned about urban smog, nuclear fallout, and other environmental concerns which gave added impetus to their return to an ecologically sound lifestyle.

While the third generation exhibited significant continuity with earlier generations, there was also much that was new. As the suburban children of post-World War Two affluence, the third generation approached the back-to-the-land endeavor from a different perspective. Whereas the first and second generation had called for suburban back-to-the-land communities on the outskirts of cities, third-generation communities were often in remote, and in some cases off-the-grid, locations – representing a rejection of both urban and suburban life. Part of this difference was practical, as remote rural land was often cheaper for students who were dropping out and combining their meager savings with others. Indeed, third-generation publications consistently published how-to guides for land buying that focused on the Ozarks, Appalachia, and the rural

West rather than near cities or large towns. Part of it was also cultural, as many hippies feared hostility from conservative rural communities. They hoped that remoteness might ameliorate such tension. A further component was rooted in shifting environmental ideals about “wilderness” that emerged in the mid-1960s and many members of the third generation viewed “untouched” land as more suitable to their utopian quest for social and ecological harmony.

At the same time, however, the fact that the third generation sought out remote rural space should not be conflated with a radical departure from previous generations. As Berger has noted in his study of rural communes in 1970s California, hippie communards shared common pastoral assumptions about rural space with their parents, whose 1950s flight to the suburbs was in part fueled by the promise of green space, independence, and escape from crowded cities.¹⁸⁵ Though members of the counterculture avoided settling in suburbs – something that Bolton Hall had advocated – they were rarely so far away from urban space that they could not seek medical treatment or conduct bulk shopping at a consumer cooperative. Indeed, rural America, after electrification, the adoption of the automobile, and the creation of interstates in the 1950s, was far different than the areas of rural Delaware, Virginia, or Texas that Bolton Hall had touted at the turn of the century. Moreover, much like their parents, most communards hoped to establish a more nurturing environment for their children, and they believed that cities were becoming overcrowded, polluted, and increasingly violent. This latter sentiment is particularly telling. Like the first and second generation, the third was able to leave urban space because of its relative affluence and, as with other antimodern dissent movements, this flight served its participants’ racial and social interests rather than offering a truly radical alternative to contemporary American society.

¹⁸⁵ Berger, *The Survival of the Counterculture*, 96.

Affluence also shaded the significance of going back-to-the-land in the late 1960s and early 1970s. The act of renunciation, of “dropping out,” was meaningful for members of the third generation because they were supposedly giving up middle-class affluence and returning to what they perceived to be more authentic, antimodern lifestyle. While members of the third generation like Margaret Grundstein sought rural self-sufficiency, a core back-to-the-land ideal, the meaning of self-sufficiency had changed by the 1960s and 1970s. Whereas Bolton Hall and other members of the first generation had sought to weather economic turmoil by returning to a more stable rural lifestyle on productive homesteads, members of the third generation believed that the pursuit of rural self-reliance would help them return to more authentic mode of relating to themselves, the natural world, and to one another. Indeed, it is revealing that the third wave crested in the late 1960s and early 1970s, before the economic upheavals of the mid-1970s. This does mark a departure from previous generations. However, as Jade Aguilar has demonstrated in her study of voluntary simplicity at Twin Oaks, renouncing affluence and consumer luxuries – especially when one could return to society and rely on family safety-nets – only appealed to a narrow subset of liberal white Americans.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, third-generation communities in the 1970s often wondered why they were not attracting a more diverse membership while failing to understand how other, more socio-economically disadvantaged, groups found voluntary simplicity bewildering.

Finally, as we shall see in later chapters, the third generation’s upbringing and political sensibilities led them to fundamentally different racial visions for back-to-the-land societies and gendered expectations of men’s and women’s work. Unlike the first and second generation, who

¹⁸⁶ Jade Aguilar, “Food Choices and Voluntary Simplicity in Intentional Communities: What’s Race and Class Got to Do with It?,” *Utopian Studies* 26, no. 1 (2015): 83.

viewed the back-to-the-land endeavor as a eugenics project, the third generation formulated a novel white identity that heavily appropriated from a variety of non-white traditions in order to frame themselves as “Native” or Native allies. Indeed, as we shall see in Chapter 5, the third generation was at the forefront of the emerging New Age movement over the course of the 1970s – a movement that primarily served its participants’ white liberal self-interests and precluded meaningful interactions with non-white groups. Along similar lines, third generation communities grappled with the rise of the Women’s movement at the end of the 1960s. While the first and second generation had both conformed to conservative, Victorian notions of separate spheres and lionized women’s role as homemakers, many third-generation women embraced second-wave feminism and actively sought out traditionally male roles, and pushed for equality within their own counterculture communities.

This sweeping portrait of continuity and change within the back-to-the-land movement in the twentieth century offers important context for understanding this study’s three case studies. As we shall see, members of Twin Oaks, Alpha Farm, and Heathcote were shaped by their experiences in the counterculture as well as through their engagement with preexisting back-to-the-land ideas and practices. Before moving into third-generation experiments in the 1970s, however, it will be important to dive deeper into the complex intergenerational exchange of ideas and practices between the second generation and members of the counterculture before they went back to the land. For that story we must return to the mid-1960s, when a radical ex-insurance salesman met Mildred Loomis and helped introduce the counterculture to the School of Living.

Chapter 2.

The Reemergence of the Back-to-to-Land Movement:

Intergenerational Exchange From 1966 to 1977

*I came upon a child of god,
He was walking along the road.
And I asked him, where are you going?
And this he told me.*

*"I'm going on down to yasgur's farm,
I'm going to join a rock 'n' roll band,
I'm going to camp out on the land,
I'm goin' to try an' get my soul free."*

*We are stardust,
We are golden.
And we've got to get ourselves,
Back to the garden.*

*"Then can I walk beside you?
I have come here to lose the smog,
And I feel to be a cog in something turning."
– Joni Mitchell, "Woodstock," 1969*

To understand how and why a large portion of the counterculture in the mid-to-late 1960s chose to go back to the land in response to the political and cultural turmoil of the times – as opposed, say, to fleeing *en masse* to Canada – it is necessary to trace the substantive interactions between countercultural groups and second generation back-to-the-landers in the mid-1960s. We have already seen how members of the New Left and other liberal organizations were influenced by the Nearings, in particular Scott Nearing's mid-1960s political writing in *The Conscience of a*

Radical.¹⁸⁷ Scholarship on the back-to-the-land movement has thoroughly detailed the Nearings' influence on burned-out radicals in the early 1970s and tracked how third-generation homesteading emerged in publications such as *Mother Earth News (MEN)*. As a result, scholarship has situated the reemergence of the movement in the early 1970s with the rise of homesteading rather than earlier within the counterculture or the communal movement of the mid-to-late 1960s. As such, little attention has been given to the School of Living's influence on the counterculture and early third-generation communes. Indeed, it would be Mildred Loomis's working partnership with Richard Fairfield, an influential promoter of countercultural communalism whose underground news publication *The Modern Utopian (TMU)* became a School of Living publication in 1967, that introduced many hippies to the antimodern back-to-the-land tradition before they became burned out and turned away from urban protests in the late 1960s.

This chapter aims to retell the early history of the third generation with a focus on the counterculture, hippie communes, and the School of Living. The resulting portrait offers a far more complicated and messy intergenerational exchange of ideas and practices than has been previously documented in back-to-the-land historiography. Indeed, this reframing also helps makes sense of how and when the counterculture emerged in the 1960s. Reintroducing the

¹⁸⁷ Gould has argued that “while the Nearings would be the ‘cult heroes’ of the 1960s back-to-the-landers, the Borsodis and Loomis continue to be minor saints with their own schools of followers.” In a subsequent note Gould argues that “the reasons that countercultural homesteaders tended to prefer the Nearings' example over the Borsodis' is not entirely clear, although the Nearings' comparatively radical politics may be one reason.” Gould cites Laurence Veysey's *The Communal Experience* which argued that the School of Living's rigidity chafed the counterculture. That book, however, was published in 1973 at the same time as Fairfield became to editor of *GR* where he influenced the second-generation publication and made it more countercultural, demonstrating the complicated ways in which the counterculture adopted School of Living ideas and practices. Gould, *At Home in Nature*, 186, 296n 52.

counterculture and the communal movement to narratives of the back-to-the-land movement necessitates placing the communal back-to-the-land movement within the larger history of communitarianism. The Diggers, after all, had modeled themselves on a radical English communal movement of the same name in the seventeenth century. As Timothy Miller has demonstrated in his study of 1960s communes, the earliest 1960s communes arose as an antimodern reaction to late-1950s culture and, more significantly, before the New Left's collapse and the widespread emergence of the countercultural communal movement. Indeed, communities like the School of Living's Heathcote, a key early community according to Miller, even fostered and "helped create the hippies."¹⁸⁸ As we shall see, the interactions between the School of Living and Fairfield's *TMU* readership support this reframing.

The first part of this chapter will explore Fairfield's route to the counterculture, communitarianism, and the back-to-the-land movement in the mid-to-late 1960s. Fairfield's experiences in the 1960s demonstrate how the younger generation's interest in radical social change movements, from group marriage to B.F. Skinner's behaviorism, brought it into contact with older radicals like members of the School of Living. Through such outreach, Fairfield met Loomis who, in 1966, helped convince him that going back to the land was the logical extension of the counterculture's search for freedom and community. By the following year Fairfield was a convert, going so far as to formally join the School of Living and merge *TMU* with School of Living's *A Way Out (AWO)* publication. This merger was a critical event by which influential members of the counterculture were exposed to the antimodern back-to-the-land tradition, especially the School of Living's version of producerism, decentralism, environmentalism, and libertarianism.

¹⁸⁸ Miller, *The 60s Communes*, 2, 8.

Such exposure did not lead to wholesale adoption as members of the counterculture like Fairfield performed a complicated borrowing of School of Living philosophy. For instance, while members of the counterculture shared similar environmental and social anxieties about nuclear war, pollution, and overpopulation with the second generation, they did not adopt the School of Living's racist framing of going back-to-the-land as a eugenic endeavor. Members of the counterculture did, however, borrow heavily from the philosophy of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, a proponent of eugenics whose work on human consciousness was touted by the School of Living in the pages of *TMU/AWO*. Furthermore, in the case of B.F. Skinner's back-to-the-land followers, there was little practical difference between the School of Living's advocacy of eugenics and the rigid behaviorism of Walden Two communities like Twin Oaks. Both sought to regulate women's reproductive decisions and both were part of a larger technological utopian tradition that assumed scientific management of humans could bring about social harmony.

By the late 1960s, then, in the context of profound political disillusionment for many young white radicals and the turn away from large-scale, urban political activism, the third generation emerged as a distinct wave of the back-to-the-land movement. Following interactions with the School of Living, the third generation developed its own distinctive character through a rich information network that emerged at the end of the 1960s and in the early 1970s. The final portion of this chapter explores this network in the pages of Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog (WEC)*, the Shuttleworths' *MEN*, and the School of Living's *Green Revolution (GR)* after Richard Fairfield became its editor in the mid-1970s. It is evident from these national publications that, by the early 1970s, the third generation's ideas and practices represented a distinct iteration of the movement and were influencing second-generation organizations such as the School of Living. In fact, by the time of Borsodi's death in 1977, the *GR* even published

essays highly critical of the founder's racist and sexist beliefs, highlighting the differences between the generations. Though the third generation retained core back-to-the-land values that it learned from the second generation, it also began expressing new priorities. These priorities included appropriate technology, egalitarianism, communalism, and New Age racial visions that characterized the countercultural back-to-the-land movement – and the social and racial priorities of its participants – over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. To understand such shifts, however, it will be important to narrow our focus and delve into the early history of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement through the figure of Richard Fairfield.

Social Change Movements before the Third Generation:

Richard Fairfield in the Early-to-Mid-1960s

Though Richard Fairfield's links to the back-to-the-land movement have received little attention, he is credited as one of the most important promoters and networkers of the 1960s communal movement. Indeed, as Timothy Miller has detailed, Fairfield was involved in several key communal endeavors over the course of the 1960s and 1970s.¹⁸⁹ These endeavors ranged from *TMU* and its community match-making service to the role his Alternatives Foundation played in founding *Communities* magazine with Twin Oaks to the Fellowship of Intentional Communities' eventual resurrection in the 1980s. As such, Fairfield's route to the counterculture and his interactions with the School of Living provides an important window into the emergence of the third generation and how the movement overlapped with the twentieth-century communal movement. Indeed, Fairfield's experiences in the early 1960s are representative of many young

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 15.

white adults who became dissatisfied with modern culture and eventually joined the countercultural back-to-the-land movement. His experience demonstrates how pre-existing social change movements – such as the New Left, the Civil Rights movement, the communal movement, and the sexual revolution of the late 1950s and early 1960s – informed youth experience before the back-to-the-land movement re-emerged in force in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

In the early 1960s Fairfield, a lifelong Unitarian, owned an insurance business in Maine, and was becoming increasingly unfulfilled by his work and interested in new “liberal causes.” In many ways, Fairfield’s route to the counterculture mirrored a long line of antimodern dissenters – from Bolton Hall to Ralph Borsodi – who found their middle- and upper-middle-class labor unrewarding. Of course, mainstream culture in the 1950s and 1960s was radically different from turn-of-the-century America. In an oral history from the 1990s, Fairfield recalled being influenced by the science fiction writing of Philip Wiley who wrote a series of works that delved into ecology, thermonuclear war, and gender dynamics in the 1950s.¹⁹⁰ Fairfield also reported that he was first introduced to alternative lifestyles and the communal movement in the pages of Ralph Ginzburg’s *Eros* and *Fact* magazines. Both were key early 1960s publications that sprang up in the wake of newly relaxed obscenity laws following *Roth v. the United States* in 1957.¹⁹¹ In fact, Ralph Ginzburg’s *Fact* magazine, which combined information on the sexual revolution with information on jazz, Civil Rights, communism, the New Left, and radical experiments with communal group marriage, gave Fairfield the idea of publishing his own newsletter on social

¹⁹⁰ Richard Fairfield, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Richard Fairfield Interview," October 12, 1995, 1. Timothy Miller Oral History Box, CCS Archive.

¹⁹¹ Ralph Ginsberg, “Eros on Trial,” *Fact*, May 1965, 3.

change organizations.¹⁹² Before moving into publishing, however, Fairfield decided to sell his business and pursue a graduate degree in Divinity at Tufts University, hoping to be a minister involved in emerging radical change organizations.

Like many who pursue graduate degrees, Fairfield's route to a post-graduate career was circuitous. He met his first wife at Tufts through what he described as early "online dating" in New York's *Parade Magazine*, and the two hit it off over their shared interest in transcendentalists like as Emerson and Thoreau – writers of particular interest to third generation back-to-the-landers.¹⁹³ In pursuing his degree Fairfield merged his interest in contemporary social change organizations with research on the twentieth-century communal movement, going as far as meeting B.F. Skinner at nearby Harvard and focusing his master's thesis on contemporary group-marriage communes in the American West.¹⁹⁴ Indeed, supporting Miller's framing of the communal counterculture, Skinner introduced Fairfield to the Walden Two movement and to members of Walden House, who went on to found Twin Oaks.

Skinner's movement was a late-1950s and 1960s communal movement based on Skinner's utopian work of the same name that envisioned a society run by an elite group of psychologists that used behaviorism – i.e., the use of operant conditioning to change human behavior – to create a more egalitarian society. This movement drew directly from the utopian writings of Edward Bellamy and placed faith in centralized scientific management – further demonstrating the role of preexisting utopian movements on the emerging counterculture. While Fairfield pursued this research, he also began organizing a newspaper on the Tufts campus to report on movements like Walden Two and other radical social change organizations such as the

¹⁹² Fairfield, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Richard Fairfield Interview," 2.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 33.

¹⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 37.

Free Speech movement, which he named *The Modern Utopian*. Through *TMU*, Fairfield found his calling to help liberal social change organizations through networking and publishing rather than through ministry.

As we have seen in the previous chapter, Fairfield's development of *TMU* occurred at an important inflection point for young liberals in the mid-1960s who were beginning to question the efficacy of New Left urban protests and to turn instead to fashioning a new cultural politics that would become known as the counterculture. Though articles in *TMU* reported on a range of organizations such as Planned Parenthood, the American Civil Liberties Union, the Peace movement, the Civil Rights movement, and the New Left, the newspaper increasingly shifted towards coverage of counterculture organizations like the Neo-American Church, a Timothy Leary inspired organization which popularized LSD. *The Modern Utopian*, therefore, must be situated as part of the emerging counterculture and the larger Left's slow inward turn. This shift can be traced to Fairfield's own evolution as a young radical-turned-hippie. While at Tufts he became friends with Timothy Leary and dropped acid at Leary's Millbrook estate in New York.¹⁹⁵ Fairfield even dropped out of Tufts in 1967 and promptly moved to the heart of the counterculture in Berkeley, where he continued to publish *TMU* in an office near the University of California at Berkeley.¹⁹⁶ As such, *TMU* offers an important window into how preexisting liberal reform movements – including communal movements like Walden Two – in the early-to-mid 1960s informed the thinking and experience of members of the counterculture before the third generation turned away from urban space and went back to the land.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 34.

¹⁹⁶ Fairfield did end up finishing his theological degree in San Diego in 1969. See *Ibid.*, 23.

A representative example of this process can be seen in the early issues of *TMU* which dealt with group marriage, a topic Fairfield, though not his wife, was particularly interested in and believed was key to radical social transformation. Proponents of group marriage in the mid-1960s employed countercultural rhetoric to argue that modern monogamy was unnatural – the root cause of jealousy – and perpetuated patriarchy and a host of other modern afflictions. These antimodern ideas were the direct outgrowth of sex reform movements dating back to the 1940s and 1950s, which included Borsodi and Loomis’s School of Living. Group marriage, however, also had deeper roots in the history of American communalism.¹⁹⁷ Indeed, countercultural proponents of communal group marriage connected their own practice to early precedents such as Oneida in the mid-1800s. As such, group marriage proponents writing in *TMU* reveal how the counterculture overlapped with radical, antimodern, liberal movements before members of the counterculture retreated from urban space. Indeed, as we shall see, such overlap facilitated intergenerational exchange as the second generation reached out to the nascent third.

It should be noted that the majority of counterculturalists never participated in group marriage or group sexual encounters, though most approved of those who willingly tried such experiments.¹⁹⁸ Personal choice was an important component of the counterculture’s emerging mentality and controversy arose in early issues of *TMU* surrounding members of the counterculture who sought to impose the radical practice on others. Such controversy reveals tensions within the counterculture concerning women's role and the limitations of the counterculture’s advocacy of egalitarianism and personal freedom that are important to recognize.

¹⁹⁷ Indeed, the practice was central to life at Oneida. See Timothy Miller, *The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth-Century America*, 6.

¹⁹⁸ Aidala and Zablocki, “The Communes of the 1970s” 105–6.

The first two issues of *TMU* contain a series of pro-group marriage articles, including two letters of support from Unitarian ministers and articles chronicling how disagreement over group marriage was roiling membership at Walden House in Washington D.C. Indeed, the first issue of *TMU* in 1966 contained a letter in support of group marriage from an ex-minister named Wayne Gourley, who helped found and finance Walden House in 1965. Gourley, drawing on Skinner and Aldous Huxley's work, argued that group marriage would radically reshape communal economics and ensure that individuals would no longer feel isolated within nuclear families and could pursue a variety of relationships that would enable them to overcome jealousy and sexism. Gourley even connected the transformative potential of group marriage to Timothy Leary's LSD trials, arguing that "If men and women were truly free, perhaps their love life would be likewise. Leary's group has indicated that under LSD at least, this is indeed the case."¹⁹⁹ As such, Gourley's advocacy of group marriage fit within an emerging countercultural focus on self-actualization through radical personal transformation as well as a larger antimodern dissent tradition that included the American communal movement – free love and alternative marriage had lain at the heart of the Oneida experiment. Gourley even argued that new communities must adopt group marriage in their quest for radical social change and that "mere personal inclination" should not be a barrier.²⁰⁰ This latter sentiment generated considerable controversy within Walden House, members of which voted against adopting group marriage, prompting Gourley to move out by the end of 1966.

¹⁹⁹ Wayne Gourley, "A Utopian Answer: Walden House Plus Group Marriage," *The Modern Utopian*, December 1966, 36.

²⁰⁰ It appears that Gourley stated this in a meeting within Walden House which Greibe attended. See Kathleen Griebe, "WALDEN HOUSE Talks Back," *The Modern Utopian*, February 1967, 2.

This controversy played out over the pages of the following *TMU* issue in January 1967, revealing tensions between men and women in the counterculture. In the January *TMU* Kathleen Griebe, a founding member of Walden House who became a leader at Twin Oaks, responded to some of Gourley's mischaracterizations and argued that "the simple fact is that there has never been a female at Walden House who had any interest in group marriage."²⁰¹ Aside from the fact that there were no women interested, Griebe felt countercultural experimentation was self-limiting if it impinged others' freedom. She stated that "the view that group marriage is such an obviously splendid solution to all of life's major problems that 'mere personal inclination' ought not to be allowed to interfere with it is not one which we can endorse...Do you like the idea? Good. So marry groupily away."²⁰² For Walden House members, the type of sexual and social revolution pushed by Gourley ran counter to their egalitarian ideals. Indeed, it ran counter to their emerging sensibilities concerning women's liberation because he wanted to subvert personal choice, a central freedom espoused by the counterculture – though a contradictory position for students of Skinner in many ways. Radical practices such as group marriage, then, did not always easily coexist alongside new impulses within the counterculture.

Griebe's response highlights one of the counterculture's central contradictions as it grappled with the sexual revolution and the rise of second-wave feminism. While members of the counterculture openly called for free-love and egalitarianism, many men within the movement used this libertine anarchism to suit their own interests.²⁰³ Indeed, the language of sexual freedom and release from "hang-ups" was often used to pressure women to have sex, while at the same time respecting "mere personal inclination" was crucial for a social and

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁰³ William Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 122.

cultural movement that sought to free individuals from a corrupt, violent society. In so doing, many countercultural men reproduced gendered expectations of women that clashed with the counterculture's advocacy of individualism and authenticity.²⁰⁴ As we shall see in Chapter 4, as the women's movement of the late 1960s and 1970s emerged, such tensions erupted within back-to-the-land communities such as Twin Oaks.

In the early pages of *TMU*, it is evident that the counterculture was beginning to coalesce. Individuals such as Fairfield, Griebel, and Gourley were grappling with the complex legacy of earlier social change movements in their own attempts to envision and implement alternatives to modern American society. It was at this point, in the mid-to-late 1960s, that members of the counterculture, like *TMU* readers, came into contact with second generation back-to-the-landers at School of Living who were eager to communicate their antimodern, antiurban ideas and experiences to the younger generation. Indeed, in many ways, the School of Living, through publications and face-to-face training at Heathcote, helped shape the counterculture – at least that portion of it that was coalescing in Berkeley. Moreover, while the counterculture was not synonymous with the third generation, which emerged in force in the late 1960s and early 1970s, early intergenerational contact between Fairfield and the School of Living represents a period in

²⁰⁴There is a complex history of the rise of the women's movement in the late 1960s. Some have argued that second-wave feminism was a direct reaction to the anti-feminism of radical movements like the New Left, the Civil Rights movement, and the counterculture. However, there is also compelling evidence that second-wave feminism has its roots in a larger post-World War Two intellectual tradition that predated 1950s and 1960s radical movements for liberation. For more see Jessica Anne Lee, "Thinking Women: The Intellectual Foundations of Postwar Feminism Activism" (PhD Dissertation - University of Washington, 2010), 4–7. For more on the history of the counterculture, the sexual revolution, and the changing gender roles of men and women in the 1960s and 1970s see Beth Bailey's study of a small town in rural Kansas that grappled with the counterculture as well as Tim Hodgdon's informative discussion of the Diggers. Beth Bailey, *Sex in the Heartland* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 20; Tim Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius: Masculinity in Two Countercultural Communities, 1965-83* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009), 67–68.

which prominent members of the counterculture were persuaded that the flight from cities was a logical next step for the counterculture. As the 1960s turned into the 1970s, then, the second generation was instrumental in rekindling the movement.

The Second Generation Reaches Out:

The School of Living and *The Modern Utopian* from 1966 to 1968

As Fairfield decided to leave Tufts, his interest in group marriage caused his conventional marriage to crumble in 1967, and he became increasingly interested in the counterculture and the communal movement. Fairfield's early interest in group marriage, Walden Two communities, and social-change groups brought him into contact with the School of Living. In the early 1960s, the School of Living was run by Mildred Loomis and was beginning to shift its focus to the younger generation. By the late 1950s and early 1960s, it was publishing *Balanced Living*, a magazine that included articles on libertarianism, psychology, and sexual liberation, like those in Ralph Ginzburg's publications. In 1962 the School of Living started another publication, named *A Way Out*, to appeal to the younger generation, which offered readers back-to-the-land information such as Ken Kern's essays on building homesteads along with the School of Living's usual antimodern, antiurban philosophical articles.²⁰⁵ In 1963, the School of Living consolidated these newspapers into *GR*, which became its sole magazine in the late 1960s. At this time, the School of Living began organizing its Heathcote community in Maryland, which became a training center for members of the counterculture interested in alternative, back-to-the-land

²⁰⁵ Kern's articles on self-sufficiency even became a mainstay in issues of the *WEC* and *MEN* over the course of the 1970s, demonstrating how effective intergeneration overlap was for transmitting back-to-the-land ideas and practices. Ken Kern, "The Owner Built Homestead," *Mother Earth News*, September 1970, *Mother Earth News* Digital CD-ROM Archive.

lifestyles. Fairfield, who was living in Boston in 1965 and 1966, was exposed to the School of Living through these publications. He published information on the organization in the first issue of *TMU*.²⁰⁶ He also began attending seminars at Heathcote in 1966 while at Tufts, where he met Loomis and was convinced that the counterculture needed to found intentional communities and go back-to-the-land if the movement wanted to start a radical antimodern revolution.²⁰⁷

Fairfield's exposure to the School of Living through publications and seminars at Heathcote represented the first sparks of interest between the second generation and members of the counterculture. It should be noted that Fairfield was not the only hippie to come across Borsodi and Loomis in this period. The School of Living's message, by the mid-to-late 1960s, was starting to appeal to members of the counterculture because the group's antimodern, antiurban ideas appealed to radicals burned-out by mainstream forms of social change such as protests against the Vietnam war as well as the growing concern over smog, pollution, and urban violence. Indeed, the School of Living had been advertising itself to the younger generation and the New Left since the early 1960s, but it was only in the mid-to-late 1960s, as other counterculture publications like the WEC picked up the organization, that the School of Living gained a large following of hippies who descended on Heathcote by the thousands. Of these converts, Fairfield was the most vocal proponent of the School of Living to the counterculture, which, by the Summer of Love in 1967 had emerged as a distinct social movement. He even went so far as to formally join the School of Living membership in 1967 and his relationship with Loomis remained close following his move to Berkeley. In fact, the two decided to merge

²⁰⁶ Richard Fairfield, "News Digest of Communities & Churches," *The Modern Utopian*, Fall 1966, 25.

²⁰⁷ Richard Fairfield and Timothy Miller, *The Modern Utopian: Alternative Communities of the '60s and '70s* (Port Townsend: Process, 2010), 61.

TMU with the School of Living's *AWO* to broadcast the School of Living's antimodern ideas to hippies living at one of the hearts of the counterculture. As such, *TMU/AWO* became a satellite School of Living organization with Loomis as member of the editorial board. Fairfield's office in Berkeley became the official School of Living: West.

Fairfield viewed members of the older generation as antecedents whose antimodern reforms were becoming conservative by the mid-1960s, but he was intrigued by the School of Living's emphasis on decentralism, rural producerism, and libertarianism. These second-generation ideals blended seamlessly with the counterculture's focus on individuality, authenticity, communalism, and love of nature. Indeed, Fairfield argued Loomis "had been the leftest [sic] of the leftists in the '30s. Now, with the open land movement espoused by Lou Gottlieb at Morning Star in California," her ideas were "becoming immensely conservative."²⁰⁸ This countercultural point of view makes sense given the types of radical experiments occurring in the Haight and in California during the mid-to-late 1960s. Along similar lines it appears that the counterculture was aware of the School of Living's various failures in intentional community building. In an oral history in the 1990s, Fairfield recalled a friend who referred to the School of Living as the "shit out of luck" organization.²⁰⁹ Such critiques highlight how members of the counterculture like Fairfield and Gottlieb were the products of post-World War Two affluence. As we have seen in the previous chapter, their "radical" open land movement assumed that post-World War Two scientific and technological advances had established the conditions for limitless abundance, allowing cultural radicals like themselves to move beyond older systems of ownership and currency. Despite such differences, however, Fairfield was receptive to Loomis's

²⁰⁸ Fairfield and Miller, *The Modern Utopian*, 61.

²⁰⁹ Fairfield, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Richard Fairfield Interview," 34.

ideas and her vast experience. In describing their ongoing relationship in 1966-1967, he recalled that “she was unhappy that youth did not give more attention to economic problems in their return to the land and intentional community. She saw *The Modern Utopian* as a vehicle to communicate her point of view.”²¹⁰ Communicate she did, imparting crucial components of her back-to-the-land ideology – including her communitarian experiences – to the counterculture.

The merger between *TMU* and *AWO* in 1967 created an effective platform for Loomis to communicate the second generation’s point of view, yet the School of Living’s dogmatism and worship of Borsodi made members of the counterculture wary.²¹¹ In describing the collaboration with School of Living, Fairfield argued that the third generation was “equally engaged in the search for the Good Life,” but that the School of Living tended to dictate answers and worship Borsodi as a hero and prophet.²¹² School of Living answers included “organic gardening, health foods, homesteading,” and “a general back-to-the-land movement,” as well as “decentralism, anarchism,” and “Georgian economics.”²¹³ The School of Living’s rigidity, however, chafed against Fairfield’s countercultural, anti-authoritarian sensibilities. He argued that “*The Modern Utopian* by its very nature leans in these directions” but that “it does not stop there. It is more irreverent. It has no saints, no heroes...instead, it actively seeks new ideas for creating a better world.”²¹⁴ For him, the merger between the two organizations would be fruitful because it would allow readers to “more fully deal with the varied aspects of living, especially the economic and political.”²¹⁵ The merger did prove to be fruitful, and second-generation ideas such as

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 61.

²¹¹ Laurence R. Veysey, *The Communal Experience: Anarchist and Mystical Communities in Twentieth Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978), 39.

²¹² Richard Fairfield, “Collaboration,” *The Modern Utopian*, October 1967, 40.

²¹³ Fairfield, “Collaboration,” 40.

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*

decentralism and rural producerism became common amongst the third generation, reflecting important continuity in back-to-the-land ideology over the course of the twentieth century.

Continuity and Intergenerational Exchange:

The Modern Utopian/A Way Out in 1967 and 1968

In the pages of *TMU/AWO* in 1967 and 1968, hip readers were presented with a host of School of Living ideas and practices ranging from organic diets and anti-statist environmentalism to arguments for decentralism and Georgist economic theory. These were introduced alongside *TMU*'s more standard countercultural articles on LSD, popular music, and news reports from a smattering of early countercultural back-to-the-land communities. During the merger, Loomis often published one or more articles in each quarterly issue. She was a frequent translator of the second generation's antimodern ideas and Ralph Borsodi's works, which tended to be dense and obtuse. She often wrote about her own experiences at her Lane's End homestead and how the School of Living had changed her life. For instance, in the Winter 1968 *TMU/AWO*, she told counterculture readers that, like them, she had dropped out of society in the 1920s to become a "green revolutionary" – a term the School of Living fully adopted by the 1950s to contrast its movement with the "red" revolution in Russia and avoid anti-communist crusades in America. While surveying her current rural lifestyle, she stated that she and her husband John were "essentially outside the cash and tax cycle – the two 'institutions' of banking and government through which people are greatly exploited. We produce and consume our own healthful food. Our occupation is creative...our time is our own to use and enjoy as we wish."²¹⁶ Following this description of the joys of back-to-the-land self-reliance and other republican

²¹⁶ Mildred Loomis, "Homesteading," *The Modern Utopian*, Winter 1968, 24.

moralisms about urban degeneration, she explained Borsodi's teachings on man's nature and his need for freedom, arguing that he was not as dogmatic as he appeared.

Loomis's approach proved to be an effective way to reach younger readers because she cast herself, and her ideas, as a precursor to their own disillusionment with mainstream politics, Cold War culture, and urban life. She crafted this message into a compelling call for rural decentralism and communalism, the latter of which preoccupied many in the counterculture. In the chaotic context of the mid-1960s, she argued, the counterculture needed programs that satisfied their "need for close human association, in small groups" because they were tired of "big organizations – big corporations, big factories, big universities, big governments, big cities."²¹⁷ This was an effective framing since, as we have seen in the figures of Mumford and Marcuse, calls for rural decentralism and critiques of big organizations and big cities were a common refrain from left-leaning social critics in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the notion that small-is-beautiful was an emerging sentiment within the counterculture during this period and helps to explain the cult popularity of E.F. Schumacher's 1973 work *Small is Beautiful*.

Along with appealing to larger dissatisfaction with Cold War centralization and urban expansion, Loomis effectively framed the communal back-to-the-land movement as "tribal." According to Loomis' *TMU* articles, the only answer to modern alienation was the fostering of loving, extended families "with members approaching a 'tribe' along with the revival of small – often intentional – communities on the land, where we set our own cultural patterns, create our own trades, jobs and professions, our own cooperative and regional interchange."²¹⁸ The type of rural decentralism – and corresponding republican framing of urban and suburban life as

²¹⁷ Mildred Loomis, "Wanted: Decentralism," *The Modern Utopian*, Fall 1967, 39.

²¹⁸ Loomis, "Wanted: Decentralism," 39.

breeding dependency – that Loomis called for in this passage resonated with members of the counterculture. She was able to frame decentralism in countercultural terms: creating “tribal” communities of extended families, which appealed to the counterculture’s fascination with what they perceived to be more “primitive” cultures that could be used as antimodern models. Indeed, given that members of the second generation often asserted that “primitiveness” needed to be eliminated through positive and negative eugenics, Loomis’s reframing of the back-to-the-land communes as tribal marks a telling moment of intergenerational exchange.

During these years, countercultural writers in *TMU/AWO* discussed the development of rural intentional communities such as Morning Star Ranch, Cold Mountain Farm, and Twin Oaks in similar terms as Loomis, wedding rural decentralism with appropriation of Native culture.²¹⁹ Coverage of Cold Mountain Farm, a short-lived countercultural back-to-the-land community founded by New York anarchists in 1966, consistently discussed rural decentralism and tribalism. Joyce Gardener, a member of Cold Mountain, explained in 1968 that it was her dream to become “a tribe, a family” and live off of the land in harmony.²²⁰ In mid-1968 Gardener reported to *TMU/AWO* that Cold Mountain Farm collapsed and the following issue of *TMU/AWO* contained a post-mortem from Loomis who argued that the community’s liberal sexual patterns and communal anarchism were the cause of the collapse.²²¹ Though Loomis’ response hints at the gulf between the generations’ sexual sensibilities, the counterculture was beginning to see rural decentralism, via tribalism and other forms of Indian play, as a core part of

²¹⁹ See Joyce Gardener, “Cold Mountain Farm,” *The Modern Utopian*, July 1968, 3–8; For Morning Star Ranch see Chuck Herrick, “Designing for Community,” *The Modern Utopian*, August 1968, 11.

²²⁰ Gardener, “Cold Mountain Farm,” 5.

²²¹ Mildred Loomis, “Collapse of Cold Mountain Farm: Comments from Mildred Loomis,” *The Modern Utopian*, September 1968, 19.

the back-to-the-land endeavor. Indeed, framing the ideal as tribal, as we shall see in Chapter 5, would live into the 1980s and shape the New Age movement. Over the course of the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, back-to-the-land communities consistently described themselves as “tribes,” appropriating an imagined, and deeply colonial, understanding of Native societies in the attempt to revive supposed pre-contact lifestyles and decentralized social networks.

Another concrete example of intergenerational exchange in the mid-1960s was the Homer Morris Fund's redeployment, which helped intentional communities finance their utopian endeavors. The fund was originally created in 1952 by the Fellowship of Intentional Communities, a second-wave organization that was founded in 1937 by the School of Living and other groups such as the Bruderhofs – a Christian communal movement with roots in 1920s Europe but which had a large presence in mid-century America and even influenced some members of Twin Oaks and Morning Star Ranch.²²² In the mid-1950s, the fund was designed to provide small loans to communities that were just starting or that were opening communal businesses. By the late 1950s, Fellowship of Intentional Communities was a waning organization. In 1961 it was temporarily dissolved, though it was later revived by members of Twin Oaks in the mid-1980s and is now one of the main intentional community organizations. The Homer Morris fund, however, remained active in the 1960s and was widely advertised in *TMU/AWO*. In fact, Twin Oaks was an early recipient of the fund, which helped the community buy ten cows to start a dairy business in order to feed members and sell dairy products to the local community – a key piece of evidence demonstrating the role the preexisting communal movement directly shaped the countercultural back-to-the-land movement.²²³

²²² For the influence on Ramon Sender, Morning Star Ranch's first resident see Miller, *The 1960s Communes*, 12.

²²³ Kat Kinkade, “Homer Morris Fund,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, December 1968, 4.

One final area of ideological transmission can be found in *TMU/AWO*'s articles on environmentalism and fear of an imminent "population explosion" in developing countries, which interested both the second generation and countercultural readers of *TMU/AWO*. In the pages of the early issues of *TMU/AWO*, the second generation attempted to communicate its own anti-statist, libertarian environmentalism to the counterculture. School of Living writers implored younger readers to eat organic food and to start composting. They warned of the evils of nuclear testing, smog, agricultural pesticides, overpopulation, vaccination, and water fluoridation – in essence, a variety of mid-twentieth-century developments that members of the School of Living had been decrying since the 1930s and 1940s. For instance, in the May edition of the 1967 *TMU/AWO*, Loomis described many of the social and environmental problems that had driven the School of Living's antimodern, antiurban ideology. She stated that "we're tired of government health programs – of compulsory shots, drugs and injections.... We seek healthful work, proper rest, creative recreation; clean, pure water; whole nutritious food. We want a rational eugenics, creative sex, a birth-rate in balance with the productive resources of our area."²²⁴ As mentioned earlier, many of these issues appealed to a younger generation that had come of age in the 1950s and 1960s under the shadow of nuclear war and the rapid ecological devastation of suburbanization and industrial agricultural development.

Environmental issues such as smog, overpopulation, and ecological destruction appeared in *TMU/AWO* articles discussing sexual freedom, new forms of birth control, and ecological destruction in Vietnam. Though it is unclear to what extent anti-vaccination and anti-fluoridation appealed to members of the counterculture in the 1960s, there was one environmental issue that

²²⁴ Loomis, "Wanted: Decentralism," 40.

both groups were focused on: birth control and overpopulation in the “third world.”²²⁵

Significantly, the focus on overpopulation in *TMU/AWO* pre-dated Paul Ehrlich’s bestselling 1968 work *The Population Bomb*, demonstrating how the second generation’s conservative environmentalism influenced members of the counterculture in the pages of *TMU/AWO*.

The focus on overpopulation represents continuity between the second and third generation’s environmentalism and similarities between the generations’ racial views. The School of Living was a vocal proponent of positive eugenics – in Loomis’s rhetorical framing “rational” as opposed to the irrational practices of old eugenics and Third Reich – in the 1950s and 1960s, and, though the organization claimed to oppose centralized eugenic programs, Borsodi was involved with the American Eugenics Society and Planned Parenthood in crafting policy for India’s government in the mid-1960s. Members of the counterculture, along with Ehrlich’s followers, supported these eugenic policies, notably government-mandated birth control in India and South America to curb population growth. Indeed, in 1968 Fairfield published a piece on the population explosion by an anonymous author writing under the somewhat-ironic pseudonym Mark Twain, which stated that “the world’s population is doubling once every forty-one years...South America will soon have twice as many people as we have. Such differential growth will affect political relationships with our southern neighbors. We, or starvation and disease, will bring about a stable population.”²²⁶ Implicit in these writings was anxiety that non-

²²⁵ Further research is needed on the ties between the School of Living’s anti-vaccination stance and the contemporary anti-vaccination movement. The issue was rarely discussed in primary sources at Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm, but it is conceivable that anti-vaccination was a component of the third generation’s back-to-the-land idealism, where it would have lingered up to the present and infected contemporary discourse. It certainly informed my aunt and uncle who homesteaded in rural West Virginia in the 1970s. They were wary of vaccination and fluoridation.

²²⁶ Mark Twain, “Over Population,” *The Modern Utopian*, July 1968, 15.

white countries – many of which were actively decolonizing in the 1960s – would supersede the United States, upsetting the world's racial and political balance. Indeed, these types of anxieties clearly demonstrate how America's role as an imperial power in the post-World War Two period – with all of the privilege that entailed – shaped the perspectives of young, white, middle-class hippies. Both the second generation and members of the counterculture, then, shared a similar racial and environmental worldview by the late 1960s. At the same time, however, such overlap should not be overstated.

The Limitations of Intergenerational Exchange: Race and Eugenics in *TMU/AWO*

It is important to recognize that not all second-generation ideas interested the counterculture, particularly when it came to the School of Living's vocal call for formal eugenics programs. Indeed, while the School of Living tried to use *TMU/AWO* as a way of persuading the counterculture to adopt formal eugenics – meaning positive eugenic practices alongside concrete programs for selective breeding in intentional communities – their efforts did not lead to any countercultural communities pursuing the practice. Part of this failure is due to the fundamentally different historical context in which members of the counterculture came of age. As children of by-and-large liberal families in the 1950s, who became involved with a variety of Civil Rights, Free Speech, and anti-war activities in the 1960s, formal eugenics, with its attendant assumptions about racial superiority, ran counter to their liberal, cosmopolitan, multicultural worldview. Moreover, by the late 1960s, many supported radical Black Freedom movements such as the Black Panthers and other movements for self-determinations such as the American Indian Movement, which were of little interest to the School of Living. Finally, as William Rorabaugh has pointed out, a disproportionate number (22%) of hippies and communards were Jewish, and

many had grown up as red-diaper babies – children of United States Communist Party members.²²⁷ As such, formal eugenics – with its attendant associations with the Third Reich – was not a part of third wave back-to-the-land experiments.

Despite the rejection of formal eugenic practices by the counterculture, the articles on eugenics in *TMU/AWO* do shed light on an important point of contact between the generations in the late 1960s. Indeed, they provide a valuable window into the complicated borrowings occurring as the counterculture was engaged with the School of Living. Though the third generation rejected formal eugenic practices – meaning selective breeding, artificial fertilization, and, by the 1960s, largely-voluntary sterilization and euthanasia – it was difficult to disentangle the second generation’s racist ideas from the School of Living’s environmentalism, its calls for decentralism, and its larger framing of the back-to-the-land movement as a positive eugenic endeavor, which were avidly adopted. Furthermore, in the process of advocating eugenic practices, second-generation writers introduced the counterculture to the influential ideas of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Indeed, Teilhard’s philosophical works on human consciousness influenced many in the counterculture like Stewart Brand, who championed digital utopianism and early personal computing – developments linked to Teilhard’s work on human consciousness. As such, a brief exploration of eugenics articles in *TMU/AWO* is important to tease out this complicated exchange of ideas.

As we have seen in Chapter 1, the School of Living’s advocacy of “rational eugenics” in the 1940s and 1950s was tied in with its larger critiques of modern society and the American Eugenic Societies’ successful post-World War Two rebranding campaign. The second wave’s

²²⁷ William Rorabaugh, *Berkeley at War*, 24; Aidala and Zablocki, "The Communes of the 1970s," 98–99.

experiences during the New Deal, World War Two, and the Cold War had led it to reject almost all forms of government intervention in their lives. This included state-sanctioned negative eugenics programs, which it argued should be left to a decentralized network of organizations like the School of Living. The School of Living claimed that this form of “rational” eugenics could defeat the forces of degeneracy in society arising from New Deal welfare reforms and post-World War Two consumer culture, both of which it assumed, based on members’ racist worldviews, were hampering human progress. From the School of Living’ perspective, an ideal back-to-the-land society rooted in positive eugenics – though, as we have seen in the case of Borsodi’s 1968 *Seventeen Problems of Man and Society*, also drawing on negative eugenic practices – would provide homesteaders and communards the proper social and environmental setting to pursue art, culture, and self-actualization.

By the mid-to-late 1960s the School of Living’s ideal social model remained – with the exception of Borsodi’s return to compulsory sterilization – largely the same as Loomis took the lead in reaching out to the counterculture through *TMU/AWO*. There was, however, a new addition to their philosophical justification for eugenics. By the 1960s, Loomis and others at School of Living believed that, by going back to the land, human evolution could be guided towards a collective consciousness that would connect the entire world, ending all war and ushering in a new age of harmony and peace. Indeed, it is clear that a portion of the School of Living membership had become supporters of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, whose French-language work *The Phenomenon of Man* was translated into English in 1959. These members adapted Teilhard’s ideas and believed that a decentralized back-to-the-land society, with interconnected communities, could create such a consciousness and ultimately lead humanity to a union with the divine – the “Omega point.”

Teilhard, it should be noted, was born in 1881 and became a highly influential Catholic intellectual in the mid-twentieth century who, like Ralph Borsodi and members of the School of Living, was a fierce proponent of eugenics. As in America, Britain, and Germany, there was a thriving French eugenics movement in the late nineteenth century as a response to perceived social and racial degeneration.²²⁸ Unlike other countries, however, the French movement gravitated to the hereditary theories of Jean-Baptiste Lamarck – who held that organisms could pass traits that parents acquired through interacting with the physical world to their children. This more environmentally oriented theory, along with opposition to eugenics from most Catholic clergy, also set the French movement apart. The country’s main negative eugenic program was requiring newly married couples to undergo physical examination rather than the more draconian sterilization measures in America.²²⁹ Teilhard’s ideas about physical and spiritual evolution were a product of this context. At the turn of the century, Teilhard argued that the trajectory of human physical development and Christian spiritual progress led to the Omega point; in other words, he infused Lamarckism with Christian ideas about transformation and perfectibility.²³⁰

According to Teilhard’s writings, humanity currently existed in what he termed the *Noosphere*, a stage of development defined by rationality and the slow creation of a collective consciousness, or “noogenesis,” that would lead to a final stage which he called the *Pneumatosphere*, a point of biological and spiritual development when humans become god-like.

²²⁸ William Schneider, “Toward the Improvement of the Human Race: The History of Eugenics in France,” *The Journal of Modern History* 54, no. 2 (1982): 269–70.

²²⁹ Schneider, “Towards the Improvement of the Human Race,” 286-287

²³⁰ John Slattery, “Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s Legacy of Eugenics and Racism Can’t Be Ignored,” *Religion Dispatches*, May 21, 2018, <https://religiondispatches.org/pierre-teilhard-de-chardins-legacy-of-eugenics-and-racism-cant-be-ignored/>.

Like Ralph Borsodi and Scott Nearing, Teilhard also believed in the inequality of races and concluded that human perfectibility necessitated eugenics programs and that union with the divine would not occur otherwise. In 1950 Teilhard even went so far as to write to the director of UNESCO after it published “The Equality of the Races” to critique it on eugenic grounds.²³¹ It is important to note, however, that, much like the wider transatlantic eugenic movement after World War Two, Teilhard retreated from the hereditarian determinism that had characterized the movement at the turn of the century. Along similar lines, Teilhard’s actual ideas need to be separated from what his American followers in the School of Living selectively borrowed. By the 1950s, Teilhard had rejected Lamarckism, and he discussed the importance of mutations and randomness in biological evolution in *The Phenomenon of Man*.²³² Nevertheless, Teilhard’s philosophical ideas – and the School of Living’s interpretations of them – cannot be extricated from his racial worldview.

By the mid-1960s, Teilhard’s followers in the School of Living sought to popularize their interpretation of *The Phenomenon of Man* with counterculturalists in *TMU/AWO* and demonstrate how guided evolution was central to the back-to-the-land endeavor. As such, much of the School of Living’s outreach to the counterculture needs to be understood as seeking to bring about noogenesis in order to reach a *Pneumatosphere* that fit within their own utopian vision for a more harmonious society. In essence, members of the School of Living like Loomis believed that the story of human evolution was one of increasing complexity and interconnectedness leading to a collective consciousness, but that exploitative economics, urban

²³¹ John P. Slattery, “Dangerous Tendencies of Cosmic Theology: The Untold Legacy of Teilhard de Chardin,” *Philosophy, Theology* 29, no. 1 (2017): 77.

²³² Ian Barbour, “Five Ways of Reading Teilhard,” *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 51, no. 2 (1968): 116–17.

decadence, racial degeneration, environmental pollution, and bureaucratic government were hampering noogenesis. For some School of Living members, the counterculture's focus on community creation, and even some of their hopes for LSD, were promising in this regard, and they hoped that they would adopt formal eugenics as a radical solution to pushing human evolution.²³³ This interpretation of Teilhard skewed the thinker's original work – it is notable that members of the School of Living were openly opposed to organized religion – but, as we shall see with the counterculture's adoption of Teilhard, his ideas about evolution, consciousness, and progressive change appealed to a wider audience grasping for ways of averting the supposed decline of human progress during the Cold War.

In response to the counterculture's emerging interests, members of the School of Living created intentional communities founded on eugenics to appeal to the younger generation in the mid-1960s. One such member was Calvin Kline, a prominent eugenics advocate in the early 1960s whose work was even cited by leading eugenicist Hermann Muller.²³⁴ In the early 1960s, Kline also led workshops for the School of Living on eugenics and specifically on the promise of euteleogenesis – artificial fertilization with semen from a “desirable” donor to produce superior

²³³ For more on the connections between LSD, the counterculture, and early networked computing see. Fred Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture: Stewart Brand, the Whole Earth Network, and the Rise of Digital Utopianism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008). Other scholars of the 1960s counterculture and the early computing movement have also noted the racial and gendered blinders that many influential counterculturalists had during this period. Indeed, Margaret O'Mara has explored the ways in which faith in technology, and the idea of “access to tools,” blinded the movers and shakers of Silicon Valley's tech boom to real racial and gendered disparities within their profession. See Margaret O'Mara, *The Code: Silicon Valley and the Remaking of American* (New York: Penguin Books, 2019), 120. A similar narrative also appears into John Markoff's exploration of the counterculture and the early personal computing movement. See especially his description of techies founding Free Universities. John Markoff, *What the Dormouse Said: How the 60s Counterculture shaped the Personal Computer Industry* (New York: Penguin Books, 2005), 1938.

²³⁴ H. J. Muller, “Human Evolution by Voluntary Choice of Germ Plasm,” *Science* 134, no. 3480 (1961): 648.

offspring. In 1963, along with seven other School of Living families, Kline founded an intentional community in rural New York called the Society of Families.²³⁵ The community was still functioning in 1967 and advertised in Fairfield's publication in the hopes of attracting members of the counterculture. Indeed, in the May 1967 *TMU*, Calvin Kline described his rural experiment as "a community solution to the problems of land, eugenics, and population explosion."²³⁶ He went on to explain that the Society of Families was a community of married couples who agreed to reproduce via artificial fertilization, or "preadoption" with gametes "chosen with maximum sagacity."²³⁷ However, because the School of Living was decentralist and libertarian, he assured readers that there would be no central authority dictating genetic ideals, though couples would be encouraged to "ask for expert advice and form groups with common eugenic ideals."²³⁸ There would of course be common ideals, and the types of language employed by Kline and Loomis shed light on the racial ideology that shaped the second generation and how its ideas had changed over the course of the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, on an even broader level, this antimodern adoption of positive eugenics demonstrates a reoccurring trend within antimodern dissent traditions, namely that they often serve the racial and class interests of their participants rather than offering truly radical alternatives to modern culture.

²³⁵ The use of artificial fertilization was particularly intriguing to a segment of eugenicists – in particular Julian Huxley (close personal friend of Teilhard), Hermann Muller, and Herbert Brewer (who wrote a utopian book *Out of the Night* which he even sent to Stalin) – who believed that a voluntary program of euteleogenesis could slowly create a super race. Indeed, there is archival evidence, at Rice University, that Klein reached out to Huxley in the early 1970s. Due to COVID I have been unable to obtain this correspondence. Interestingly, many of these euteleogenesis advocates were left-leaning and Brewer had hoped that Stalin would adopt the idea for the Soviet eugenics program. Apparently, Stalin's puritanism was a major obstacle. For more see Kevles, *In the Name of Eugenics*, 186-192.

²³⁶ Calvin Kline, "The Society of Families - A Community Solution to the Problems of Land, Eugenics, and Population Explosion.," *The Modern Utopian*, June 1967, 4.

²³⁷ Kline, "The Society of Families," 5.

²³⁸ Ibid.

By the 1960s, Kline, Loomis, and others at School of Living believed that Cold War American life – with its over-centralization, urban and suburban moral decay, and nuclear arms race– was hampering the creation of noogenesis. They even argued that Cold War society was hindering natural selection and used racially coded language to describe modern degeneration. In his 1967 *TMU* article, Kline stated that “the side effects of civilization have been such as to arrest even the good effects of natural selection in great measure.”²³⁹ Mirroring antimodern statements by Loomis, Kline argued that the “welfare state” and modern medicine respectively tended to “encourage the reproduction of socially inadequate people,” and save “the lives of those who would previously have died of constitutional weakness,” many of whom now crowded poor neighborhoods in cities across America.²⁴⁰ The ways in which civilization inhibited natural selection even extended into married families, and he argued that monogamy had abolished real “sexual selection.”²⁴¹

The effects of such developments led Kline and Loomis to a common racist rhetoric in the eugenics movement. Mimicking first generation back-to-the-landers like Bolton Hall who had decried the degenerative potential of unchecked immigration, Loomis and Klein argued that society was seeing an “adverse birth rate differential between educated and lower classes.”²⁴² Such statements place the School of Living’s back-to-the-land ethic as a product of the Progressive era while at the same time demonstrating the profound social and racial positioning of its members even into the 1960s. The School of Living’s back-to-the-land utopia, then, was not open to those creating the “adverse birth rate differential,” which in the post-1950s context

²³⁹ *Ibid.*, 6.

²⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁴¹ *Ibid.*

²⁴² *Ibid.*

implied African Americans and other people of color. Their ultimate utopian vision was for whites only.

That this was published in the *TMU* before it even merged with School of Living is remarkable and demonstrates that, to an extent, the School of Living was effective at tailoring its antimodern message to a younger generation concerned with nuclear war, environmental ruin, overpopulation, and free love – it also helped that they did not discuss negative eugenics. Loomis’ and Kline’s argument for decentralism and environmental health in the 1967 *TMU* made the connections between these modern developments clear. Kline asserted that such social issues, coupled with an “increased mutation rate due to man-made ionizing radiation and chemical mutagens,” gave “added urgency to the need for genetic hygiene.” In concluding his article, Kline related all of this to Teilhard and said that “the spontaneous religious fervor that genetic idealism evokes in us is by far the more compelling motive.”²⁴³ The argument for “rational” eugenics was racially coded while at the same time touching on issues that third wave back-to-the-landers cared about, namely pollution, the “population bomb,” and the furthering of human evolution through expanded consciousness.

Though the second generation was masterful in weaving together positive eugenics, environmentalism, and human evolution, formal eugenic practices were not adopted by the counterculture, whose members, as we have seen, were not predisposed to the second generation’s racial worldview. By the late 1960s, Kline, who had changed his name to Calvin of

²⁴³ It is notable that “religious” served a few purposes for Kline. The Societies of Families was not a religious organization in the sense that it was connected with a faith tradition like Christianity, rather it applied to a general secular humanism and the goal of perfectibility. Indeed, in the early 1960s the group had applied for religious tax-exempt status but was denied. For Kline, religious appears to have been both rhetorical (they were still trying to become tax exempt) and spiritual (they were focused on physical and spiritual perfectibility on the land.) Ibid.

Oaknoll, was unable to convince more than a handful of people to join him on a 335-acre parcel of land in rural Chautauqua County, New York. Over the course of the 1970s, the group appears to have consisted of Calvin, his wife Mary, and another family. By the end of the 1970s, only Mary remained, and the couple did not have children. There was also considerable local animosity towards the group. In 1981 Calvin of Oaknoll was convicted of second-degree murder after shooting a neighbor who was hunting on his land. As a result of legal issues stemming from unpaid taxes, the Society of Families lost the title to their land, and Oaknoll died in prison at the age of 71 in 1999.

Despite little interest in formal eugenics on the part of third-generation communities, it is important to note that Kline's and Loomis's writing on eugenics did not generate controversy within the *TMU/AWO* readership – the countercultural portion of which, as noted earlier, was less than one percent non-white. In 1966 and 1967 *Fairfield* included the usual disclaimer at the beginning of the magazine that articles and views expressed inside were not necessarily shared by the editor, and he did not publish letters in response to Kline's article or Loomis's statements on "rational" eugenics in later issues. Indeed, the School of Living's advocacy of positive eugenics was well known and did not preclude the partnership with *TMU* or prohibit *Fairfield* from going to work for the School of Living in the mid-1970s. It seems, then, that *Fairfield* was able to overlook the second generation's racism in favor of their other antimodern ideas. Such picking and choosing was a common practice within the counterculture, and many counterculturalists adopted Teilhard's core ideas about progressive human evolution without ever knowing his ties to eugenics. Indeed, his work has been lauded for laying the groundwork for the early cyberculture and the notion of the "Omega Point" continues to influence the study of artificial intelligence. His ideas also shaped the path of some early utopians, such as Stewart

Brand, in the 1970s because his optimistic belief that human society and technology were progressing towards a better future was deeply appealing to countercultural utopians. Teilhard's writings even underlie the digital utopianism that has had a substantial influence on the modern world through personal computing, the development of the internet, and even the utopian belief that social media would lead to harmony and understanding.²⁴⁴

One reason why Kline's and Loomis' positive eugenics writing stirred little controversy in *TMU/AWO* can be traced to the similarities between the second generation's utopian eugenic ideals and the counterculture's interest in guiding human development via experimental means like LSD. This is particularly true in the case of the Walden Two movement, which by the time of Kline's advertisement in 1967 included the newly founded Twin Oaks community in rural Virginia. The founders of Twin Oaks were followers of B.F. Skinner, whose 1948 utopian work *Walden Two* introduced members of the counterculture to behaviorism, a philosophy which posited that free will was an illusion and that humans were the products of their physical and social environments. Behaviorism, like eugenics, had its roots in debates at the turn of the twentieth century concerning perfectibility and scientific management of human progress.²⁴⁵ Indeed, it is no coincidence that Skinner's ideal society drew directly on the technological

²⁴⁴ For more on this digital utopianism see Fred Turner's work on Stewart Brand, LSD, and digital utopianism as well as his work on media before the counterculture. Indeed, Turner's *Democratic Surround* offers useful insights into how a shift in how Americans thought of media occurred in the late 1950s to a new ideology in which an individual, more psychological, politics of consciousness emerged. Turner argues this went on to inform the counterculture's approach to technology. See Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 175-176; Fred Turner, *The Democratic Surround: Multimedia & American Liberalism from World War II to the Psychedelic Sixties* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2013), 260.

²⁴⁵ For more on this debate and how Watson viewed contemporary eugenics see his major work on behaviorism, which was originally published in 1924. John Watson, *Behaviorism*, Reprint Edition (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2009), 82.

utopianism – in particular trust in central planning – of figures such as Edward Bellamy, whose late 1800s writings we explored in Chapter 1.

John Watson developed behaviorism in the 1910s as a response to the genetic determinism of prominent turn-of-the-century eugenicists. Whereas turn-of-the-century negative eugenics programs called for sterilization and selective breeding, Watson's and Skinner's philosophy, drawing on the work of Ivan Pavlov, called for rigid control of social and physical environments to channel human development – a position basically identical to the positive eugenic policies put forward by Scott Nearing and the School of Living. Behaviorism and eugenics shared similar goals for human perfectibility and shared dedication to scientific methods to bring about such transformation.

Over the course of the twentieth century, behaviorism grew within the study of psychology and was popularized by Skinner, a student of Watson's, whose utopian writing envisioned the possibilities of behavioral engineering in back-to-the-land communities. Skinner's academic research focused on using operant conditioning – behavioral modification through reinforcement or punishment – to shape animals and children's behavior. He famously created the “Skinner Box,” a box containing an electrified floor that shocked animals undergoing operant conditioning, as well as the “air crib,” a temperature-controlled enclosure meant to regulate infant stimuli. His ideas also led to the “time out” technique of child discipline in which children are removed from environmental stimuli to promote correct behavior. Skinner's *Walden Two* expanded on such ideas drew on Bellamy's *Looking Backwards*. His imagined back-to-the-land community was run by an elite contingent of behaviorists who regulated the community's environment and its occupants' behavior to create a more harmonious and productive society. This model particularly intrigued members of Walden House, Richard Fairfield, and the larger

TMU/AWO readership in the mid-to-late 1960s who were searching for alternatives to Cold War society. Indeed, the rise of the Walden Two movement before the full emergence of the counterculture adds support to the conclusion that preexisting communal groups were instrumental in shaping and guiding the communal back-to-the-land movement of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Aside from basic differences concerning racial attitudes, there was little substantive difference between the second generation's call for positive eugenics and the behavioral engineering methods of communities like Twin Oaks. As we have seen in Borsodi and Nearing's writings, the second generation believed that rural environments were just as important as genes for shaping Americans into more productive, homogenous citizens. Indeed, in following behaviorism members of Twin Oaks reproduced many of the same eugenic methods that the second generation had been advocating since the 1930s. Twin Oaks was run by an unelected board of planners who had considerable authority over members' day-to-day lives, ranging from regulating language to deciding what jobs needed to be done and how many hours needed to be worked. Like the School of Living, they were particularly focused on raising children. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, they used air cribs. They also established an elaborate childcare system based on behaviorism, which relied on non-parent specialists to ensure that children were neither violent nor competitive. Finally, in the early-to-mid 1970s, the board of planners also regulated women's bodies and reproductive decisions. In the early 1970s, a woman who became unexpectedly pregnant at Twin Oaks was asked to leave and promptly moved to Alpha Farm.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁶ This bit of trivia comes from Caroline Estes, who stated that the baby was the first at Twin Oaks. This was not true, however, as the founders of Twin Oaks brought a 7 year old and a 13 month old to the rural farm in 1967 and 1968. Caroline Estes, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Caroline Estes Interview," July 18, 1995, 33.

Thus, while the generations had different visions for their ideal back-to-the-land societies, they shared basic eugenic assumptions about how to achieve their ideal society. As such, it is little wonder that Kline's call for a Society of Families generated little controversy within *TMU/AWO*.

An Uneasy Merger:

The Modern Utopian/A Way Out, Morning Star Ranch, and People's Park

As we have seen, the second generation's financial help and intellectual guidance was an important component in shaping the early counterculture and the communal back-to-the-land movement. Indeed, the *TMU/AWO* merger and Heathcote's seminars were crucial in introducing the counterculture to the back-to-the-land tradition. At the same time, however, the merger was uneasy. By the late 1960s, the counterculture had established a series of rural intentional communities like Tolstoy Farm, Cold Mountain Farm, and Morning Star Ranch, which were more anarchistic than the School of Living's land-trust model for intentional communities. Likewise, the School of Living's second-generation leaders were wary of the counterculture, whose lifestyles and iconoclasm unsettled their rigid ideological positions. Such tensions played out in the pages of *TMU/AWO* in 1967 and 1968. These tensions revealed the complex nature of intergenerational interactions in the late 1960s as members of the counterculture became increasingly interested in the back-to-the-land endeavor as a way of continuing their countercultural search for freedom and meaning.

Based on *TMU/AWO*'s "Letters to the Editor" section during this period, it appears that, while most of the readership viewed the collaboration positively, some second-generation readers were alarmed by their new alliance. Indeed, older readers from *A Way Out* and *Green Revolution*, who represented a fifth of *TMU/AWO*'s readership, complained vehemently about

issues of the newspaper that contained naked photos and information about psychedelics, which raised the eyebrows of local postmasters.²⁴⁷ For instance, Lloyd and Selma VonHaden from Vista, California wrote to Fairfield in 1968 to remove them from the subscription list because “this hippie publication does not represent the School of Living philosophy and practice, nor ours.”²⁴⁸

Hippie readers also had their own opinions of the second generation. Earl Conroy from New Zealand argued in a letter to Fairfield that “TMU is alive, pulsating....*A Way Out* pages were cold, impersonal diatribe on theoretical reforms.”²⁴⁹ Conroy even took issue with some of the School of Living writing in *TMU/AWO*, especially Herb Roseman’s argument in a 1967 issue that the younger generation needed to embrace formal libertarianism, abandon its “do your own thing” ethos and stop “the dangerous emphasis on drugs, including LSD.”²⁵⁰ From Conroy’s perspective, “Contrary to the articulate Mr. Roseman, I feel that simply doing your thing is the answer to the gigantic problems confronting the technological authoritarian world.”²⁵¹ For Conroy, Roseman had misunderstood the liberating potential of LSD and the counterculture, and he chafed at Roseman’s condescending tone. In light of such clashes, it is apparent that the

²⁴⁷ It is difficult to gain an accurate picture of the actual numbers of readers for *TMU*, *AWO* or *GR*. Countercultural newspapers are notoriously hard to analyze, but it is possible to approximate. Rose, in her study of Loomis, notes that in 1970 *GR* had 1,800 subscribers which dropped to 800 in 1972 before Fairfield took over editorship. It is conceivable that the 800 represented the remnants of the second-generation, meaning that the combined readership of *TMU/AWO* was no more than 5,000. Considering that some communities signed up for a single copy for everyone to read, however, the actual readership was probably much larger. See Rose, “Homesteading as Social Protest,” 279.

²⁴⁸ Richard Fairfield, “Letters of Response,” *The Modern Utopian*, December 1968, 27.

²⁴⁹ Fairfield, “Letters of Response,” 27.

²⁵⁰ Herb Roseman, “A Collaboration,” *The Modern Utopian*, November 1967, 41.

²⁵¹ Fairfield, “Letters of Response,” 27.

counterculture was engaging with the second generation while carving its own back-to-the-land vision.

Earl Conroy's critique of Roseman reveals important distinctions between the generations concerning libertarianism and anarchism and how those ideals were translated into practice in early countercultural back-to-the-land communities like Lou Gottlieb's Morning Star Ranch outside of San Francisco. Indeed, Morning Star Ranch (aka the Digger's Farm) serves as a useful example of how members of the counterculture, though influenced by earlier communal movements, embraced radical anarchism over the School of Living's formal libertarianism in the late 1960s.²⁵² Gottlieb's community, it should be noted, was what Fairfield used as evidence that Loomis and the School of Living were too conservative. It was also a key third-generation community that many back-to-the-landers in the 1970s pointed to as the first countercultural back-to-the-land community. Indeed, Twin Oaks named one of its residence buildings Morning Star which sat alongside other buildings with names like Oneida.

Unlike the School of Living's homestead communities in the 1930s and 1940s, Lou Gottlieb's Morning Star Ranch north of San Francisco was open access, or as he phrased it "Land Access To Which is Denied No One."²⁵³ Gottlieb refused to place restrictions on people living on his land. In fact, after trouble with the local county over public health resulting in heavy fines, Gottlieb deeded the land to God to keep the land free – a tactic that generated press but did not sway the courts.²⁵⁴ Though the community eventually imploded, and its dwellings were bulldozed in the early 1970s, the community offered lessons to the budding communal movement and the readers of *TMU/AWO*. In particular, its existence and failure had implications

²⁵² Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 192.

²⁵³ *Ibid.*, 189; Miller, *The 60s Communes*, 51.

²⁵⁴ Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 192.

for radical social change, anarchism, and the limits of individual freedom. Furthermore, the community represented an early example of counterculturalists going back to the land, and many in the Berkeley scene, including many Diggers, traveled to Morning Star Ranch to see for themselves.

Coverage of Morning Star Ranch in *TMU/AWO* shows how going back to the land was becoming popular within the counterculture in and around Berkeley in the late 1960s as well as the role of the School of Living in the reemergence of the third generation. Indeed, there was a direct connection between School of Living, *TMU/AWO*, Morning Star Ranch, and urban protests in Berkeley – in particular the People’s Park incident – which have been so far overlooked. Gottlieb’s open-access experiment drew Chuck Herrick’s attention, a young activist in the Peace Movement during the mid-1960s who led the Ecology Caucus at Berkeley and was a frequent contributor to *TMU/AWO* and editor alongside Mildred Loomis in 1967 and 1968. It is clear from Herrick’s articles in *TMU/AWO* that he reveled in aspects of Gottlieb’s anarchism, but that he was also an advocate of the back-to-the-land movement as it was framed by the School of Living, demonstrating the crucial influence of the second generation on leading counterculturalists by the late 1960s.

An example of this influence can be seen in 1968 when Herrick published a report in *TMU/AWO* on Morning Star Ranch that concerned building environments and architecture for new communities that would foster radical social and environmental change.²⁵⁵ In that piece, which appeared alongside Loomis’s article on homesteading and Borsodi’s writings on the

²⁵⁵ Herrick’s rethinking of the built environment was also part of a larger movement in architecture in the 1960s. For a discussion of how counterculturalists were viewing architecture as socially and psychedelically transformative see Jonathan Harris and Christoph Grunenberg, eds., *The Summer of Love: Psychedelic Art, Social Crisis and Counterculture in the 1960s* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006).

nature of man, it is clear that his interactions with the School of Living had shaped his vision for a new back-to-the-land movement. In the article, he argued that:

the present social reorganization in the U.S. and Europe has the express intent of creating a visible alternative to the established economic and social order. Rather than a revolution in the bloody sense, it is the creation of self-sufficient communities that function within a capitalism rather than coercive industrial socialism. Their anarchy is of individualism within cooperation rather than the classical violent disenfranchisement.²⁵⁶

The visible back-to-the-land alternatives that Herrick referenced were meant to be beacons to the rest of society, leading not to socialism but an American style of radical back-to-the-land social transformation through rural mutual aid that the School of Living had been advocating since the 1930s. Indeed, it is noteworthy that Herrick pulled from the School of Living's ideas rather than Scott Nearing's, who still advocated Old Left politics in the 1960s. Herrick came to these conclusions because of his study of communes like Morning Star Ranch and his direct exposure to the School of Living while working with Loomis. Thus, even though the third generation was creating new, and somewhat more radical, communities, it was also shaped by the second generation.

It is important to recognize that, while *TMU/AWO* contributors like Herrick began adopting School of Living ideas in 1967 and 1968, the broader counterculture had not yet soured on urban protests against the war in Vietnam, the Draft, and racial inequality. For instance, in October 1967, during the March on the Pentagon in Washington D.C., prominent Yippies Abbie Hofman and Jerry Rubin famously led a countercultural political protest that tried to levitate the military headquarters as a satirical prank.²⁵⁷ The Yippie movement, it should be noted, was also known as the Youth International Party, a radical political and countercultural organization allied

²⁵⁶ Herrick, "Designing for Community," 11.

²⁵⁷ Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 150.

with the Diggers, which *TMU/AWO* covered. Indeed, on the West Coast, counterculturalists like Herrick, members of Morning Star Ranch, local Diggers, and the *TMU/AWO* readership remained hopeful that ecological and property-ownership reforms could reshape preexisting urban space in Berkeley. As they moved forward with plans to change local urban spaces, however, conflict soon emerged, leading to violence and further disaffection with urban life.

Herrick was at the forefront of the counterculture's political movement in Berkeley and saw the back-to-the-land movement as compatible with other attempts to radically reshape urban areas – a sentiment that, as we have seen, was shared by first-generation reformers like Hall, who championed the Vacant Lot movement more than half a century before Herrick. In late 1967 and early 1968, Herrick – working with other prominent leaders of the Peace and Freedom movement and the Ecology caucus– drew up plans for creating a community garden on an unused plot of land on Berkley's Telegraph Avenue in order to popularize their open land ideas. Herrick, however, did not live to see to his plans carried out. On May 2nd, 1968, he was killed in a car accident. Three days later, his friends in Berkeley began their occupation and initially named the land the “Herrick Peace and Freedom Park,” though it was simply called “people's park” by the *Berkeley Barb*.

Less than a year later, Herrick's park had been dismantled by the city, but it became the basis for a much larger park a couple of blocks away. In early 1969 Michael Delacour, a prominent New Left anti-war activist (and friend of Herrick's who helped build the first park), along with the leader of the local Yippie movement Stew Alpert, planned to occupy an unused, university-owned 2.8-acre plot of land on Telegraph Avenue as a way of continuing Herrick's work. In April 1969, these activists, along with 100 community members, began their occupation.

Over the course of April and May, the park became a site for Diggers, Yippies, and other radicals to experiment and “do their own thing” with varying levels of success. The park was, however, short-lived, at least in its purely anarchic form. On May 15th, 1969, the University erected a chain-link fence, infuriating local organizers. By noon that day, a crowd of between two and six thousand marched from campus towards the park.²⁵⁸ When they could not reach the park, the protest began to turn destructive on Telegraph Avenue as protesters began breaking windows. Local police opened fire, and at least one protester was killed. The incident finally died down when the governor, Ronald Reagan, called in the National Guard. The Guard remained for seventeen days, but the use of them, according to Rorabaugh, “had a radicalizing effect on both students and hippies within Berkeley.”²⁵⁹ It took three more years before the fence was finally taken down, but by that time, the damage was done; for many hippies in Berkeley during the late 1960s and early 1970s, urban protests had proved to be ineffectual and contributed to the sense that urban space was prone to violence – a sentiment that only increased as police and the FBI repressed the Black Power movement.

The confrontation at People’s Park was one of several late-1960s events that drove a significant portion of the counterculture, like the generations before it, to seek refuge in rural-self-reliance and republican moralisms about urban dependency and degeneration, thus marking the formal emergence of the third generation. As we have seen, members of the School of Living along with contributors to *TMU/AWO* like Herrick, played a significant role in this development, at least in one of the hearts of the counterculture. Thus, while it is accurate to frame the third wave as fully emerging by the early 1970s, the process of emergence began much earlier, in the

²⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 161.

²⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 163.

mid-1960s, when prominent counterculturalists like Fairfield interacted with Loomis. Indeed, based on Herrick's plans for vacant lots across Berkeley, it is clear that the People's Park protests were grounded in interactions between the second generation and the counterculture following Fairfield's merger with School of Living.

The People's Park riot, however, was a local matter, and it took a series of other disillusioning events – many in urban areas or on college campuses – to propel the third wave. These events included the 1968 suppression of the Democratic National Convention protests in Chicago and the ensuing trial of the Chicago Seven – which included Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin along with Stew Alpert as an unindicted co-conspirator – as well as the election of Richard Nixon and the 1968 assassination of Martin Luther King and resulting urban uprisings.

For many young liberal Americans in the late 1960s it seemed as though – despite all of their efforts – America was headed for total collapse, making a retreat to the countryside appealing.²⁶⁰ This apocalyptic sensibility marked a profound shift on the Left away from social and political activism towards individual transformation. Though protests against the Vietnam war and the draft increased over the following years, so too did young liberal disaffection with mainstream politics and urban life. Indeed, such disillusionment dramatically increased as events like the shooting of students at Kent State in May 1970 confirmed to many white liberals, such as Margaret Grundstein, that freedom and security could only be attained outside of cities and away from mainstream politics – recall that Grundstein fled New Haven in response to the sight of seeing “tanks lumbering” down the streets of her neighborhood. Thus, following in the footsteps of Bolton Hall and the Single Tax colonies, the sons and daughters of post-World War Two

²⁶⁰ My aunt and uncle who decided in 1973 to homestead in Webster county West Virginia recall bulk purchasing nails and other materials that they could not make for themselves, believing that American society was doomed to imminently collapse.

prosperity became part of a long antimodern dissent tradition that wove together pastoralism and republicanism to frame rural land, and especially rural communities, as a space for moral, physical, and spiritual renewal.

The Modern Utopian and School of Living Part Ways: The Third Wave Emerges

The collaboration between Fairfield and the School of Living effectively shaped the next generation of antimodern dissenters that responded to the seismic upheavals of the late 1960s by going back to the land. The direct collaboration between *TMU* and School of Living, however, was short-lived. After two years of being The School of Living: West, Fairfield's organization parted ways with the School of Living in early 1969. It appears that part of the decision to break away was practical for Loomis, who was grappling with a series of organizational issues in 1969 as counterculturalists inundated Heathcote and as the School of Living struggled to compete with the explosion of underground newspapers in the late 1960s. In 1969, the School of Living consolidated its two publications *GR* and *AWO*, and *TMU* was set free.

Part of the split could also have been cultural because, as previously mentioned, many second-wave readers were uncomfortable with the *TMU*'s psychedelic and sexual ideas. In any case, the split was amicable, and Fairfield even went to work as the editor for *GR* in the mid-1970s. After the split, Fairfield published fewer articles on Borsodi and other second-wave thinkers, though *TMU* still listed School of Living and Heathcote in its directories list. *TMU* would change after 1969, and the publication dwindled as other countercultural back-to-the-land publications such as Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* and the Shuttleworth's *Mother Earth News* eclipsed it. Fairfield continued to be influential in the communal back-to-the-land movement, however, and he founded the Alternatives Foundation in 1969, which partnered with Twin Oak's

Communities Magazine and the School of Living in the early 1970s. As such, the post-merger *TMU* reflects how the third generation fully emerged in the late 1960s and reveals the extent of countercultural borrowing from the second generation.

In the wake of the separation in 1969, Fairfield came out with a long article that surveyed the state of the back-to-the-land movement in the late 1960s. The article provides a window into his vision for the counterculture moving forward and how that vision was shaped by interactions with Loomis and the School of Living. In the Fall 1969 issue Fairfield wrote a guide entitled “Training for ALTERNATIVES: Dropping Out,” which described his own experience of “dropping out” of Cold War society and explained the purpose of his new Alternatives Foundation – an organization aimed at encouraging rural intentional communities. In a reflection of common dissatisfaction with contemporary culture and politics that could have been lifted from a David Greyson novel, he stated, “we too are searching for self-fulfillment and ways of overcoming dissatisfactions. Most of us, of course, will never take the step of completely dropping out...we will continue to feel a little empty, unfulfilled and somewhat dissatisfied.”²⁶¹ For those who did drop out, like himself, he offered readers an explanation of their shared utopian worldview and the Alternatives Foundation's programs. Significantly, much of what he advocated was in line with School of Living teachings, and he even ended the article with a call to create communal back-to-the-land training centers like Heathcote.²⁶²

Taken as a whole, the utopianism that Fairfield put forward represented the countercultural search for authenticity, individuality, and community that William Rorabaugh has depicted in his study of the hippie movement. As such, Fairfield’s utopian vision for the

²⁶¹ Richard Fairfield, “Training for ALTERNATIVES: Dropping Out,” *The Modern Utopian*, Fall 1969, 3.

²⁶² Fairfield, “Training for ALTERNATIVES,” 7.

back-to-the-land project reveals how inextricably the counterculture was tied to the growing third wave of the back-to-the-land movement as well as the profound social and racial privilege of the movement's overwhelmingly white membership. According to Fairfield, the shared ideals of the new dropouts who were on a search for community included: a self-chosen and self-created environment, getting back to essentials, getting back to the land, getting back to people, searching for self, and social change by example. Embedded in such a list was the assumption that readers fed up with Cold War society could afford to go back-to-the-land, that they could chose a rural environment (remember that many of the rural communities, particularly in the South, had only just begun the fitful process of integration), and that they would find getting back to essentials an appealing prospect.²⁶³ Indeed, as Aguilar has noted, voluntary simplicity was a racially and socially charged activity.

Fairfield's ideals reflect how white, third wave back-to-the-landers reacted to the profound political and cultural upheavals of the late 1960s by developing inwardly-focused countercultural alternatives. The new back-to-the-landers called for self-created environments that included shelters which "reflected the individual's needs, not the prefab or ticky-tacky tract house" and an external environment with "beauty and originality. Woods and fields and water

²⁶³ For more on how non-white groups viewed urban and rural spaces differently, and specifically the way in which Black rural migrants brought their southern experiences to California and how they saw the promise of urban space, see Donna Murch's work. She makes a compelling case that southern Black experiences with being denied access to education help to explain the BPP's focus on education, for instance. It is important to note that Fairfield's publication did contain positive support for the Black Panther Party, and even included letters from Black Power activists such as Floyd McKussick explaining the meaning of the movement to the counterculture. Indeed, Herrick's obituary in *TMU* pictured him at a Black Panther event. Nevertheless, as we shall see in later chapters, the larger back-to-the-land movement concluded that militant urban activism was not a recipe for social change – reflecting their privileged position. Donna Jean Murch, *Living for the City: Migration, Education, and the Rise of the Black Panther Party in Oakland, California* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 11, 53.

nearby, not concrete, tar and asphalt.”²⁶⁴ From Fairfield’s perspective, Cold War urban and suburban environments could not permit authentic self-expression because they enforced social conformity and separated individuals from the natural world – an interesting sentiment considering the third generation’s parents had sought suburban living for similar reasons in the immediate post-World War Two period. Indeed, in many respects, Fairfield’s call for members of the counterculture to drop out and go back-to-the-land reinforced mainstream middle-class values. Just like their suburban parents, countercultural back-to-the-landers valued self-reliance, close-knit community life, and raising children close to nature and away from urban dependency, pollution, and social degeneration.

Authenticity and being “true to one’s self” ran throughout many of Fairfield’s critiques of suburban monotony and uniformity and even extended to the food and clothing for the new dropout. For the new utopian, Fairfield called for “clothing that expresses self-individualized dress, including hair style and length. What feels right to the individual, including no clothes at all perhaps.”²⁶⁵ As for food, the new back-to-the-lander, following the teachings of the School of Living, prized “‘Natural’ food, not junk...having a concern for nutrition and a balanced diet with a minimum of expense and a minimum of artificial additives.”²⁶⁶ Such concerns show how Fairfield’s back-to-the-land ideology was shaped by interactions with Loomis and the School of Living, which had been decrying unnatural food additives since the early 1950s. Fairfield’s definition of self-created environments, his call for individualized dress, and his praise of natural foods clearly demonstrate the ways in which antimodern movements like the back-to-the-land movement serve the social and racial interests of participants. Indeed, like earlier back-to-the-

²⁶⁴ Fairfield, "Training for ALTERNATIVES," 5.

²⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 5.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 5.

landers, the third generation ended up revitalizing bourgeois values and reinforcing dominant cultural trends towards consumer capitalism – the organic food movement’s effects on the American grocery business is another case in point.²⁶⁷

In Fairfield’s take on the new utopian awakening in the late 1960s, getting back to the land and communing with others was the only way forward for individuals to self-actualize, effect real social change, and avert the collapse of American society – all common antimodern refrains dating back to the turn of the century. As such, he borrowed heavily from the School of Living’s teachings. In his view, alienation from the land and alienation from one’s fellow man were one and the same. He stated that “Man has become alienated from his natural habitat. Communal people, the new dropouts, want to get away from the pollution, the congestion, and the foul odors of the cities and the freeways. They want the soil, not concrete under their feet.”²⁶⁸ In this call to get back to the land and get back to people, Fairfield was reacting to the effects of Cold War American society and 1960s socio-political instability on white, middle-class hippies. At the same time, Fairfield also echoed many of the School of Living’s back-to-the-land ideas. Indeed, Fairfield’s writings in the late 1960s demonstrate how his interactions with the School of Living shaped his rural utopianism. Fairfield’s focus on personal transformation reflected the back-to-the-land producerism in the School of Living’s ideology, and his call for the intensive development of allied rural communities fit with the School of Living’s calls for decentralism. Going forward, these ideas would permeate the movement as it gained steam over the late 1960s and early 1970s.

²⁶⁷ For more on this shift see Davis’s important work on the rise of Whole Foods, in particular his treatment Erewhon organic foods. Joshua Davis, *From Head Shops to Whole Foods: The Rise and Fall of Activist Entrepreneurs* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 117.

²⁶⁸ Fairfield, “Training for ALTERNATIVES,” 5-6

The Movement Matures: The *Whole Earth Catalog* and *Mother Earth News*

By the time that *TMU* and School of Living parted ways, the countercultural back-to-the-land movement was developing its own distinct character through a national information network of back-to-the-land publications, in particular Stewart Brand's *Whole Earth Catalog* and John and Jane Shuttleworth's *Mother Earth News*. Through its founders' experiences and in the pages of its publications, it is evident that the third generation had become uniquely focused on rural communalism, appropriate technology, egalitarianism, environmental activism, and Native American experience. Some of these publications, such as the Shuttleworth's *MEN*, had been directly influenced by members of the second generation such as Ralph Borsodi and Scott Nearing. This is reflected in their emphasis on self-sufficiency and rural decentralism and in published interviews with both men. The *WEC* and *MEN* were rooted in the counterculture. Their founding stories and early publications demonstrate how and why the third generation was going back to the land, the ways in which they drew on preexisting ideologies, and how they differed from the second generation.

The second significant back-to-the-land publication, following *TMU/AWO*, was Stewart Brand's *WEC*, first published in 1968. Brand, once a biology student at Stanford, who had participated in the Menlo Park Veterans Hospital LSD trials and went on to join the hippie Merry Pranksters group, was convinced by 1968 that the counterculture needed access to tools and information in order to bring about the counterculture's vision for a remade society on the land.²⁶⁹ Brand was also heavily influenced by the emerging environmental movement and the

²⁶⁹ For discussions of Brand's counterculture origins, experiences with LSD, and how these shaped his futurism see Andrew G Kirk, *Counterculture Green: The Whole Earth Catalog and*

study of ecological systems, which was part of his Stanford coursework. He crafted the *WEC* idea while he traveled back to California in March 1968 and wrote his notes on the back of Barbara Ward's influential environmental work, *Spaceship Earth*.²⁷⁰ Brand envisioned the *WEC* as a service for the rural intentional communities that he had contacted in New Mexico while he traveled the American West in the mid-1960s photographing Native reservations.²⁷¹ Modeled on the L.L. Bean catalog, the *WEC* was meant to be an information system for such communities. It provided them with appropriate technology, book reviews, and news on the communal back-to-the-land movement.

It is evident from Brand's history and in the *WEC* material that the third generation was coming of age in the late 1960s and began to fashion its own set of interests rooted in the counterculture. The first edition of the *WEC* was published in the fall of 1968, and the catalog was sporadically published over the next few years to high acclaim. Unlike *TMU* or *GR*, the *WEC* was a tome that often totaled more than 600 pages and, true to its mission, included a dizzying array of tools and resources for counterculturalists, from instructions on creating solar panels to book reviews on cybernetics and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. The first issue of the catalog carried the recently released NASA photo of Earth as seen from orbit and included a now-famous statement of purpose by Brand that read:

We are as gods and might as well get good at it. So far, remotely done power and glory – as via government, big business, formal education, church – has succeeded to the point where gross defects obscure actual gains. In response to this dilemma and to these gains a realm of intimate, personal power is developing

American Environmentalism (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2007), 37–38; Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 59–68.

²⁷⁰ Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 21.

²⁷¹ On Brand's experience in the Southwest see Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, 46–52.

– power of the individual to conduct his own education, find his own inspiration, shape his own environment, and share his adventure with whoever is interested.²⁷²

The *WEC* was meant to enable this intimate, personal power by empowering individuals to teach themselves how to use appropriate technology and successfully live on the land. This statement of purpose reflects how the counterculture had taken up the back-to-the-land cause and fashioned an ideology focused on rugged individualism, authenticity in personal interactions, and environmental activism, while at the same time drawing upon preexisting movements and ideas such as Mumford and Borsodi’s decentralist crusade. Indeed, Brand’s famous framing of human progress and technological development – “we are as gods” – reveals the extent of Pierre Teilhard de Chardin’s influence on the counterculture and is crucial for understanding Brand’s vision for the *WEC*, the back-to-the-land movement, Appropriate Technology (AT), and later his work in personal computing.

The emerging AT movement – a movement firmly rooted in earlier social critics such as Mumford who had championed the utopian possibilities of decentralizing technology since the 1930s – became popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s.²⁷³ E.F. Schumacher’s *Small is Beautiful* most famously espoused the movement in 1973, and Mumford and Schumacher’s critiques were key to Brand’s countercultural vision and his later adoption of personal computing - another development tied to dissatisfaction with technological and bureaucratic centralization.²⁷⁴ Adherents to the movement argued that the industrial world, with its large,

²⁷² Stewart Brand, “Purpose of Whole Earth Catalog,” *Whole Earth Catalog*, Spring 1968, 3.

²⁷³ For more on the decentralization of technology and its effects on utopian writings like Callenbach’s *Ecotopia* see Segal, *Technological Utopianism in American Culture*, 151-152.

²⁷⁴ For more on how Brand’s generation attacked “bigness” in the computer industry – a notoriously centralizing force in society given its roots in the military-industrial-academic complex – see O’Mara’s work on Silicon Valley and specifically her treatment of Ted Nelson’s 1974 counterculture publication *Computer Lib*. O’Mara, *The Code*, 118-122.

centralized, technocratic corporations and governments, had created unsustainable technologies that led to alienation and environmental degradation.²⁷⁵ Early proponents, such as Brand, pushed for small-scale, user-centric technologies to remedy these problems. Thus, the *WEC* contained advertisements and articles on a variety of decentralized technologies, including homemade wooden fruit presses, pamphlets on how to blast stumps with black powder, and handbooks on birth control, repairing trucks, solar power, and constructing tipis and geodesic domes. As Andrew Kirk has argued, the AT movement's environmentalism represented an environmental heresy at the time because it did not conform to the mainstream wilderness ethos.²⁷⁶ The appropriate technology movement was also rooted in Murray Bookchin's eco-anarchism instead of the Sierra Club's preservationist ideals, demonstrating how the countercultural back-to-the-land program had carved out a unique position in the environmental movement by the late 1960s.²⁷⁷

While much of the third generation's focus on environmentalism and AT was rooted in changes to post-World War Two American society and industry and therefore new, there was also generational overlap in the AT movement and in the pages of the *WEC*. This generational overlap ran deeper than most scholars of the back-to-the-land movement have noted. E.F. Schumacher's views on decentralism built on Borsodi's vision, and Borsodi is listed by the Schumacher Center for New Economics as a progenitor of the movement. Furthermore, issues of the *WEC* from 1968 to 1972 contained positive reviews of *GR*, even calling Mildred Loomis the "grandmother of the alternative newspapers" who was "spry (she's been publishing since the

²⁷⁵ On the history of the AT movement and countercultural environmentalism see Andrew Kirk, "Appropriating Technology: The Whole Earth Catalog and Counterculture Environmental Politics," *Environmental History* 6, no. 3 (2001): 381.

²⁷⁶ Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 29.

²⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 29.

‘30’s).”²⁷⁸ The June 1971 *WEC* even ran an advertisement for Teilhard de Chardin’s *The Phenomenon of Man*, and Brand stated that the book was “a bit unnerving: Teilhard de Chardin manages to say most of the things many of us are trying to say. He said them in 1938. Was no-one listening?”²⁷⁹ Brand did not state where and when he had been introduced to Teilhard’s ideas, nor did he mention the Jesuit scholar’s racism and eugenics advocacy, but it is clear that Brand was developing his back-to-the-land philosophy in the context of interactions with the older generation.

In his publication, Brand was also deeply interested in emulating Native American groups – an interest that set him apart from older generations of back-to-the-landers like Hall and Borsodi. His preoccupation with Native cultures demonstrates a last component of the third generation’s new countercultural identity – its reliance on ties to Indianness to justify its back-to-the-land project. All the *WEC*s between 1968 and 1972 included sections on Native American folkways and even kept readers apprised of the American Indian Movement’s efforts to secure land and self-determination. It should be noted, however, that Brand, unlike other counterculturalists, had a more complicated relationship to such cultural appropriation. Brand’s first wife was Native, he was a fierce proponent of Native self-determination, and the sections of the *WEC* that deal with Native folkways argued that interactions with real Natives were a necessary part of learning the “Indian Way.”²⁸⁰

²⁷⁸ Stewart Brand, "The Green Revolution," in *The Last Whole Earth Catalog* (Menlo Park: Portola Institute, June 1971), 239.

²⁷⁹ Stewart Brand, "The Phenomenon of Man," in *Whole Earth Catalog* (Menlo Park: Portola Institute, Fall 1969), 31.

²⁸⁰ Smith, in her treatment of Brand and the Red Power movement, argues that Brand was one of the more nuanced hippies who interacted with real Native Americans. Indeed, he married a Native woman in 1966 and he continues to be vocal proponent of the Red Power movement into the twenty-first century. Nevertheless, as Deloria and others have explored, the larger trend

An entire section of the 1971 *Last Whole Earth Catalog* was devoted to books on Native American folklore and political issues and sheds light on the complicated cultural borrowings occurring in the early 1970s. The section began with an excerpt from Allen Ginsberg's famous poem "Howl," specifically the portion referring to visionary countercultural Indian angels.²⁸¹ The reference to "Howl" is significant because it demonstrates how the counterculture was indebted to the Beats – down to their racial approach. In the 1972 *Last Whole Earth Catalog* (an update to the 1971 edition), Ginsberg's poem was followed by a short introduction by Stewart Brand. He stated that "the booklist that follows comes from two intense informal years (and five-slack ones)...hanging around Indians, reservations, anthropologists and libraries....They gave me more reliable information, and human warmth, than dope and college put together."²⁸² From Brand's perspective, searching out actual Native knowledge would be crucial for any serious back-to-the-landers who wanted to learn how to live in harmony with nature, demonstrating how the counterculture had begun to recast the back-to-the-land project in racial and environmental terms. Most countercultural back-to-the-landers, however, ignored Brand's call for actual Native

within the counterculture was towards Native appropriation rather than substantive and sustained engagement with Red Power activists. For Deloria this marks a turn to post-modernism, whereas this study situates Brand's interest in non-whites within a larger antimodern tradition. Indeed, some of the first antimodern dissenters to turn away from white Western traditions sought out the supposed martial culture of Japan and the spiritual teachings of Buddhism. Finally, it is also noteworthy, as Native scholar Kent Blansett has demonstrated in his study of the Red Power movement, that the hippie counterculture ended up coopting the Intertribal philosophy that urban Red Power activists developed in the 1960s. As such, much of the intercommunal organizing we will explore in chapter 5 was based on emulating the Red Power movement.²⁸⁰ Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, 45–50; Deloria, *Playing Indian*, chap. Counterculture Indians and the New Age; Jackson Lears, *No Place of Grace*, 228–33; Kent Blansett, *A Journey to Freedom: Richard Oakes, Alcatraz, and the Red Power Movement* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), Location 2092.

²⁸¹ Ginsberg's Howl contains a stanza that intones: "Who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking visionary Indian angels, who were visionary Indian angels." This is specifically cited in Brand's section on Native American folkways. Brand, *The Last Whole Earth Catalog*, 382.

²⁸² *Ibid.*, 382.

mediators, instead consuming books and mimicking Native lifestyles through Indian play. In so doing, the larger counterculture engaged in a long-standing white practice of playing Indian as a way of protesting modern culture and dominant society – the participants of the Boston Tea Party had, after all, dressed as Indians.

Over the course of the 1970s, Brand continued to advocate interactions with indigenous groups, though he soured on the communal back-to-the-land movement and began to believe that it would not lead to a countercultural utopia. Instead, Brand transitioned the *WEC* into an organization focused on personal computing, renamed the *WEC* the *Whole Earth 'Lectronic Link*, and became an influential player in the rise of digital utopianism and the early internet. Indeed, Brand's experiences in the counterculture proved to be a key component of digital utopianism that has shaped the modern tech world. As Fred Turner has explored in-depth, Brand's awakening via LSD and his experience running the *WEC* informed much of his later work.²⁸³ Despite this later divergence, the *WEC* was an influential publication for the third generation, and it spurred others to develop the movement's information network.

One example of this influence is John and Jane Shuttleworth, who founded *MEN* in 1970.

If Brand's *WEC* represented a short-lived, eccentric clearinghouse of technologies and books for the third generation, then *MEN* was a force of stability and continuity for the movement and represented how the back-to-the-land movement had fully remerged by the early 1970s. Indeed, *MEN* has survived into the present as the most important forum for those interested in going back to the land, and its long-form articles provide scholars with a more detailed account of how the third generation emerged. Due to this longevity and breadth, *MEN*'s founding in 1970 has often been cited as the rebirth of the back-to-the-land movement – notably by Brown who argued that

²⁸³ Turner, *From Cyberculture to Counterculture*, 175–76.

the third generation's back-to-the-land awareness arose after 1970. As we have seen in *TMU* and the *WEC*, however, the movement reemerged years earlier at the heart of the counterculture.²⁸⁴ The material in *MEN* does represent the point at which the movement matured, and its contents and founding history are important for understanding what was new about the third generation and how it continued to be influenced by older back-to-the-landers.

John and Jane Shuttleworth founded *MEN* in 1970 following the first Earth Day, and the publication represented an amalgamation of back-to-the-land practices and ideas that had emerged at that time, especially the turn towards framing Native groups as antimodern role models. Both Shuttleworths were older than most hippies, and, more significantly, John had been exposed to the School of Living and Borsodi in the 1950s. Indeed, like Mildred Loomis, John Shuttleworth was effective at framing his own decision to go back to the land in countercultural terms. When asked by an interviewer in 1970 why he decided to drop out in the 1950s, Shuttleworth answered, "For the same reasons that people are dropping out now: The establishment education system trains great replacement parts for the military industrial complex and it turns out wonderful consumers but it doesn't teach much about living a satisfying life or developing human potential."²⁸⁵ John Shuttleworth's story mirrors countless other countercultural conversion narratives, including those of Stewart Brand and Richard Fairfield and the larger antimodern reaction to the perceived alienation of modern work. After becoming dissatisfied by the "dead" 1950s, John Shuttleworth "dropped" out and wandered the country

²⁸⁴ Brown, in her description of the Shuttleworths, argues that their unique environmental awareness set them apart from previous generations. Brown, *Back to the Land*, 215.

²⁸⁵ John Shuttleworth, "Plowboy Interview: John Shuttleworth," *Mother Earth News*, March 1970, *Mother Earth News* Digital CD-ROM Archive.

searching for alternatives. At the same time, however, he was influenced by the younger generation and only decided to go back to the land in the late 1960s.

MEN was also directly inspired by Stewart Brand's *WEC* and shared similar interests in Native culture, going so far as to frame the flight from cities as analogous to nineteenth-century Native resistance to the federal government. In the same 1970 interview, John Shuttleworth was asked why he created *MEN*. After being asked how his previous work mutated into *MEN*, Shuttleworth answered, "Stewart Brand is responsible. I was inspired by THE WHOLE EARTH CATALOG."²⁸⁶ He then went on to praise the *WEC* and Brand, stating that the *WEC* was "Mind boggling and *tremendously* useful" and that the *MEN* "paralleled and supported" Brand's work."²⁸⁷ Indeed, like Brand, Shuttleworth was fixated on Native Americans and admitted that "I wanted to call the thing THE GREAT CHIEF JOSEPH NEWSLETTER. I still think Chief Joseph, of the Nez Perce Indians, is one of the few authentic heroes of the North American Continent. But Jane held out."²⁸⁸ This insight demonstrates a key aspect of Shuttleworth's back-to-the-land countercultural mindset and how Native culture was being retold and co-opted by the counterculture. By musing about naming the magazine after Chief Joseph, Shuttleworth was trying to link his anti-establishment political beliefs with the "authentic" symbolism of Joseph's defiance.

As we shall see in Chapter 5, such appropriation was a fundamentally new component of the third generation's back-to-the-land quest for self-reliance and authenticity. Indeed, articles on Native culture and folkways were commonplace in the early issues of *MEN*. An article in the first special edition of *MEN* explicitly lauded plains tipis as the original, back-to-the-land

²⁸⁶ Shuttleworth, "Plowboy Interview: John Shuttleworth."

²⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

building that the counterculture should adopt. The article stated that many back-to-the-landers “are into the aborigine things these days and live in plains Indian tepees. It makes sense because, unlike white man’s tents, a properly constructed tepee is warm in winter, cool in summer, and able to withstand windstorms that will flatten a frame house.”²⁸⁹ This excerpt exhibits a number of themes touched on earlier in the *WEC*. In the “Indian books” section of the catalog, it is evident that many counterculturalists were getting “into the aborigine thing” and connecting it with their own search for a sustainable, more environmentally conscious lifestyle. Of course, it should be noted that actual Native peoples found the hippies’ fascination with their traditions problematic at best and, especially in northern New Mexico, reacted to hippie incursions onto reservations by calling the local police.²⁹⁰

The Shuttleworths’ history, founding vision, and publication materials demonstrate that by 1970 the third generation had emerged and was exploring its own set of ideas and practices. With close to one million subscribers by the mid-1970s, *MEN* contained a plethora of articles aimed at both homesteaders and intentional communities – that encouraged back-to-the-landers to become self-sufficient, rural producers. Articles ranged from descriptions of how to start cottage industries like beading, printing, and fly tying to articles on the farming of sustainable cash crops such as strawberries via small-scale technologies. Along with how-to articles, *MEN* also published interviews with influential – and predominantly white and male – back-to-the-landers and other figures allied with the movement. These included interviews with Murray Bookchin, the eco-anarchist; David Brower, the head of the Sierra Club; and Paul Ehlrich, the

²⁸⁹ John Shuttleworth, "How to Make It Your Way," *Mother Earth News*, January 1970, 6. *Mother Earth News* Digital CD-ROM Archive.

²⁹⁰ Smith offers an insightful section on New Mexican reactions to hippies. See Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, 129

author of *The Population Bomb*; and Helen and Scott Nearing, Ralph Borsodi, and Mildred Loomis. Indeed, *MEN* was unquestionably a part of the environmental movement and published articles on how to hunt polluters for “fun and profit” by reporting them to local governments, along with a host of other articles on how back-to-the-landers could be involved with environmental activism.²⁹¹

Taken as a whole, then, the material in *MEN* over the course of the 1970s reveals that the back-to-the-land movement had reemerged and was uniquely focused on appropriate technology, egalitarian community formation, countercultural Indianness, and formal environmental activism. These interests were rooted in the counterculture and its interactions with the second generation in the mid-to-late 1960s, particularly the overlap between the second and third generation’s environmentalism. Therefore, any exploration of the third generation must take this overlap into account when contrasting back-to-the-landers in the 1970s with those who had been living on the land since before World War Two.

The Third Generation Influences the Second:

Fairfield and *Green Revolution* in the mid-to-late 1970s

That the third generation had emerged and was driving the movement is evident in the influence that the counterculture exerted on preexisting organizations such as the School of Living. The School of Living continued to function and grow as the *WEC* and *MEN* appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s, though those publications had dwarfed the School of Living’s *GR* publication by the early 1970s. Members of the School of Living, such as Loomis, continued to

²⁹¹ Robert Meier, “Hunting Polluters for Fun and Profit,” *Mother Earth News*, January 1973, *Mother Earth News* Digital CD-ROM Archive.

interact with the younger generation through self-sufficiency seminars at Heathcote and in numerous advertisements in *MEN* and the *WEC*. The direction of influence by the early 1970s, however, was beginning to run the other way.

As we shall see in the following chapter, Heathcote was overrun by members of the third generation, who established their own hybrid back-to-the-land community and helped run the *GR* publication starting in the late 1960s. By the early 1970s, due to membership turnover, the *GR* was sporadically printed out of Heathcote, and the School of Living contracted with Twin Oaks members to manage the *GR*'s subscription list. In 1972, *GR*'s quality had reverted to its pre-1965 format as a rough newsletter, its readership had plummeted to only 800, and it struggled to compete with the *WEC* and *MEN*.²⁹² This changed in 1973 when Loomis reached out to Fairfield to take over the editorship at *GR*. Fairfield, who had never lost touch with Loomis, had been working on his newly founded Alternatives Foundation. He had also partnered with Twin Oaks to publish *Communities Magazine*, another influential communal back-to-the-land publication formed in 1972. In part, Fairfield accepted Loomis's offer because he was going broke and needed the money and even reestablished his office in Berkeley as the School of Living: West.²⁹³

The nature of *GR* radically changed after Fairfield took over, and he expanded its readership to include more counterculturalists. Long-form essays on Borsodi's writings were pared down and moved to the back of the newspaper, and the new *GR* was restructured like *TMU* to focus on specific issues such as education, health, and religion. The magazine also began covering issues more relevant to the counterculture, such as new music, mystical religious experiences, environmental activist opportunities, and even a new section on intentional

²⁹² Rose, "Homesteading as Social Protest," 279.

²⁹³ Fairfield, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Richard Fairfield Interview," 6.

community news. *Green Revolution* also began to look more countercultural, with psychedelic colors and hand-drawn pictures of flowers and other hippie symbols. It appears that the changes were generally well-received – at least initially.

In taking over the editorship, Fairfield merged his *Alternatives* readership, the newsletter for the Alternatives Foundation, with the *GR*, and there were more countercultural readers of the *GR* after that. In the issue of *GR* following Fairfield's takeover in early 1973, letters to the editor painted a rosy picture of the changes. Eleanor Allen from California wrote to congratulate Fairfield and stated, "Cover, content, illustrations – beautiful! I like to see the Pluralistic Philosophy emphasized."²⁹⁴ Albert Woods of California, who had been a subscriber to *GR* before 1973, wrote that "I like the new point of view of the *GR*. The Heathcote people were getting side-tracked from the main issues. Now, you seem to be back on the right track."²⁹⁵ The only consistent critique of the new approach was how long issues had become. In his attempt to add elements of the counterculture without cutting School of Living philosophy, Fairfield had doubled the bi-monthly publication to an unwieldy sixty pages.

The changes that Fairfield brought to *GR* reflect how the third generation had taken over the movement after it had been awakened in the mid-1960s. It was also evident in *GR* that this made some in the second generation uneasy because, though Fairfield's editorship had retained much of the School of Living's antimodern messaging, it also openly discussed the radical ideas of the Yippies and the Diggers. In the first issue of *GR* that Fairfield edited, Borsodi wrote an article entitled "The Green Revolution as part of the Counter-Culture" in which he argued that

²⁹⁴ Eleanor Allen, "Reader's Responses," *The Green Revolution*, December 1973, 46, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

²⁹⁵ Albert Woods, "Reader's Responses," *The Green Revolution*, December 1973, 46, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

members of the counterculture were responding to the same modern issues that he had been addressing since the 1920s. However, he argued that the counterculture contained groups at odds with one another and could not become part of the back-to-the-land movement. In particular, he singled out “the lunatic counter-culture – the hippies, yippies and the zippies...the drug, sex, dress and tramping culture nihilists,” and finally “the violent revolutionaries” as specifically unfit to create a mass movement of radical change.²⁹⁶ Such pronouncements demonstrate a surprising amount of continuity between Borsodi’s worldview in the 1920s and his perception of the counterculture – remember that he had called for prostitutes and other sexual deviants to undergo (albeit largely-voluntary) sterilization. Unsurprisingly then, Borsodi found hope in what he called “the fundamentally sane and working counter-culturists,” but noted that they lacked an economic and political philosophy, which the School of Living aimed to provide.²⁹⁷

As we have seen, Borsodi’s characterization of the counterculture missed much of the back-to-the-land ideology that the third generation had formulated by the early 1970s, and his article led to many response letters. In 1974, for instance, Bob Zaslow from New York called out Borsodi’s characterization of the counterculture, arguing that “Borsodi’s nasty attack on various parts of the counter-culture with which he disagrees (no reason given)” was unhelpful.²⁹⁸ Zaslow even went a step further, critiquing the School of Living’s “right-wing capitalistic” ideas and Borsodi’s *Seventeen Problems of Man and Society* for lacking alternative viewpoints. In response, Fairfield stated that he had tried to summarize the book fairly at the end of each issue

²⁹⁶ Ralph Borsodi, “The Green Revolution as Part of the Counter-Culture,” *The Green Revolution*, September 1973, 4, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

²⁹⁷ Borsodi, “The Green Revolution as Part of the Counter-Culture,” 4.

²⁹⁸ Bob Zaslow, “Reader’s Responses,” *The Green Revolution*, February 1974, 62, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

and that “the main value of Borsodi’s work is not in his discussion of alternatives,” but in his questions, allowing members of the counterculture to conduct “our discussion of them and our working” on their implementation.²⁹⁹ It is clear from such exchanges that the third generation had emerged and, though it engaged with the older generation’s antimodern ideas, it was comfortable critiquing the “leading lights” of the second generation and confident in its own discussions and back-to-the-land practices.

Over the course of the 1970s, the second generation’s influence waned, and by the time of Borsodi’s death in 1977, members of the younger generation were openly critiquing the School of Living’s ideas on racial hierarchy and women’s roles on the land. Following Borsodi’s death, the December 1977 edition of the *GR* published a series of tributes to the importance of his radicalism and a few harshly critical exposés on his sexism and racism. Chuck Fager, editor of *Workshop in Nonviolence* magazine who had been asked to interview Borsodi before his death, wrote a blistering article entitled “Ralph Borsodi: The Flawed Prophet of Decentralism” in which he noted Borsodi’s accomplishments and sought to answer why he died in relative obscurity.³⁰⁰

Fager argued that the “grandfather of the counterculture” died in relative obscurity because he was a sexist elitist and a proponent of eugenics – Fager, much like the wider society in the 1970s, found eugenics to be a dirty word. Contrasting Borsodi with the more measured E.F. Schumacher, Fager contended that “Borsodi’s opinions of women working in careers other

²⁹⁹ Richard Fairfield, “Reader’s Responses,” *The Green Revolution*, February 1974, 62, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

³⁰⁰ In an interview for this dissertation Fager said that he had been asked to do the interview with Borsodi by Jubal, who was the editor of *GR* by 1977. Fager noted that he had visited Jubal’s rural School of Living community in New York and was intrigued by the group, though after his interview and article he was no longer in contact with members of the School of Living. Jonathan Bowdler, Chuck Fager Interview with Author, May 27, 2020.

than as ‘homemakers’...are hardly what could be called advanced: ‘thus they invite the lifelong frustration which nature inflicts upon all those who flout her mandate of fecundity,’ he declared.”³⁰¹ For Borsodi, a return to the land on productive homesteads should be the highest and most natural calling of women, a notion that, by the rise of second-wave feminism in the 1970s, was justly under attack. This worldview, according to Fager, clashed with the counterculture’s sensibility that all individuals should be able to pursue activities that give meaning to their lives. This ultimately contributed to his obscurity.

Fager also singled out Borsodi’s 1968 *Seventeen Problems of Man and Society*, sections of which were published at the end of most *GR* issues in the mid-1970s, for its illiberal attack on equality and its open racism. Early in the book, Borsodi plainly stated that “there are no facts whatsoever which indicate that ‘all men are born equal,’ or that both sexes are equal...or all races, or all cultures and civilizations” were equal. He argued that “attempts at compromising the facts, particularly if it takes the form of intermarriage, must mean elevation not of the inferior but the deterioration of the superior.”³⁰² In his article, Fager contextualized Borsodi as a product of the turn-of-the-century eugenics movement and explored his defense of Social Darwinism, which, as we have seen, Borsodi argued was “humanitarianism of the most farsighted kind” when combined with negative eugenics.³⁰³ If his written works were not solid enough evidence of his views, Borsodi proudly told Fager “I am a eugenicist” in their face-to-face interview.³⁰⁴ Such views were of little interest to members of the counterculture and the third generation who had grown up supporting integration and the Civil Rights movement. Furthermore, the fact that

³⁰¹ Chuck Fager, “Ralph Borsodi: The Flawed Prophet of Decentralism,” *The Green Revolution* 34, December 1977, 20, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

³⁰² Fager, “Borsodi,” 20.

³⁰³ Ibid.

³⁰⁴ Ibid.

Fager was asked to do this interview and to publish a critical essay in *GR* is a testament to how the younger generation had come of age and had begun to influence key second-generation organizations such as the School of Living.

Conclusion

By the time Borsodi died in 1977, the antimodern back-to-the-land movement had re-emerged in response to the socio-political turmoil of the late 1960s and the complex exchange of ideas and practices between the second generation and the counterculture. As we have seen, the reemergence of the back-to-the-land impulse arose at the heart of the counterculture in Berkeley in the mid-1960s within the overwhelmingly white, middle-class hippie movement. Fairfield's encounters with Loomis, while he was a graduate student in 1966, were crucial exchanges during which the second generation was able to impart its antimodern ideas and practices to a growing group of younger liberals who, like previous generations, were beginning to find Cold War life – not to mention late-1960s urban political activism – alienating and unsatisfying. Second-generation leaders such as Loomis, then, played a vital role in teaching members of the counterculture about self-reliance, producerism, decentralism, environmentalism, and the merits of leaving cities through the merger between School of Living and *TMU*. Moreover, as we have seen in the case of People's Park and the Walden Two movement, preexisting organizations like the School of Living also shaped the counterculture in direct ways.

Not all ideas, however, were of interest to the younger generation, especially the School of Living's racial understanding of the back-to-the-land project. At the same time, however, though the third generation did not adopt formal eugenics, elements of the second generation's utopian vision did appeal to members of the counterculture, in particular their interest in Pierre

Teilhard de Chardin's vision for progressive change, Skinner's scientific management of human progress, and the larger shift towards decentralization that figures like Mumford and Borsodi had been championing since the 1930s. Finally, as the 1960s faded, the younger generation created its own information network that expressed its interests in environmentalism, appropriate technology, and appropriation of Native culture. As we have seen in the pages of Stewart Brand's *WEC* and the Shuttleworth's *MEN*, the movement matured during the late 1960s and early 1970s, incorporating the "grandparents of the counterculture" along with new practices ranging from catching environmental polluters to building tipis.

The third wave of the back-to-the-land movement began as a gentle swell in the mid-1960s and crested in the mid-1970s. Over the course of that period, the third generation supplanted the second, even beginning to run the older generation's newsletters and critique its leaders. In order to get a sense of how these shifts occurred and how the third generation reflected larger shifts on the American Left and post-World War Two consumer capitalism, the following chapters will turn to the lived experiences of members of Twin Oaks, Heathcote, and Alpha Farm. The following two chapters will explore how those communities sought to implement egalitarian political and economic schemes over the course of the late 1960s and 1970s. This will ground an analysis of what made the third-generation unique while at the same time demonstrating how going back to the land served the social and racial interests of white back-to-the-landers. Like the first and second generation, in seeking to create alternative political and economic systems, the third generation mimicked and reinforced dominant cultural trends towards consumerism and conservatism.

Chapter 3.

“Without Any of the Divisive Influence of Voting:”

The Third Generation’s Quest for a Politics of Harmony

You say you’ll change the constitution.

Well, you know,

We’d all love to change your head.

You tell me it’s the institution.

Well, you know,

You better free your mind instead

– The Beatles, “Revolution,” 1968

Contrary to popular – and some scholarly – representations of the movement, going back to the land was an inherently political act instead of apolitical, escapist, or representative of the final collapse of the counterculture.³⁰⁵ The countercultural back-to-the-land movement was part of a broader shift on the American Left away from Old Left collective activism – a movement, in the context of the Cold War, associated with Marxism, Stalinism, and the more radical elements of the New Deal – towards a politics of personal liberation – i.e., the New Left and the counterculture. In popular narratives of hippie communes, such as T.C. Boyle’s 2003 *Drop City*, disorganized communes like Drop City and Morning Star Ranch are populated by members of the New Left and the counterculture burned out by drugs and urban protests against the Vietnam War.³⁰⁶ Such communities’ rise and fall are used to demonstrate countercultural excess and the movement’s ultimate failure to create lasting alternatives to American society and politics. Readers of such works are offered enthralling accounts of biker gangs taking advantage of hippie open-land policies and distressing episodes of bad trips and child neglect. While such accounts are rooted in actual historical events, the framing of countercultural communes as escapist or

³⁰⁵ The Nearings are partly responsible for this narrative and argued that most countercultural pilgrims to their homestead in the 1970s were apolitical. Given the Nearing’s Old Left political leanings, their dismissal makes sense. Similarly, Robert Houriet whose 1971 book was the first to explore the movement, described it as following a long tradition of political escape and compared the counterculture’s cultural focus with the New Left’s democratic politics. Dona Brown does not follow these narratives but does frame the third wave of the movement as part of the failure of hippie politics in the late 1960s and glosses over intentional community politics. Andrew Kirk has also fallen into this trap in his treatment of Brand, framing most communes as apolitical retreats from society. See Scott Nearing and Helen Nearing, *The Good Life: Helen and Scott Nearing’s Sixty Years of Self-Sufficient Living* (New York: Schocken Books, 1989, 358–59; Robert Houriet, *Getting Back Together* (New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan, 1971), 18–24; Brown, *Back to the Land*, 205; Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 53–55.

³⁰⁶ Boyle’s popular work of fiction is representative of a variety of accounts of the movement that began with journalistic accounts like Tom Wolfe’s *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Tests* and Robert Houriet’s *Getting Back Together*. Boyle’s narrative weaves together history of Drop City with more lurid details of communities like Morning Star Ranch. See T. C. Boyle, *Drop City* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), chap. Drop City South.

apolitical makes it difficult to take their internal political cultures seriously as part of a larger and longer utopian back-to-the-land tradition. Moreover, branding the countercultural back-to-the-land movement merely escapist obscures how the counterculture's inward turn was part of a larger political reconfiguration in the late 1960s and 1970s. Indeed, this inward turn reflected the young Left's shift away from the Old Left's collective vision in the late 1960s and mirrored American society's rightward turn in the 1970s.

All of this is not to say, of course, that back-to-the-landers were not escapist or naïve. As rural utopians, a degree of separation from mainstream society – and naïveté – was a given. As utopians, however, back-to-the-landers sought to create liberal, internal political systems that could model alternatives to Cold War society, which might – however naively believed – influence the outside world. Moreover, many back-to-the-landers were disaffected with America's majoritarian democratic political system – an understandable position following Martin Luther King, Jr.'s and Robert Kennedy's assassinations, Nixon's 1968 presidential win, and the trial of the Chicago Seven following the protests at the Democratic National Convention in 1968. In response to these events, many young liberals sought to narrow their political world by going back to the land – a deeply conservative impulse – and communing with like-minded others. This was, of course, not a new phenomenon. As we have seen in Chapter 1, Scott Nearing also retreated from Old Left politics by going back-to-the-land and focusing on personal transformation. The counterculture undertook a similar process. In the case of the Diggers, Morning Star Ranch's creation was a direct reaction to profound socio-political turmoil in the late 1960s and the counterculture's exposure to Loomis and the School of Living. Contrary to popular representations, then, Lou Gottlieb's experiment with open-access land policies, though naïve, was not apolitical and fitted within a much larger transformation of the American Left in

the mid-to-late twentieth century. The libertarian sensibility of Gottleib and residents of Morning Star Ranch even foreshadows key political shifts in America over the course of the 1970s.

While open land experiments at Morning Star Ranch, Drop City, and Wheelers Ranch were radical, most third-generation communities, particularly those that survived the 1970s, sought to create egalitarian, harmonious, and largely democratic internal political cultures. As we shall see in the case of Heathcote, Alpha Farm, and Twin Oaks, back-to-the-landers sought political harmony by eliminating the practice of voting, believing that majoritarian democracy – i.e., a political culture guided by the majority vote of all citizens – was too divisive. This was a sentiment that made sense given the Left’s political losses in the late 1960s. As a result, many back-to-the-land communities adopted anti-majoritarian governing systems, ranging from consensus decision-making to technocratic behaviorism. Such systems shared the same goal of creating an economics of equality that would ensure internal stability, egalitarianism, and harmony. Such governing systems, however, produced mixed results over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. As we shall see in the case of Twin Oaks and its childcare program, internal harmony was difficult to achieve when it came to deeply held personal beliefs.

Of course, many members of the third generation rejected communalism, souring on hippie communes or deciding to homestead. Yet, these individuals also pursued a politics of harmony based on their countercultural mindset. Some, like Stewart Brand, looked forward to a harmonious, libertarian society based on technological development – a point of view that connected him with Borsodi, Mumford, and technological utopians of the early twentieth century – to provide solutions to division and scarcity on a societal level. Others, like John Shuttleworth, followed in Borsodi’s footsteps and looked back to a mythical, harmonious, agrarian society and criticized contemporary liberals like Gloria Steinem and Ralph Nader. Indeed, it is apparent in

Shuttleworth's transformation over the course of the 1970s that some third generation back-to-the-landers ended up mirroring elements of the second generation's politics. As we shall see, Shuttleworth combined the Nearings' search for rural self-reliance with the School of Living's right-leaning agrarian decentralism as a response to broader socio-political shifts in the 1970s. Moreover, it is apparent in both Shuttleworth's and Brand's transformation over the course of the 1970s that both men responded to events by shifting towards the political Right, much like American society as a whole.

Key Political Differences between the Second and Third Generation

The history of third-generation politics reveals complex differences between the second generation and the third. In weighing such differences, we can look at a representative political contrast between two major second-generation influencers: the Nearings, who by the 1960s continued to favor the Old Left's centralized socialism, and the School of Living, which advocated libertarian decentralism. These were fundamentally different political viewpoints. In fact, it was Scott Nearing's call for international cooperation and radical socialist politics, in his 1965 *The Conscience of a Radical*, that first interested members of the younger generation. Unlike the younger generation and the School of Living, however, the Nearings did not put their politics into action and never established intentional communities – an activity that the third generation, given its critiques of Cold War society, gravitated towards.³⁰⁷ The Nearings preferred their position as political gadflies who sought rural isolation.

³⁰⁷ For more on the Nearing's turn away from collectivism in Vermont see Brown, *Back to the Land*, 199.

In weighing the differences between the generations, then, it is more fruitful to explore the differences between the third generation's quest for political harmony and the School of Living's political sensibilities. Both envisioned the act of going back to the land as the first step in modeling alternatives to American politics. As we have seen, the School of Living's politics of libertarian decentralism formed during the crucible of the Great Depression. This attitude soured the organization's budding relationship with the federal government during the 1930s, 1940s, and 1950s, but it did not lead its members to abandon majoritarian democracy as a model for back-to-the-land communities. In contrast, the third wave's anti-majoritarian, egalitarian, and communal political style in the late 1960s and early 1970s was a response to a complex blend of post-World War Two factors, of which three are particularly relevant.

First and foremost, members of the third generation came of age during a period of unprecedented prosperity for white Americans, which shaped their understanding of the back-to-the-land endeavor and the kinds of political cultures they formed. Though such prosperity was unevenly distributed, the affluent, white members of the third generation internalized the idea that post-World War Two America was a post-scarcity society.³⁰⁸ Thus, whereas the School of Living was concerned with scarcity and fashioned political cultures to preserve liberty within homestead land-trust communities, the third generation was far more focused on egalitarianism because it believed material abundance and scientific progress could ensure equality for all. Indeed, from Alpha Farm's use of consensus decision-making to Twin Oaks' experiments with

³⁰⁸ For more on the effects of post-World War Two affluence on the meaning of going back to the land and the types of socio-political experiments the third generation conducted see Berger, *The Survival of a Counterculture*, 104-105; Hugh Gardner, *The Children of Prosperity: Organization, Commitment, and Change in Thirteen Modern Communes, 1965-1973* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1976), 19-22.

behaviorism, the third generation was far more interested in egalitarianism than the second, which was openly inequalitarian.

Secondly, as products of the New Left and the counterculture who grew up in Cold War America and experienced the profound political instability of the mid-to-late 1960s, members of the third generation fashioned experimental, participatory, communalistic, and even undemocratic systems of government to avoid internal divisions.³⁰⁹ Since the counterculture was influenced by a variety of radical social change movements in the late 1950s and early 1960s, it gravitated to a diverse array of political cultures, ranging from Quaker consensus to Skinner's behaviorism. Moreover, as part of the disintegration of the New Left movement at the end of the 1960s – a development linked to disastrous political defeats in the late 1960s as well as the Democratic party's cooptation of the New Left's less radical elements – the communal counterculture retained the New Left's focus on liberation through face-to-face participatory politics while at the same time souring on majoritarian democracy. Thus, whereas the School of Living created land-trust communities in which a majority of homestead-residents could *vote* on policy (remember that Borsodi left Barnard Lane after losing a vote), the third generation experimented with political cultures that eliminated the divisive influence of voting in order to foster harmony. Additionally, it is important to recognize that, unlike the Beats, who lacked the “critical mass to create a numerically significant community,” members of the counterculture were aware of how numerous they were, which fostered a common, communal identity.³¹⁰ As

³⁰⁹ It is important to recognize that distrust of majoritarian democracy was an early preoccupation for liberal youth in the 1960s. The SDS was one of the first groups to sour on the political system, even going so far as to adopt Quaker consensus decision-making rather than parliamentary procedure as early as 1964. This distrust of majoritarian rule only increased over the course of the 1960s and was retained by hippies who turned away from political protests in the late 1960s. For the SDS's use of consensus see Miller, *Democracy Is in the Streets*, 206.

³¹⁰ William Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 12–13.

products of the counterculture, then, third-generation intentional communities were more experimental, communal, and skeptical of majoritarian democracy than the second's community enterprises.

Finally, the third generation's politics was rooted in the counterculture's Western egalitarian ethos. This ethos was promoted by influential counterculturalists such as Ken Kesey, Stewart Brand, members of the Grateful Dead, and the founders of the Rainbow Family whose experience as Westerners shaped their political sensibilities and that of their supporters.³¹¹ Not all members of the counterculture were Westerners, but the movement, so strong on the West Coast, fashioned a political vision that wove together nostalgia for egalitarian frontier communities and supposed pre-contact Native American lifestyles with a Western libertarian sensibility that valorized rugged individualism close to "wild" nature.³¹² This nostalgia drove Margaret Grundstein to leave New Haven and move west to Oregon, a place she viewed as more conducive to her communal experiment. The same impulse guided the founders of Alpha Farm to move from Philadelphia to rural Oregon. Such nostalgia was widespread, and the third generation adopted politics that emulated an imagined Western political style that would enable

³¹¹ The counterculture was particularly interested in a nostalgic vision of the past and more "authentic" lifestyles such as western pioneering. Rorabaugh as argued that "opposed to their own parents, hippies often embraced their rural grandparent's values. The fascination with nature, the primitive, or the only recently departed western frontier expressed a Freudian inversion: they sought to go forward from the unacceptable mainstream present by reverting to a pastoral past where a heroic individual created personal space." See Rorabaugh, *American Hippies* 12, 56.

³¹² Kirk, in his treatment of Brand, has described the counterculture's environmentalism as rooted in a "distinctly western libertarian sensibility" which he sees in the pages of *WEC* and in communes in the West. This sensibility was not formal libertarianism. Kirk asserts that "this libertarian sensibility" is important "because it helps explain the tendency of the counterculture to embrace individual and small-group tinkering" as opposed to participatory democracy or reliance on the federal government. Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 18.

individuals to discover more “authentic” and egalitarian ways of interacting.³¹³ As such, the third generation’s politics was markedly different from the School of Living’s Eastern-centric homestead communities, which were composed of distinct family units that did not share resources between families or pursue egalitarian communalism.

As a result of these three factors, third-wave political cultures at Heathcote, Alpha Farm, and Twin Oaks were different from the second generation’s communal experiments. All three were antimajoritarian and, in theory, all pursued egalitarian communalism. In order to weigh how these communities diverged from the second generation and pursued political cultures focused on internal harmony, it will be important to delve into each community’s founding history and plans for internal self-government.

Intergenerational Back-to-the-Land Politics at Heathcote

Heathcote was the first of these communities to be founded, and its history reflects how the third generation diverged from the second as it emerged in the late 1960s. Before the third generation emerged, Heathcote was a thoroughly second-generation enterprise focused on single-family homesteading and building a land-trust community based on Single Tax economic

³¹³ There is considerable debate within the historiography of the American West about how to frame the Western political tradition. Richard White, for instance, has argued that developmental agendas and dependence on central institutions such as the federal government did not create a western political ideology, but instead a “Western political style” that tended to favor direct democracy, populism, suffrage. Other scholars such as Rebecca Mead, John Walton, and Carl Abbot have explored this style in the suffrage movement, conflicts over water rights, and in western urban development. The hippies, of course, approached the West in an idealized fashion, but it is notable that they replicated stereotypes of Western communities as egalitarian. Indeed, while they saw their rural communities as laboratories for new societies, their antimajoritarian democratic experiments did not conform to Turner’s famous notion of western space as a place for mini laboratories of democracy to flourish. See Richard White, *A New History of the American West, "It’s Your Misfortune and None of My Own"* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991), 386.

theories. It began in 1964 and 1965 when the School of Living membership began discussing creating a new model community to reach out to the younger generation. Unsurprisingly, the majority of members agreed that the new intentional community should be based on the same Single Tax, land-trust model that Borsodi and Loomis had used at Bayard Lane and Dayton. Under this model, families could buy into the community and own a two-acre parcel of land, enabling them to vote in community meetings so long as they paid dues to the trust. Though the proposed community's political culture was democratic, it was also libertarian and individual families could "co-operate with each other to whatever extent is mutually convenient."³¹⁴ However, as we shall see, the second generation's mid-1960s utopian aspirations for Heathcote did not come to fruition because new countercultural community members gravitated to alternative social and political structures. Indeed, the evolution of Heathcote during its first five years illustrates key generational differences between the second and third generation.

In 1965, the School of Living purchased a thirty-seven-and-a-half-acre plot of land in rural northern Maryland and set about encouraging families to join. The land just outside of Freeland – and right next to the border with Pennsylvania – had originally housed a nineteenth-century mill. By 1965, this area of Maryland was still largely agricultural and, unlike the rest of the state, was removed from the rapid suburbanization that was turning prime agricultural land into tract homes for Baltimore residents. Like the rest of agricultural land in the mid-Atlantic, however, local agriculture declined as post-World War Two trends towards industrial agriculture continued to grow.³¹⁵ Indeed, by the mid-1960s, the property that the School of Living

³¹⁴ Herb Goldstein, "The Heathcote Experience: Personal Interpretations," *Green Revolution*, January 1971, 5, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

³¹⁵ Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, *The Routledge History of Rural America* (Routledge Handbooks Online, 2016), 48, <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203494219>.

purchased contained a series of dilapidated buildings, a large meadow, and ample woods. The original 1847 mill house, located in the lower meadow, was still habitable and became the School of Living's new headquarters. The forested lands above the meadow were set aside for potential homesteaders who would undertake their own clearing efforts, like the "pioneers" of old – though now such pioneers could drive half an hour to York, Pennsylvania for needed supplies.

Third generation back-to-the-landers were able to reshape Heathcote because the second generation planned to exert as little control over the rural community as possible, in keeping with their decentralist, libertarian political philosophy. Issues of *Green Revolution* between 1966 and 1967 offer glimpses of the early community and show that the School of Living leadership intended to impose few restrictions on residents. In response to a 1967 *GR* question from a reader who wanted to know if Heathcote members were expected to believe in vegetarianism or the Single Tax, Loomis stated that "the philosophical base for Heathcote is maximum individual initiative, freedom and self-expression. Hence all personal choices and activities are left to each individual and family....so long as they do not physically harm others."³¹⁶ Libertarianism, then, was built into the early vision for Heathcote's political culture, and not all members were required to adhere to Single Tax philosophy, though the land trust would bind them if they bought in.

There were few full-time residents of Heathcote in the mid-1960s and the back-to-the-landers who did reside there were School of Living members who ran the organization's headquarters and taught seminars in the lower meadow – such as the one Fairfield attended in

³¹⁶ Mildred Loomis, "Questions, Answers on Heathcote," *Green Revolution*, April 1967, 4, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

1966. A series of families acted as custodians of the property up until 1968, at which point the community was infused with a surge of young members. Before 1968, there was considerable turnover of the custodian families. The first family to take up residence was the Sprauges, who installed bathrooms, repaired windows, and winterized the old mill. The Sprauges, however, were found guilty of violating the state's health codes after they refused to vaccinate their daughter for public school. According to a 1970 article in *GR*, the family was "given a choice of serving a jail term or leaving the state."³¹⁷ It chose to leave the state, and by 1968 a series of families had come and gone after personal disagreements with Loomis.

After the counterculture was exposed to the School of Living through youth seminars at Heathcote and in the pages of *TMU/AWO*, a countercultural commune emerged on the Heathcote grounds and Heathcote's total population blossomed in the late 1960s. By the summer of 1968, there were twenty-five full-time members of the commune, most of whom were part of the counterculture, and in 1969 Heathcote recorded more than 2,000 visitors to the community and its weekend seminars.³¹⁸ This population boom was compounded when *GR's* production was moved from Loomis's homestead in Ohio to Heathcote, where School of Living staff members could live and homestead alongside the hippie commune. Loomis even lived at Heathcote for periods of time during the late 1960s, though she often complained that the younger generation was not tidy enough and lacked focus.³¹⁹ By 1971, though the commune's year-round residents had stabilized at sixteen, Heathcote recorded more than 100 trial stays that year – meaning individuals who lived on the grounds for more than two weeks and less than two months.³²⁰

³¹⁷ Goldstein, "The Heathcote Experience," 5.

³¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 5.

³¹⁹ For a reproduced letter discussing the third generation's "disorderly" cleaning habits and how Loomis viewed the younger generation see Fairfield and Miller, *The Modern Utopian*, 61.

³²⁰ Goldstein, "The Heathcote Experience," 5.

By the late 1960s, Heathcote was a hybrid community that had more in common with Morning Star Ranch than with the 1940s Dayton experiment. Though Loomis had set aside land for a Single Tax land-trust community, which required prospective families to lease a two-acre plot of land for a one-time payment of 1000 dollars and pay nominal dues to the trust to gain voting rights, younger residents of Heathcote were interested neither in homesteading nor in voting. Most had not yet started families and could not afford the money to buy into the trust. As a result, an ad-hoc open land community developed as the younger generation paid for membership by repairing the old mill buildings to make them habitable. By 1971 the community's sixteen residents lived in a variety of dwellings ranging from "reconstructed chicken houses, corn crib, spring house, a trailer, a tee-pee, and a log cabin" to the carriage house.³²¹ As in other countercultural communities, there was a great deal of turnover in Heathcote's early years, and many members left every year in late summer to discover other communities or return to urban life. By 1970, however, Heathcote's population had stabilized, and residents were beginning to craft a community politics rooted in libertarianism and consensus-based decision-making.

The political culture of Heathcote in the early 1970s was a merger of countercultural ideals with the more formal ideology of the School of Living. Issues of *GR* in the early 1970s contained a variety of testimonials from younger Heathcote members, offering a glimpse into this merger and illustrating how the School of Living successfully communicated its antimodern ideas to the younger generation. Herb Goldstein, for instance, reflected upon his time at Heathcote and how he had converted to the School of Living's world view. He stated that "In my year-and-a-half here I feel as tho [sic] I've been permanently converted to a decentralist view-

³²¹ Ibid.

point” and also said he had gained valuable knowledge, such as the importance of organic foods and how to construct his own home.³²² Indicating how Heathcote was shaped by the counterculture and the New Left’s disintegration in the late 1960s, Goldstein also noted that “I’ve learnt that a community can function with a minimal amount of structure and rules and that consensus is a viable alternative to democracy, (where there is often an unhappy minority).”³²³ By the late 1960s, consensus decision-making – meaning all full-time residents of Heathcote had to agree on a course of action – had become a wildly popular countercultural practice following its popularization by members of the New Left in the mid-1960s.³²⁴ Third generation back-to-the-landers also adopted consensus from the communal Quaker tradition because, unlike America’s 1960s political climate, it promised peaceful, communal decision-making and no unhappy minority.

The insistence on decision-making through consensus and the libertarian focus on individual freedom reveals the complex interactions between the second and third generation at Heathcote. Countercultural members of Heathcote saw the merits of the School of Living’s practical knowledge and larger decentralist vision, but they also reveled in building the community’s anarchistic, egalitarian, political culture. Another writer, who aptly went by the name Gypsy, concurred with Goldstein and stated that “as a community we are fortunate enough to live in a constant state of flux so that no order can be imposed on us. Any order has to come first from within myself.”³²⁵ The focus on personal transformation as a way of leading to larger

³²² *Ibid.*, 6.

³²³ *Ibid.*

³²⁴ The New Left did adopt consensus decision-making but as Todd Gitlin has observed reaching consensus could be extremely difficult. See Gitlin, *The Sixties*, 196.

³²⁵ Gypsy, “The Heathcote Experience: Personal Interpretations,” *Green Revolution*, January 1970, 6, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

cultural change was a telling sentiment and demonstrated the larger shift on the Left towards personal liberation as opposed to the Old Left's focus on structural and economic change for the entire nation. For Gypsy, going back to the land was a way to foster this internal search for order. Gypsy used Heathcote to gain necessary back-to-the-land skills and planned to move on to a "less civilized" rural place to continue his journey – a difference, as we have seen, from earlier generations who envisioned going back to the land as a suburban endeavor.³²⁶ Both Goldstein and Gypsy's testimonies highlight how the countercultural preoccupation with experimentation, egalitarianism, and communalism had shaped Heathcote by the 1970s and created a hybrid political culture that contained seemingly contradictory ideas like libertarianism and communitarianism.

Over the course of the 1970s, Heathcote remained a hub of back-to-the-land instruction. Many third wave back-to-the-landers spent time in the community, either living on the grounds or attending seminars and conferences. By 1977, though, the community's population had leveled off at ten full-time members – an average population for medium-sized communes – and the community had matured away from its more anarchistic political culture. Though the full-time population declined, by this point, the commune had attracted a few families who bought into the homestead land-trust.³²⁷ Along with producing the School of Living's *GR* publication, the community also ran a series of seminars and annual conferences on back-to-the-land topics. The most successful of these events was the annual Alternative Energy and Shelter conference

³²⁶ Gypsy, "The Heathcote Experience," 6.

³²⁷ It is unclear from the source material if these new families made decisions via consensus. By the late 1970s prominent back-to-the-landers like John Shuttleworth ended up adopting the School of Living's right-leaning libertarianism, so it would be unsurprising if homesteaders at Heathcote used voting. See Mildred Loomis, "Seeds of Change: A Report from the School of Living," *Green Revolution: Seeds of Change*, December 1977, 3, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

which offered participants information on solar energy, methane generation, and bicycle-powered grain mills.³²⁸

Heathcote's evolution from a second-generation ideal community to a functioning countercultural community demonstrates how the second and third generations interacted and how the School of Living provided instruction to members of the counterculture. While Heathcote eventually turned into a land-trust community, the fact that the younger generation established its own community, with a communal politics based on consensus, reveals fundamental differences between the generations, differences which, as we have seen, were rooted in the different historical contexts – and antimodern sensibilities – that led each to leave urban space. At the same time, Heathcote was unique in this intergenerational history for not all countercultural communities were as integrated with the second generation. The founding histories and early experiences of these later communities reveal that the counterculture's focus on harmony and communalism led to a variety of social and political structures as their back-to-the-land projects took shape.

“Upleveling” at Alpha Farm:

Consensus Decision-Making and Egalitarian Communalism

Alpha Farm's political trajectory was shaped by the fact that its early founders were Quakers disillusioned by contemporary New Left politics who moved from Philadelphia to rural Oregon in the early 1970s. It should be noted that Quakers were a religious group that many counterculturalists sought to emulate because their social, political, and religious ideas were

³²⁸ Kyla, “Annual Alternative Energy Conference,” *Green Revolution*, March 1977, 20, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

viewed as more egalitarian, harmonious, and socially conscious. According to the community's early documents, the idea for Alpha Farm began in March 1971 when Caroline Estes, a Quaker in her early 40s, attended an American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) camp in New Jersey. The AFSC was the Quakers' service arm involved in social outreach to the Civil Rights movement and the Antiwar movement in the 1960s. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, there was a split within the AFSC between an older generation that wanted to continue traditional Civil Rights programs and a growing faction of members – who became known as the Movement for a New Society (MNS) – who were influenced by the New Left and the counterculture. Members of the MNS wanted to create new communities where individuals could pursue individual spiritual renewal and local political action.³²⁹

During the 1971 AFSC in Philadelphia, Estes and other countercultural Quakers established the MNS. It was at this moment that she decided to go back to the land. At a meeting of the new MNS at the AFSC, she claimed to have felt a “particularly intense movement of the Spirit.”³³⁰ She realized that she had been given a commandment from God to live “the spirit of God with wholeness and balance and givingness [sic]” in a community of like-minded individuals.³³¹ According to her, the group left for the same reason that drove others of the period, or in her words because “the change that would change the world was first in our own hearts, and as enough people stayed tuned to that spirit, its reality would naturally expand to others.”³³² Estes, like most members of the counterculture, believed that if enough people were

³²⁹ For more on this early history in Estes' own words see Estes, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Caroline Estes Interview," 1.

³³⁰ Caroline Estes, "Initiation and Early History," 1974, 1, Alpha Farm Box - Information Material 1976-2006, CCS Archive.

³³¹ Estes, "Initiation and Early History," 1.

³³² Ibid.

given the space to self-actualize, their internal transformation would slowly spread to the rest of society – a belief that reflects larger shifts towards the politicization of the personal that had begun with the New Left in the early 1960s. This was no apolitical endeavor and was a direct response to the New Left political movement's disintegration in the late 1960s, which further fueled the generation's inward turn. The MNS was explicitly framed as a political movement in response to the war in Vietnam that could reach out to local rural communities through the "Berkeley Model" – a reference to how political radicals in Berkeley in the late 1960s and early 1970s successfully ran for political office on a local level.

While Estes's early vision of reaching out to locals was inherently political, it was also escapist since it was a retreat from the left-leaning social activism that many Quakers – and counterculturalists – had pursued since the mid-1960s. As such, Estes's decision to go back to the land reflects larger shifts within the counterculture in the early 1970s. Along similar lines, Estes's escapism was reminiscent of the generations of back-to-the-landers who had come before her. White, middle-class urbanites like Scott Nearing and Bolton Hall had also rejected contemporary society and politics in a search for antimodern alternatives. As we shall see, many elements of Estes's early political vision appealed to other members of the counterculture, especially Alpha Farm's use of consensus and group encounter therapy to shape a harmonious political culture.

Estes found early support from her husband Jim as well as from Glenn Hovemann and Linda Williams, friends allied with Quaker causes who lived near the Estes in Philadelphia.³³³ The group spent the next year looking for rural land in the West because Western states' political

³³³ Estes, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Caroline Estes Interview," 1.

climates were perceived as more egalitarian and populist.³³⁴ After traveling around the West, they settled on the Pacific Northwest because of its assumed regional personality. For them, the Northwest was “generally open-minded and tolerant, with relatively small populist–type political units. The land was newly settled by white people [the 1850s hardly constitutes newly settled], and tradition was not entrenched compared to most other area [sic]. The climate was mild, educational facilities were good, the ocean was nearby and the land seemed not to be particularly prone to earthquakes.”³³⁵ Interestingly, the group admitted that it did very little research about earlier communal movements and stated that there was little readily available information to be had. Their interest in small populist political units and “newly settled” land, however, puts them squarely in the back-to-the-land political tradition and the counterculture’s nostalgic framing of the American West and the Western political style. This nostalgia often erased the history of Native groups.

In April 1972, they decided on a large plot of land in the coast range west of Eugene near the small town of Deadwood, Oregon, and began moving in over the summer. The name of their community, Alpha Farm, was taken from the property's history, which had contained the local post office that had used “Alpha” as a postmark in the early twentieth century. The land was relatively remote, and the rural community was deeply conservative, though, given local animosity towards the federal government and land agencies, members of Alpha Farm and locals shared a similar set of attitudes towards the federal government. Moreover, the proximity to Eugene, which as a university town was a bastion of Left politics, meant that the early residents of Alpha Farm were not entirely isolated from other liberal counterculturalists. Like in other

³³⁴ Caroline Estes, “Prospectus,” 1971, Alpha Farm Box - Information Material 1976-2006, CCS Archive.

³³⁵ Estes, "Initiation and Early History," 3.

rural parts of the country, local single-family farming was on the decline, yet unlike rural Maryland or Virginia, rural Oregon's landscape was markedly different from the mid-Atlantic coast. Indeed, based on the demand for wood products in the post-World War Two economy, large timber companies in the Pacific Northwest, such as Weyerhaeuser and Georgia-Pacific, undertook a massive clear-cutting campaign on their lands – which, given this history of the region, were extensive. By the late 1960s and early 1970s, little private timber remained, and Alpha Farm members gravitated to the area around Deadwood, hoping to be better environmental stewards. Indeed, the land that Alpha Farm sat on had been clear-cut in the 1930s, and by the 1970s, the 220 acres of second-growth forest they purchased offered both economic and environmental possibilities.

During this early phase of settlement, the founders of Alpha Farm attracted a small number of other like-minded individuals by circulating a prospectus in Philadelphia to other MNS members that laid out a clear antimodern message. The document is significant for explaining their motivations for leaving cities, their desire for a more hospitable local political climate, and their countercultural political ideals. The opening paragraphs stated that they were “grieved by a loss of control over ourselves,” and that they sought “the opportunity to create, in an atmosphere of freedom and reality, a viable alternative for ourselves and others.”³³⁶ Such a sentiment could have been lifted from the pages of Hall’s *Three Acres and Liberty* or Borsodi’s *Flight From the City*. Reflecting the broader Left’s inward turn, the authors of the prospectus were also explicit about how their earlier lives working for peace and social change were too “outwardly focused” as opposed to inwardly focused, and that any “renewal of the social order” could only occur if individuals questioned their basic assumptions and “patterns of daily living”

³³⁶ Estes, “Prospectus,” 1.

in order to “live ourselves into the future we seek.”³³⁷ For members of Alpha Farm, then, living on the land in the West would provide the perfect space for prospective members to pursue the search for authenticity.

In the prospectus, Alpha Farm members also went into the ways in which their daily patterns would have to be altered socially, spiritually, and politically to bring about an ideal society. Following in a long back-to-the-land rhetorical tradition – particularly Borsodi and the School of Living – they decried the effects of industrial society on families and communities. They stated that they wanted to “correct the isolation and built-in tensions of the nuclear family which has occurred in the industrial age.”³³⁸ This did not mean that they were a group marriage community; instead, they wanted to nurture communalism and allow children to learn from multiple adults – all of which they found lacking in Cold War society. They also imagined a more fruitful economic and political relationship with the local community. Unlike the anarchistic countercultural community blossoming at Heathcote during this same period, Alpha Farm was well organized and interested in local outreach – a core premise of the Berkeley Model. Reflecting the counterculture’s focus on egalitarianism, Alpha Farm members set out to learn from their neighbors and create “non-exploitative relations with others” from the very beginning.³³⁹ They created Alpha-Bit, their local business arm, which ran a bookstore and successfully won a local mail delivery route —an effective way to meet their neighbors while also demonstrating that they took the community's history seriously.

One of the other elements of going back to the land and living in rural areas was what they saw as government on a “sufficiently small scale to play a meaningful part” in – a sentiment

³³⁷ *Ibid.*, 2.

³³⁸ *Ibid.*

³³⁹ *Ibid.*, 3.

that harkened back to Borsodi's call for decentralization.³⁴⁰ In the prospectus, they described themselves as "rankled by uncontrolled corruption and the quasi-police state we now see around us," and bemoaned the "gross inadequacies and miseducation that passes for school systems in major cities."³⁴¹ They hoped that their small community outside of Deadwood would provide a more nurturing atmosphere than Cold War American society. Over the course of the 1970s, they became involved in local politics, especially concerning environmental policy. Estes even joined a local advisory board on land management. She shared the locals' distrust of big government and hoped to shape the local council's policies towards environmental concerns. When such influence did not work, members of Alpha Farm even took matters into their own hands. When the Bureau of Land Management brought pesticide-spraying trucks down the nearby Deadwood Creek Road, Alpha Farm members surrounded them with thirteen cars, and Estes recalls telling the BLM workers that "Eugene is that-a-way. Don't ever come back."³⁴² According to her, they never did, thus confirming her sense that the rural West was the best place for back-to-the-land communities to conduct utopian experiments aimed at environmental and socio-political harmony away from central authorities.

Overall, Alpha Farm was quite successful in Deadwood in the early-to-mid 1970s. Their mail route, bookstore, and café will be explored further in the next chapter. There were many reasons for this success, notably how well-organized they were. The majority of documents in the University of Southern Indiana's Center for Communal Studies' Alpha Farm archive are not newsletters or philosophical treatises, but instead are receipts, business ledgers, timecards, and completed member forms for borrowing cars and other minutiae. Alpha Farm's political system

³⁴⁰ Ibid.

³⁴¹ Ibid.

³⁴² Estes, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Caroline Estes Interview," 13–14.

of consensus was equally well organized. This was partly a result of the founders' shared Quaker roots as well as the fact that the community never exceeded more than eleven full-time members – though the community often contained far more part-time or trial residents. Indeed, such a system broke down in larger, more transient communities like Morning Star Ranch. Though the early founders were Quakers, the consensus process had wider appeal with the counterculture because, disillusioned as they were by the New Left's failure, its antimajoritarian form of governing appealed to the younger generation's sense that political cultures needed to foster harmony and egalitarianism. As such, exploring how consensus worked at Alpha Farm offers a window into understanding how some thriving third-generation communities sought to ensure internal harmony.

By 1975, when the group incorporated in Oregon and drafted its bylaws, egalitarian communalism via consensus decision-making had become a cornerstone of the community. In a series of documents drafted, presumably by Caroline Estes, in the mid-1970s to supplement the bylaws, Alpha Farm's version of consensus was explained as "probably the hardest form possible" because it required complete participation – a key New Left precept – and "unselfcenteredness [sic] to work correctly."³⁴³ Since any one individual had the power to veto a decision, the community could only run when all members were in harmony – a key countercultural ideal. According to the supplemental documents, the result was a "fully unified group, without any of the divisive influences of voting."³⁴⁴ It is telling that these new back-to-the-landers were so preoccupied with eliminating divisions and creating harmony that voting itself was a suspect mechanism within society, a sentiment shared by Heathcote and Twin Oaks

³⁴³ Caroline Estes, "Governance," 1975, 1, Alpha Farm Box, Alpha Farm Box - Information Material 1976-2006, CCS Archive.

³⁴⁴ Estes, "Governance," 1.

members. This form of hip consensus was predicated on the material equality of members and their equal engagement with the system to eliminate divisions because they feared that such divisions would lead to inequality, disharmony, and eventual dissolution of the community – in other words what they saw happening in contemporary politics during Nixon’s Watergate Scandal. Given the counterculture’s post-scarcity mindset, such a political system was appealing to utopians in the counterculture because it promised a more egalitarian and harmonious political culture.

To avert potential disharmony and inequality, Alpha Farm members allowed for three courses of action when disagreements arose in the community. If members disagreed with the matter at hand, they could veto it, postpone their decision for “further reflection,” or they could “step aside,” and allow the majority’s decision to stand with the understanding that dissenters took *full* responsibility for it.³⁴⁵ Additionally, there were two different venues for consensus decision-making. The community was incorporated as a corporation whose board consisted of all full members, and their decisions had to be reached by consensus. There was also the “full house” which included all individuals working and living on the farm, including those who had not yet become full members. This latter group did not have the power to substantially impact the community’s finances, but the full house settled most day-to-day decisions. Thus, all Alpha Farm residents were engaged with the consensus process and, even if they disagreed with the community’s decision, took equal responsibility for creating social harmony.

Along with fostering egalitarianism, Alpha Farm’s political culture was supported by meetings on religious beliefs and group encounter therapy sessions to create social harmony by enabling individuals to become self-actualized and thus ensure that consensus ran smoothly.

³⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 2.

Group encounter therapy was a widely popular activity within the counterculture, which required members to listen to blunt statements critiquing their personalities and habits so that they could work on personal issues such as jealousy and being too “ego” driven, both of which were believed to contribute to disharmony. Often quite emotionally brutal, these therapy sessions were also practical and aimed at airing community grievances in order to avoid larger conflicts that would destabilize consensus meetings. Along similar lines, Alpha Farm members held regular meetings on religious ideas related to social and environmental harmony, ranging the spectrum from Quakerism to New Age belief systems. It was hoped that both the religious meetings and therapy sessions would ensure that all members shared similar ideas about what they termed “upleveling,” i.e., personal self-actualization. It is also crucial to recognize that over the course of the 1970s, these meetings facilitated the community’s transition away from Quakerism and towards a more diffuse and inwardly focused New Age spirituality, a process that was already underway when MNS members broke away from the AFSC in the early 1970s. Reflecting this process, in a supplement to the by-laws entitled “Support and Conversation” Estes stated that “When each individual joins the family they accept a profound commitment to love, protect, and encourage the personal growth of each other; and similar, to be open ourselves to each other’s help in this business of upleveling our lives.”³⁴⁶ As such, consensus was one of a number of socio-political structures geared to ensure that the community ran smoothly, fostered egalitarianism, and enabled individual, rather than societal, transformation.

Although a widespread practice, Heathcote and Alpha Farm’s use of consensus did not appeal to all third-generation communities; some, such as Twin Oaks, openly scoffed at the idea.

³⁴⁶ Caroline Estes, “Support and Conversation,” 1975, 1, Alpha Farm Box - Information Material 1976-2006, CCS Archive.

Such differences highlight the myriad ways that the counterculture was seeking new antimajoritarian, experimental, and communal political structures and the role of preexisting communal movements in shaping members of the counterculture. There remained considerable common ground between Alpha Farm and Twin Oaks within these differences, since both hoped that their governing structures would ensure harmony and enable individual members to “uplevel” their lives.

Behavioral Engineering and Undemocratic Governance at Twin Oaks

Within the scholarship of the communal movement and the countercultural back-to-the-land movement, Twin Oaks has customarily been placed in the former tradition because it was formed in the mid-1960s rather than in the early 1970s.³⁴⁷ Unlike most other back-to-the-land communities, Twin Oaks was founded on the principles of B.F. Skinner, which predated the counterculture. Unlike other countercultural communities such as Alpha Farm, Twin Oaks members were also conscious of their place within the twentieth-century communal movement. They, like Skinner, drew on the technological utopianism of Edward Bellamy and his faith in central planning. They were also aware of earlier communities such as the Hutterites and the Oneida community and replicated some of their communal ownership practices. The community named many of its first buildings after these groups. Furthermore, early members of Twin Oaks sought to distance themselves from the “hippie” movement and hippie communal experiments like Morning Star Ranch, arguing that that movement’s lack of structure was not conducive to creating harmonious, egalitarian communities.

³⁴⁷ Miller places Twin Oaks before the countercultural back-to-the-land movement, which in his chronology began after the 1967 Summer of Love. See his chapter "Communes Begin to Spread 1965-1967" and the sections on Twin Oaks. Miller, *The 60's Communes*, 13, 56.

Framing Twin Oaks as part of the twentieth-century communal movement, rather than the countercultural back-to-the-land movement, too closely follows the historical actors' rhetorical representations of themselves and simply repeats the reasons they sought distance from the negative connotations of the hippie movement. This framing also obscures how intricately Walden House, and later Twin Oaks, were tied with the counterculture in the mid-1960s and how the *TMU/AWO* merger introduced the third generation to back-to-the-land ideas. Indeed, the Walden Two movement of the mid-1960s was part of both the early counterculture and the larger back-to-the-land movement's search for human perfectibility. Twin Oaks even managed member subscriptions for the School of Living's *GR* publication in the early 1970s and socialized with Heathcote. Twin Oaks, then, was a countercultural back-to-the-land community despite its rigid adherence to behaviorism. Its undemocratic – and thoroughly technocratic – political culture reflects the countercultural impulse to commune and create new antimajoritarian communities. A brief description of the community's early history and its governing structures will support this new framing.

The earliest experiments in communal living undertaken by the founders of Twin Oaks were at Walden House, a seven-bedroom home in Washington, D.C., during the mid-1960s. The founders viewed Walden House as a transitional space to prepare themselves for a rural, self-sufficient Walden Two community based on Skinner's utopian writing – clearly demonstrating the role of already-established social change movements on the emerging counterculture. It is important to recognize that Walden House members chose Skinner's undemocratic model as a reaction to the political context of the mid-to-late 1960s. Indeed, their disillusionment with New Left political mobilizing against the Vietnam war represents how the emerging counterculture turned inwards towards personal liberation. Like Richard Fairfield and other members of the

counterculture, early Walden House members were in search of more harmonious and less democratic socio-political relationships to counter the divisions they saw in mainstream American politics. The primary difference between Walden House and the early counterculture lay in the former's trust of scientific experts and Skinner's rigidly organized utopia run by a planner-elite. At the same time, however, such faith in technocratic management and undemocratic means was not a break with the larger utopian currents in the twentieth century since Edward Bellamy's socialist utopia was anything but democratic or anarchistic. The resulting political culture at Walden House, and later Twin Oaks, was purposefully organized and largely undemocratic, though members shared the same goal of fostering harmony and egalitarianism with the broader counterculture.

It is clear from the group's early writing that Walden House members, though they trusted trained behavioral experts to run the community's governing structure, were, like the wider Left, sensitive to the importance of democratic participation. In June 1966, the *Walden House* newsletter discussed a recent meeting in St. Louis between Walden Two communities that concerned Walden House's proposed government structures. The house members framed the discussion about democracy around how much power they should give to planner-elites and the extent to which "other members control planned social changes."³⁴⁸ They assumed that all future community members would trust in Skinner's undemocratic form of social engineering through central planning but felt that there needed to be some democratic checks on potential authoritarianism.

³⁴⁸ It should be noted that most articles in the Walden House newsletters were penned by Kathleen Kinkade, though it also contained articles from members Rudy and Dusty. Kathleen Kinkade, "Proposal for Government," *Walden Pool*, June 1966, as reproduced in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks Vol. 1*, 6.

Members of Walden House framed the issue of democracy as a power struggle between planners and nonplanners, who would have competing ideas about how to implement Skinner's vision. In the newsletter, they stated that “the argument against democracy is that it allows the unqualified to place restraints on the experts” and argued that such a system “retards the possibilities of constructive social change and [scientific] experimentation” in search of an egalitarian society.³⁴⁹ In other words, while these countercultural followers of Skinner were whole-heartedly invested in behaviorism, they, like other counterculturalists, were distrustful of centralized authority, especially if it came in the form of older academics. Thus, while trust in academic “experts” to create tools for behavioral engineering sets Walden House members apart from later anarchistic elements of the counterculture in the late 1960s, members of the group were very much a part of political shifts on the American Left in the mid-to-late 1960s.

These generational differences also played out in the national Walden Two movement. By 1966 there was an emerging split within the national movement over how quickly communities could be reasonably founded and the extent to which they would include democratic checks on planners. By this point, Skinner's younger adherents, like the members of Walden House, were eager to go back to the land and chafed at older academics who were holding them back and who insisted on total authority over the movement. Along similar lines, a faction of the younger generation also began critiquing Walden Two academic experts for their authoritarian tendencies, in particular the way they ran the annual conferences. Indeed, intergenerational conflict boiled over when Walden House members attended the Walden Two national convention in August 1966. In an amusing display of the counterculture’s idealism, the conference was thrown into disorder when a younger minority group – though not including

³⁴⁹ Kinkade, “Proposal for Government,” 6.

Walden House members – commandeered the stage. This minority briefly captured the podium to protest for more democratic inclusion as a counter to the relative power of academic, “expert” behaviorists, who, following the minority’s departure, then berated the audience for not behaving properly. The *Walden House* newsletter provided its own take on events. It concluded that “the difficulty at the conference arose from the fact that nobody knows quite enough about behavioral engineering to step into a group of eighty people and control it. The methods substituted, ludicrously enough, was to....scold us for not ‘behaving’ properly.”³⁵⁰

It is apparent from the way that the Walden House newsletter narrated the conflict that it took a more centrist position between what it described as a “particularly senseless minority demonstration on the subject of democracy” and the academic leaders at the podium who admonished the audience to behave correctly.³⁵¹ Countercultural members of Walden House sympathized with the democracy demonstrators while at the same time adhering to Skinner’s behaviorist ideas. Members of Walden House, most of whom were in the audience, the newsletter stated, felt that “all of our conditioning calls out for some sort of plebiscite, some form of democratic check on power...we stand for some system that does not depend on personal integrity for its functioning.”³⁵² This was an understandable position for early members of the counterculture living during a period of intense political struggles in the mid-1960s. From the Free Speech movement to the Civil Rights movement, young liberals in the mid-1960s sought democratic checks on power. At the same time, however, the counterculture’s push for democracy and the Walden Two movement’s strict behaviorism was a recipe for conflict.

³⁵⁰ Kathleen Kinkade, “Conference Report,” *Walden House Newsletter*, June 1966, as reproduced in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks Vol. 1*, 10.

³⁵¹ Kinkade, “Conference Report,” 11.

³⁵² *Ibid.*

Disagreements between leadership and interested members of Walden Two communities continued into early 1967. Another conference was scheduled by the national Walden Two organization for late December in 1966 in Racine, Wisconsin, but this time the conference was open only to academic experts who had an invitation. Members of Walden House were not invited, and by January 1967 they were discussing “to split or not to split.”³⁵³

According to the Walden House newsletter, this controversy directly led to the creation of Twin Oaks. The only people who were invited to the December conference had been older academics, including behavioral scientists, architects, and other professionals. The invitees did not include the group who had been appointed to the leadership council following the acrimonious dispute about democracy during the summer conference. Thus, a group of academic elites had disregarded the countercultural Walden Two movement's desires, a primary fear that the pro-democracy group had expressed. In response to these developments, Walden House members met in Atlanta, Georgia with other uninvited Walden Two followers at the end of January 1967. The group appears to have been distrustful of the national committee and impatient to get on with the formation of its own rural Walden Two community. Reporting in March 1967, the newsletter stated that the Atlanta meeting resulted in two agreements: “that we all are interested in a community that is rural, independent, and equalitarian; and that we are willing to do the work that such a project requires on a limited budget.”³⁵⁴ This Atlanta group, funded by a friend in Washington, D.C., purchased a 123-acre farm in Louisa County, Virginia, and moved in with their paisley school buses during the summer of 1967.

³⁵³ Kinkade, “Conference Report,” *Walden Pool*, January 1967, as reproduced in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks Vol. 1*, 112.

³⁵⁴ Kinkade, “Two Conferences,” *Walden House Newsletter*, March 1967, as reproduced in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks Vol. 1*, 13.

The choice of rural Louisa County places Twin Oaks within the larger countercultural back-to-the-land movement. Situated between Richmond and Charlottesville on the I-64 corridor, the then-remote area shared many similarities with rural Maryland, where Heathcote was located. Like Heathcote, members of Twin Oaks moved beyond the encroaching suburbs of Richmond and Washington D.C. – the Dulles corridor expansion was in full swing by this point – to a rural area with a handful of small towns. As a rural area in the early 1970s, the local agricultural economy for single-family farms was in decline in Louisa county. Indeed, members of Twin Oaks purchased the farm from an older farmer who was leaving the business. Unlike Maryland and rural Oregon, however, piedmont Virginia’s southern colonial roots shaped the culture and landscape around Twin Oaks.³⁵⁵ Tobacco was still a primary cash crop in the area, and members of Twin Oaks briefly got into the business, though they promptly left citing moral qualms about health. Like the rural Pacific Northwest, rural communities in Virginia were deeply conservative and distrustful of urban hippies. Following a few drug and runaway searches by local police, the community instituted a no-drug policy and established clear rules for who could be a guest. Members of Twin Oaks, like Alpha Farm, were not isolated. The nearby college town of Charlottesville was quickly becoming another center for the counterculture and the back-to-the-land movement. Indeed, over the course of the 1970s, the area around Charlottesville became heavily influenced by the counterculture as homesteaders and communitarians flocked to the area. It is within this context that members of Twin Oaks experimented with a novel political system.

Walden House members took lessons learned from their interactions with the national committee and modified Skinner’s original utopian scheme to include more democratic oversight

³⁵⁵ Riney-Kehrberg, *The Routledge History of Rural America*, 55-65.

of expert planners.³⁵⁶ As soon as they arrived at their rural utopia, they established both an undemocratic government with a board of planners and full transparency in the community's decision-making process, which became key components of Twin Oaks's political culture. Moving forward, all board minutes and decisions would be posted on the community board, and members would have the right to veto board decisions if two-thirds assented, thus ensuring a check on the planners' undemocratic power.

The community's early governmental structure followed the Skinnerian model, with a Board of Planners as well as section managers who ran various activities – from the newsletter to the hammock workshop. In the first year of its existence, Twin Oaks members viewed their undemocratic community as a unique, practically-minded utopia that was well-run and well-planned. Interestingly, they also viewed themselves as the most radical experiment within the counterculture because they were conducting the most radical and sensible form of “dropping out.” Indeed, they even distinguished themselves from anarchistic hippies, whose communes, such as Morning Star Ranch and Heathcote, they condescendingly saw as disastrously undermanaged and chaotic.

By the spring of 1968, Twin Oaks had been discovered by the wider counterculture and droves of hippies had begun to descend on the budding community. This contributed to a sense of differentiation between the founders and the newer members who had moved to Virginia from the West Coast. In the March 1968 *Leaves of Twin Oaks*, founding member Kathleen “Kat”

³⁵⁶ Interestingly, Skinner had allowed for a two-thirds vote of the managers and a unanimous vote of the Board to change Walden Two's community's constitution. He was deeply skeptical of democratic government. He had a main character, Frazier, tell a questioner who asked if the entire membership could vote. Frazier stated, “You're still thinking about government by the people. Get that out of your head. The people are in no better position to change the constitution than decide upon current practices.” See B. F. Skinner, *Walden Two* (Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing, 1948), 254.

Kinkaid situated Twin Oaks within the larger utopian movement and tried to define what made it different, a framing that has been replicated in the scholarship of the community. Twin Oaks members like Kinkaid saw ideological similarities between themselves and religious communities such as the Hutterites, which had similar communal political structures despite having different aims. They also noted “philosophical” similarities between themselves and the anarchistic hippie communes. Indeed, Kinkaid argued that “the hippies, like us, believe that life should be full of joy and freedom and restricted as little as possible by conventional trivia.”³⁵⁷ There were, however, a number of differences Kinkaid saw between Twin Oaks and the hippies. According to members of Twin Oaks, whereas hippie communities rejected government and permitted the use of drugs, Twin Oaks banned all illegal substances and used rigid governmental structures to ensure work was accomplished. Twin Oaks, it should be noted, was by no means alone in banning drugs – a policy adopted by Alpha Farm as well – and regulation of drugs became more common in successful back-to-the-land communities in the 1970s as a result of famous drug busts at communities like Morning Star Ranch in the early 1970s.

Twin Oaks’s critique of hippies, while revealing subtle differences in style, ultimately demonstrates how Twin Oaks was part of the larger countercultural movement of the late 1960s and 1970s and the role preexisting social movements played in shaping the countercultural back-to-the-land movement. Similarities between members of Twin Oaks and hippies can be seen in an article that appeared in both *TMU/AWO* and the *Leaves of Twin Oaks* in 1968 entitled “Twin Oaks and The Larger Movement.” The article was written by Twin Oaks co-founder Rudy, a proponent of Skinner’s vision who managed many of Twin Oaks’s successful economic

³⁵⁷ Kathleen Kinkade, “We Are Discovered by the Hippies,” *Leaves of Twin Oaks*, March 1968, as reproduced in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks Vol. 1*, 36.

ventures. The article delved into how Twin Oaks and other communities fit within larger radical movements for social change on the Left in the late 1960s. Rudy argued that the communal back-to-the-land movement was dealing with the same liberal issues addressed by other groups such as “student, draft, peace, civil rights, poverty, labor... SDS and the Wobblies.”³⁵⁸ According to Rudy both the countercultural back-to-the-land movement and other radical social change movements focused on “equal rights for men and women, a classless society, and some sort of equitable distribution system.”³⁵⁹ This was, of course, a simplistic comparison – the mainstream Civil Rights movement of the 1950s and mid-1960s had been neither Marxist nor anti-patriarchy.

The fundamental difference that Rudy saw between Twin Oaks and other radicals in 1968 was that Twin Oaks was attempting to create immediate alternatives for those dropping out of society instead of the New Left’s efforts to take down the current “power structure” before setting up these alternatives. It is important to recognize how this belief positioned members of Twin Oaks within the political context of the late 1960s and how the third generation’s overwhelmingly white, middle-class demographics shaped its call for rural communalism. In critiquing the New Left for not creating social and cultural alternatives, Rudy was part of the counterculture’s inward turn in the late 1960s, even if he claimed not to be a hippie (it is worth noting again that while all hippies were part of the counterculture, the counterculture contained more than just hippies). Moreover, in a follow-up article written by Erik entitled “Twin Oaks and the Revolution” in 1971, the Black Panthers were added to the list of groups whose radicalism and violence precluded a larger cultural revolution – signaling the profound social and racial

³⁵⁸ Rudy, “Twin Oaks and the Larger Movement,” *Leaves of Twin Oaks*, March 1968, as reproduced in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks Vol. 1*, 39.

³⁵⁹ Rudy, “Twin Oaks and the Larger Movement,” 39.

positioning of Twin Oaks members. Like the generations of back-to-the-landers that came before, then, Rudy and the other founders of Twin Oaks went back-to-the-land to serve their own personal interest in small community transformation rather than offering the truly radical alternative to American society that they claimed.

Following Rudy's critique of the New Left, he argued that two groups were actively dropping out of society: communities like Twin Oaks and the hippies. According to Rudy, there were three subgroupings of hippies. First, there were "those living off the fringe of society, living in cities, panhandling on the streets....These have dropped out only in the sense that they are not engaged in contributing anything to the society."³⁶⁰ The second group he labeled the "self-revolution group," which was mainly preoccupied with individual transformation through religious or drug-induced experiences. The third group was the community hippies, which he spent more time on. For him, the fundamental difference between Twin Oaks and the community hippies was the latter's rejection of all power structures. He argued that "the hippie fear of organization is the main difference, and this seems to me analogous to the SDS fear of nondemocratic means. In both cases, it is obvious to all that the 'evils' are performed by organizations, systems, structures, such as the police, the military, the corporate – political structure, the authoritarian educational system, etc. etc."³⁶¹ His primary critique of these community hippies is not that they are impractical, which is assumed in the article, but that their lack of structure would generate the very same sorts of inequalities that they were trying to stamp out.

³⁶⁰ Ibid.

³⁶¹ Ibid., 40.

Rudy noted that many of the community hippies who came to visit Twin Oaks in 1968 were thoroughly disgusted by the labor credit system – a system based on Bellamy’s ideas that Skinner developed to ensure that all members had access to meaningful labor – because decisions were passed down by labor managers, but that often their communities defaulted to gendered divisions of labor. At the same time, Rudy’s differentiation between hippies and Twin Oaks members was overblown and mainly served to distinguish Twin Oaks’ successful planning from the explosion of countercultural communities that rose and fell in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Both groups were part of the third generation and the counterculture, and all sought to create political cultures to nurture harmony and egalitarian communalism.

Twin Oaks’s actual system of government indeed appeared to deviate from counterculture communities like Morning Star Ranch and Heathcote. A closer examination, however, of its motivations and goals keeps the community firmly within the countercultural back-to-the-land movement. The undemocratic governance of Twin Oaks is best understood as occurring at three levels. The first and most powerful was the three-member Board of Directors, with each member serving eighteen months. The membership did not vote on their replacements but instead were appointed by existing Board members. The Board was responsible for all crucial decision-making, setting policies on drug use, the admittance of new members, and even the community's economic direction.

There were very few checks on the board's power, which was tasked with ensuring that the community remained egalitarian by following behaviorism. In Article III Paragraph three of the community’s by-laws concerning governance, the founders defined the board's limits. According to the by-laws, the board must always “govern within the principles...of the community,” which included egalitarianism, behaviorism, and the elimination of “classism,

racism, ageism, patriarchy and other forms of oppression.”³⁶² It was also stipulated that the Board would allow public forums for the input of all full members, enabling a weak plebiscite that was not part of Skinner’s vision.

Along with the Board, Twin Oaks established a management system. The Board had the power to appoint “such other officers and representatives as it deems necessary” and “said officers shall be appointed for a term of one year, shall serve until their successors are appointed, and shall be removable at the will of the Board.”³⁶³ This group of appointees were the community managers, who held a great deal of power to make decisions and implement behavioral engineering on their “crews.” The number of managers changed over time depending on the community’s needs, and they ran much of the community’s day-to-day life. For instance, Rudy, the hammock manager, oversaw the community’s workshop and communicated directly with customers. The final group was the full membership who, upon joining, gave elements of their personal wealth to the community as a loan – thus meeting the IRS criteria as a tax-exempt egalitarian monastic community – and were responsible for meeting the community’s weekly labor requirements in the labor-credit system. Communalism and egalitarian work, then, were key goals of Twin Oaks’s early undemocratic political culture.

It is important to recognize that Twin Oaks’s political culture generated fierce debate within radical circles in the late 1960s and early 1970s. During this period, Twin Oaks members often had to defend their rural experiment from urban politicians who branded them escapists and counterculturalists like the Diggers who critiqued Twin Oaks’s rigid system in light of their own experiments with anarchism. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the debate about Twin Oaks’s

³⁶² "Revised Bylaws of Twin Oaks," 1978, 2, 7, Twin Oaks Box – Twin Oaks Taxes Folder, CCS Archive.

³⁶³ "Revised Bylaws of Twin Oaks," 7.

system, with its focus on long-term viability over immediate personal freedom, revealed a growing split within the third generation between practically-minded communities like Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm and open land communities like Drop City and Morning Star Ranch. Such debates often took place with newly arrived visitors as well as in articles in the underground media. In *TMU/AWO* and *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, Twin Oaks members painstakingly explained that the community was neither escapist nor apolitical and that its political culture aimed to cultivate individual transformation, egalitarianism, and communalism – all key elements of the counterculture’s cultural politics.

Aside from Rudy’s article, one particularly notable article defending Twin Oaks during this early period was penned by Kat Kinkade. In the January 1970 *Leaves*, she published an opinion piece simply titled “Government.” In the article, she explored critiques of the Twin Oaks system and laid out a series of arguments for why the undemocratic planner-manager system was the most effective for small communities that wanted to foster harmony and egalitarianism. The article offered readers a clear summary of Twin Oaks’ political culture. It explored how the community dealt with thorny issues such as allowing marijuana in the community, making economic decisions, adopting new members with children, and requiring outside work details. It also very specifically dove into ongoing political debates within the third generation about what types of political systems were best suited to fostering egalitarian communalism. Kinkade’s article was in many ways a reaction to the rise of (in)famous communities like Drop City and Morning Star Ranch, which at the time gained the most notoriety for their anarchism and experimentation with consensus meetings.

Kinkaid argued systems like consensus and pure democracy were too impractical for large back-to-the-land communities, which Twin Oaks hoped to become.³⁶⁴ She took direct aim at the most popular governing structure, consensus decision-making, by showing how impractical it would be for a typical Twin Oaks daily agenda in 1970. According to her, consensus would require all members to be present, meaning that planning meetings could only occur later in the evenings once people returned from town, as at this point, Twin Oaks relied on outside work for money. There would be heated discussions for contentious topics such as cannabis, and since no voting was allowed, discussions would either end when enough people got tired of the argument and left or an agreement was reached. Kinkade was skeptical that consensus could ever be reached over the drug topic, based upon group dynamics between new and seasoned members that led to the decision being postponed. Given that communities like Morning Star Ranch and Drop City had been busted numerous times in the past two years, Kinkade was worried that such postponement would lead to local hostilities and, most significantly, involvement with law enforcement. Moreover, she was also uncomfortable with the notion of postponing decisions because that meant that “in any issue that anyone is willing to argue about for a long period of time, the status quo will be upheld because of group fatigue.”³⁶⁵ Indeed, if Twin Oaks was meant to be an experimental community, such conservatism was untenable.

³⁶⁴ It should be noted that, as of 1970, Twin Oaks had fifteen full-time members – one less than Heathcote – though the community would go on to be one of the largest in America with more than a hundred members by the 1990s. By the mid-to-late 1970s there were around 70 members. Kathleen Kinkade, “General Information,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, October 1970, 13, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

³⁶⁵ Kathleen Kinkade, “Government” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, January 1970, 77.

Along similar lines, Kinkade argued that consensus was “primitive,” revealing how dedication to behaviorism infused early life within the community. She concluded that consensus procedure pushed “decision-making back to the more primitive methods of individual action, reaction, lead and follow.”³⁶⁶ To the behaviorists at Twin Oaks, who championed modern social engineering, the use of “primitive” decision-making techniques was unacceptable, a position that was understandable given Skinner’s reliance on Bellamy and technological utopianism. They may have gotten back to basics with organic gardening, but they wanted their social structures to be modern and cutting-edge. Indeed, on the question of accepting new members with children, a particularly fraught topic for behaviorists, Kinkaid believed that consensus would lead to decisions based on primitive instincts and mere “personal feelings” rather than the community’s long-term goals.³⁶⁷ Twin Oaks’s focus on behavioral engineering and scientific experimentation set it apart from other communities like Heathcote and Alpha Farm and the larger counterculture. Indeed, as we have seen, members of the counterculture like Morning Star Ranch residents even eschewed scientific knowledge in favor of emotion, spontaneity, and authenticity. It was this faction of the counterculture to which Kinkaid was responding by arguing that the Twin Oaks system was superior and that it shared the same ultimate goal: harmonious egalitarian communalism.

The next political process that Kinkade explored in her article was pure democracy, another fraught topic for Twin Oaks members in the late 1960s because they were being accused of authoritarianism by both members of the New Left and the broader counterculture. Kinkade argued that, unlike consensus decision-making, decisions in a pure democracy would ultimately

³⁶⁶ Kinkade, "Government," 78.

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 77.

be made, but that the system was unfeasible for Twin Oaks.³⁶⁸ Perhaps voicing larger dissatisfaction with politics in the late 1960s, she argued that consensus decision-making was not necessarily conducive to making the community's best long-term decisions. She continued the thought experiment by predicting how the group would vote on various issues. On the question of whether to allow cannabis in the community or new members with children, she noted that it would depend entirely on the makeup of the group rather than on the objective fact that cannabis would endanger the community's survival. If there had been a large flood of new members that wanted to smoke more than they worried about local police, it was possible that the community would vote to allow cannabis, sacrificing the community's long-term stability. Similarly, members would make decisions about children and new members based on the majority's short-term considerations.

Throughout her argument, Kinkaid was particularly concerned about members not being invested in the community's longer-term well-being. This perspective makes sense given the tumultuous histories of anarchist communities like Morning Star Ranch, which, though initially popular, collapsed in the early 1970s due to members putting their own personal freedom ahead of group interest – leading to drug busts and even outbreaks of infectious diseases like hepatitis. In many respects, the counterculture's focus on authenticity and personal transformation created situations in which personal fulfillment overrode long-term community goals, especially when it came to mind-altering substances. Kinkade's other argument was that decision-making via pure democracy for a large community was too impractical because many decisions, such as the drug question, required deliberation. She believed that individuals would be “influenced by personalities, by superficial aspects of issues, and by their desire to get the meeting over with and

³⁶⁸ Ibid., 78.

get on with their lives” rather than on “careful thought.”³⁶⁹ Given the profound political turmoil in the late 1960s as the New Left coalition collapsed, these undemocratic sentiments make sense. As Twin Oaks's members looked forward to their prospects in the 1970s, they hoped that their undemocratic system of planners would ensure harmony and egalitarianism.

From Theory to Practice:

The Limitations of Twin Oaks’s Ideal Political Culture in the 1980s

All successful third wave back-to-the-land communities in the 1970s and 1980s shared two critical characteristics. First, they were organized around core political ideologies rather than practicing pure anarchism as at Morning Star Ranch. Indeed, even Heathcote, which started as a libertarian, countercultural anarchist community, relied on the School of Living’s philosophy and organizational apparatus for structure and funding. From labor division to more mundane day-to-day tasks, members of communities like Alpha Farm, Twin Oaks, and Heathcote shared coherent founding philosophies rooted respectively in Quakerism, Behaviorism, and Decentralism.³⁷⁰ As a result, they were effective at organizing their lives and marshaling their labor for their respective communities' economic best interests. This organization ensured community stability. Secondly, they generally maintained a core group of early members that served as both leaders and cultural stewards. Heathcote and the School of Living had the guiding influence of Mildred Loomis and Ralph Borsodi; Twin Oaks organized itself around a small, rotating group of board members; and Alpha Farm, despite its consensus system, relied heavily on the leadership of Caroline and

³⁶⁹ Ibid.

³⁷⁰ Miller, citing Rosabeth Kantor’s influential sociological work *Commitment and Community*, makes a similar argument that successful communes had a shared greater purpose, either religious or secular, that allowed them to weather hardships in the 1970s. See Miller, *60s Communes*, 166-167.

Jim Estes. Even though these communities were successful, keeping in mind that “successful” meant paying their bills and retaining members, they encountered difficulties that placed a strain on their internal governmental systems. Twin Oaks, the paragon of undemocratic organizational structure, was a case in point.

By the 1980s, there was one recurring issue that brought Alpha Farm and Twin Oaks together. From the beginning, each had been concerned about raising the next generation of back-to-the-landers, and each adopted different approaches to raising children. At Alpha Farm, children and families were welcomed from the beginning, and parents took primary responsibility for raising their children. The community also sent their children to the local public schools. In contrast, Twin Oaks approached childrearing from a behaviorist perspective. Twin Oaks members sought to control the “variables” of their children’s lives by raising them communally and homeschooling them – an approach which, as we have seen, was eerily similar to the second generation’s positive eugenic framing of the back-to-the-land endeavor. Their approach to raising children, however, changed over time.

There was a debate early on in Walden House and in the early years of Twin Oaks about whether to allow children at all. Some Walden Two adherents believed that individuals needed to work through their own issues via behavioral engineering before they could be allowed to have children. For the first few years of Twin Oaks’s existence, it did not allow members to have children, though it did allow new members with children to join on a case-by-case basis. Indeed, as we have seen in Kinkade’s article on the Twin Oaks governmental structure, one of the issues she followed was the rationale for not accepting families that would hinder the community’s long-term interests.

In 1973, once the community became more financially stable and had built childcare space, Twin Oaks reversed course and encouraged existing members to have children. Following behaviorism, Twin Oaks instituted the “meta-system” in which the “primaries,” also known as parents, shared parenting responsibilities with the community’s childcare professionals, known as Metas. Over the course of the 1970s, they added other designations such as Midis and Megas who took care of middle schoolers and high schoolers, respectively. Metas, Midis, and Megas signed up for childcare as part of their weekly labor credits and reported back to the community through the newsletters about how the children were doing and how their behavioral engineering was proceeding. It is apparent from the newsletters that the early Meta-program took the behavioral engineering of children quite seriously. Indeed, Twin Oaks experimented with “air cribs” made of plexiglass and plywood that surrounded the child in order to ensure that the only stimulation they could receive was carefully regulated by the Metas.³⁷¹ As the community expanded and began building, it set aside spaces and buildings for childcare and families.

Over the course of the 1970s, the program appears to have been mostly successful as the community continued to grow – though they got rid of the plexiglass cribs. By the mid-1980s, however, tensions surrounding behavioral methods, the departure of a slew of families, and the allocation of child-friendly spaces boiled over. The community became particularly split over the questions of how many children to have in the community and how many adult-only spaces there should be. The Twin Oaks Board and Meta program manager were unable to resolve community

³⁷¹ It should be noted that, though Caroline Estes remembered that the first women to get pregnant at Twin Oaks was asked to leave, the community’s first baby was born in 1968 to a short-term member named Connie, who gave birth at a local hospital to a baby girl named Lisa Kay. On aircribs see Kathleen Kinkade, “Brand New Member,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, December 1968, 2, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

differences, despite the broad undemocratic powers that they had. To resolve the dilemma, the community reached out to a prominent figure in the communal movement: Caroline Estes.

By the 1980s, Estes had made a name for herself, both as one of Alpha Farm's leaders and as a traveling lecturer on consensus decision-making. Members of Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm had been aware of each other since the early 1970s – Kinkade's article critiquing consensus was published before Alpha Farm was established – and Estes was considered a neutral third-party who could help Twin Oaks with its childcare dilemma. She arrived for a week in October 1987 and conducted interviews and workshops with community members. The following year, she produced a report on the Twin Oaks child policy that offered a glimpse into deeper issues within the community's political culture. One of Twin Oaks' central issues was how much community participation was required in the childcare program. Estes noted in her report that over the years "Twin Oaks has been slowly moving away from a total communal childcare program more by default than design."³⁷² In other words, the board and management's planning had not kept up with subtle shifts in community parenting over time, and the political culture failed to avert dissension.

By the time Estes arrived in Virginia, the membership had become divided over how much space to give children and families. She observed that "Twin Oaks has people who are very interested in children and those who want them but are not interested in living closely with them," but she noted that only a fourth of the current adult population were parents, making them a clear minority – a fact which, given the community's adherence to behaviorism, is perhaps unsurprising.³⁷³ Rather than being the harmonious behavioralist utopia run by an enlightened

³⁷² Caroline Estes, "Caroline's Report Number II," 1988, 1, Twin Oaks Box - Twin Oaks Miscellaneous Folder, CCS Archive.

³⁷³ Estes, "Caroline's Report Number II," 2.

elite that Kinkade had imagined, the community had been unable to resolve deeper disagreements over children and the community's continuation. By the mid-1980s, the community had lost almost all its high-school-aged children as the childcare program declined and parents left. This worried Twin Oaks's leadership for obvious reasons: their utopia's long-term viability was at stake if they could not raise and foster a younger generation.

In her report, Estes argued that the community had not been clear enough about the kind of society it was trying to foster for potential members. There were no set policies on the ratio of children to adults. Estes noted that in her workshops, people had told her that the official ratio ranged from one in four, one in five, and not known to not wanting a ratio. She concluded that “in the end it appears there is no established agreement on this subject. Making, keeping and implementing agreements is the place where everyone builds trust in this society.”³⁷⁴ That trust had been broken was evidenced by groups of parents taking their children out of the community in the mid-1980s when it became apparent that the community's dedication to children was wavering. During this tortuous time, Twin Oaks was confronted with the limitations and benefits of their planner-manager system. On the one hand, they had created an enduring Meta program and had attracted counterculturalists and New Age adherents. On the other hand, their system had broken down when confronted by deeply held beliefs about the value of children and community and the rights of members to seek revitalization in rural spaces away from distractions such as childcare.

By the 1980s, Twin Oaks was struggling with the same questions that motivated Kinkade's passionate call for an undemocratic form of government. Could members ever be represented fully by leaders? Would planners have the long-term viability of the community at

³⁷⁴ Ibid., 7.

heart? The mid-1980s were a trying time for the community and it benefited from the relationship it had with Alpha Farm and its consensus-driven political culture. Following Estes's report, though Twin Oaks reaffirmed its dedication to non-democratic decision-making it also adopted Estes' recommendation of creating a Child Board that supplanted the childcare manager.³⁷⁵ This new board contained a group of planners consisting of all interested parties: Meta program managers, parents, and the larger non-parent community. The Board had the authority to make decisions about the childcare program, its allocation of space, and its curriculum. Twin Oaks appears to have complied with Estes's report throughout the 1990s and early 2000s, and the community continues today as a multi-generational back-to-the-land community. In the end, then, much as the early founders had done in reaction to the national Walden Two movement, Twin Oaks leaders modified their system to include more democratic oversight while retaining optimism for long-term planning and central government institutions.

Forwards and Backwards:

Back-to-the-Landers and America's Turn to the Right in the 1970s

While the history of these communities demonstrates how the third wave generated a variety of political cultures aimed at fostering harmony through egalitarian communalism, not all members of the third generation shared the same communal sensibilities. Indeed, by the end of the 1970s, not all back-to-the-landers shared the same liberal political beliefs. For many members of the third generation, their time in intentional communities was transformative but transitory, and their political sensibilities evolved following their departure. Stewart Brand's experience is a case in point. By 1972 Brand had soured on the search for self-sufficiency in

³⁷⁵ Ibid., 5.

anarchistic hippie communes and looked forward to a harmonious, futuristic society based in free-market libertarianism and technological interdependence. Moreover, not all members of the third generation attempted to live communally or shared the counterculture's liberal sensibilities, despite the shared goal of political harmony. John Shuttleworth, the homesteading founder of *MEN*, is representative of this latter cohort. Over the course of the 1970s, Shuttleworth developed a political perspective that combined the Nearings' isolationism with the School of Living's right-leaning libertarianism. As a result, by the end of the 1970s, Shuttleworth became another gadfly decrying the contemporary Left and writing nostalgically about social and political harmony in the 1940s.

Both Brand and Shuttleworth's conservative turn mirrors how American society shifted to the political Right between 1970 and 1988.³⁷⁶ Even though Brand looked forwards and Shuttleworth looked backwards, both men became disenchanted with the counterculture's left-leaning politics and the countercultural back-to-the-land movement as the 1970s waned. Moreover, their conservatism reveals how traditional Left/Right binaries fall apart when studying antimodern movements like the back-to-the-land movement. Back-to-the-landers like Shuttleworth shared conservative ideas about rural land and a basic distrust of the federal

³⁷⁶ In placing these two figures within a conservative shift this study follows the scholarship of Bruce Schulman, Marjorie Spruill, and Darren Dochuck. As both Schulman and Dochuck have pointed out the conservative movement that would eventually become the New Right had deeper roots in the history of twentieth-century conservatism that predated the counterculture. Indeed, both authors demonstrate how the turn to the Right in the 1970s was not a shocking reactionary response to the 1960s, rather it was the product of complex forces such as suburbanization, the deindustrialized of northern cities, and the migration of people from the South to the sunbelt. In fact, suburban housewives in the sunbelt were the grassroots organizers of the movement that propelled Barry Goldwater and Ronald Regan. See Bruce J. Schulman and Julian E. Zelizer, eds., *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2008), 3; Darren Dochuk, *From Bible Belt to Sunbelt: Plain-Folk Religion, Grassroots Politics, and the Rise of Evangelical Conservatism* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2012), xvii–xxiii.

government with members of the political Right, who, by the end of the 1970s, catapulted Ronald Regan to power. Digital utopians like Brand mirrored the Right's fierce advocacy of free markets. A closer examination of both men's experiences in the 1970s will demonstrate this complex development.

By the early 1970s Stewart Brand, who was primarily involved with communities in the Southwest such as Libre (a Colorado commune founded by ex-Drop City members) and Hog Farm (another Digger community), became increasingly disillusioned by how dysfunctional and, from his perspective, escapist most rural hippie communes had become.³⁷⁷ Brand was concerned by how many people within the counterculture were turning away from society and technological innovation, which he viewed as key to fostering socio-political harmony. He had founded the *WEC* in 1968 to encourage communes to share information and experiment with appropriate technologies in order to solve social and environmental problems. By the early 1970s, though, many fledgling communities had instead sought self-sufficiency through less technological solutions to the problems of living – becoming “neo-luddites” from his perspective. The larger movement's attitude was, of course, more complex than this and, as we have seen in Chapter 2, Brand's advocacy of appropriate technology – indebted as it was to Lewis Mumford and Ralph Borsodi – was a widespread approach to the use of technology by rural communities. This perceived luddite turn, however, ran counter to Brand's vocal eco-pragmatic futurism.

Brand was also intimately aware of how early back-to-the-landers' high idealism had come crashing down when it was put into practice. In the 1971 *Last Whole Earth Catalog*, Brand published a poem he had written in his correspondence with Hog Farm members about the

³⁷⁷ Kirk was the first scholar to follow Brand's turn away from the back-to-the-land movement. This study builds off of Kirk's work by placing Brand within the larger back-to-the-land tradition. Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 2007, 53–55.

difficulties and wishful thinking of rural communal life. Brand prefaced the poem, entitled “Communal Lies,” by acknowledging that communes were a crucial space for individuals to “make wishful mistakes” and learn from them, reflecting how he still supported the communal back-to-the-land movement in general.³⁷⁸ The poem delved into a series of common lies that communards told one another and read:

We'll let other people take care of us.
We'll let God take care of us.
Free Lunch. (Robert Heinlein)
The Tragedy of the Commons. (Garret Hardin)
We'll all be honest.
We'll all be selfless.
No rules.
Possessions are bad. Privacy is bad. Money is bad.
We've got the answer.³⁷⁹

In Brand's view, most back-to-the-land communities in the early 1970s were too anarchistic and self-focused to effect real change. They also did not fit into his evolving countercultural political and environmental vision, which was rooted in a Western libertarian sensibility. Expectations of a “free lunch” or having other people take care of you did not fit into this sensibility, which valued individual initiative, privacy, and market-driven economic relationships. Indeed, Brand's critique of the countercultural excesses reveals how, in the early 1970s, he began to question the counterculture's post-scarcity mindset and turn towards libertarianism – a position in many ways similar to Borsodi and the School of Living.

As the 1970s wore on, Brand became increasingly critical of the back-to-the-land endeavor and his generation's post-scarcity mentality, which was crumbling in the face of 1970s economic upheavals like the oil embargos. In the context of the energy crisis, Brand turned away

³⁷⁸ Stewart Brand, “The Commune Lie,” *The Last Whole Earth Catalog*, 181.

³⁷⁹ Brand, “The Commune Lie,” 181.

from the very idea of self-sufficiency, which, according to him, was backward, unnatural, and impractical based on his study of systems ecology. In his 1978 work *Soft-tech*, he argued that “Anyone who has actually tried to live in total self-sufficiency – there must be now thousands in the recent wave that we (culpa!) helped inspire – knows the mind-numbing labor and loneliness and frustration and real marginless [sic] hazard that goes with the attempt. It is a kind of hysteria.”³⁸⁰ Instead of pursuing self-sufficiency – a key ideal for back-to-the-landers dating all the way back to Bolton Hall – Brand argued that back-to-the-landers and mainstream environmentalists needed to recognize that human social ecology was based on a series of dependent relationships and that Americans needed to adopt forward-looking technological solutions that brought humanity together. While this critique of self-sufficiency makes sense given the Oil Crisis context, it is important to recognize that Brand, though critical of post-scarcity hippie communes, still believed that a harmonious post-scarcity society was within reach. Like technological utopians dating back to Edward Bellamy, Brand believed that scientific and technological advances could ensure a more equitable and just society as long as such innovations were guided correctly. As a result, by the late 1970s, Brand had even embraced nuclear power as an answer to oil scarcity, a heretical position from the perspective of mainstream environmentalists who feared the environmental impacts of nuclear powerplants.

Brand’s critique of many within the third wave was sound, though he overstated how widespread attempts at total self-sufficiency were within the movement.³⁸¹ As we shall see in

³⁸⁰ Stewart Brand, *Soft-Tech* (New York: Penguin Books, 1978), 5.

³⁸¹ According to Jacob’s sociological survey of third-generation homesteaders, only 3 percent of homesteaders were “purists” meaning they practiced total self-sufficiency. Indeed, only 20 percent of his survey respondents stated that their economic wealth came from labor on their land. In contrast, 44 percent were “weekenders” who dreamed of self-sufficiency but had full-time employment away from their property. See Jacob, *New Pioneers*, 53.

Chapter 5, communities such as Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm recognized the need for intercommunal networking and spent considerable time in the mid-to-late 1970s creating mutual aid organizations and fostering positive relationships with local communities. The evolution of Brand's ideas during the 1970s, then, demonstrates the complicated tensions within the movement between rugged individualism, libertarianism, and communalism. While he decried the backward-facing search for authenticity through rural self-sufficiency, he called for libertarian free-market exchanges among virtuous, rugged individuals who were on the "frontier" of technological and social innovation. This reflected his own embrace of an idealized Western political tradition, his shift towards elements of conservatism, and his ties to a much larger technological utopian tradition that stretched to the turn of the twentieth century. At the same time, however, Brand's politics deviated from both the Western political style and the School of Living's conservative libertarianism by calling into question the basic tenet of rural self-reliance. For Brand, the only path forward led to a futuristic digital utopia of mutual dependence, interconnectivity, and noogenesis.

While Brand shifted to digital utopianism and eco-pragmatic libertarianism over the course of the 1970s, other third wave back-to-the-landers ended up adopting elements of the second generation's political sensibilities as they shifted rightwards. John Shuttleworth is a case in point.³⁸² As seen in the previous chapter, Shuttleworth had been exposed to Borsodi's writings in the late 1950s and he was a devoted follower of the Nearings in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In the early days of *MEN*, however, Shuttleworth did not espouse the School of Living's libertarianism or the Nearings' socialism. Instead, Shuttleworth's *MEN* was concerned with environmental issues, Left politics, self-sufficiency, and harmonious Native American lifestyles.

³⁸² Brown has also noted Shuttleworth's rightward shift. Brown, *Back to the Land*, 217.

Over the course of the 1970s, however, John Shuttleworth appears to have grown increasingly angry, conservative, and libertarian.

By the late 1970s, Shuttleworth began writing nostalgic editorials about rural life in the 1940s that decried contemporary liberal politics in the 1970s. In the November/December issue of *MEN* in 1979, John Shuttleworth re-examined his life and his reasons for founding the magazine nearly a decade before. The article was deeply nostalgic, angry in tone, and revealed his rightward shift. He recounted his early childhood growing up on a farm in Indiana in the 1940s. He thought that growing up in the waning years of the Great Depression taught him the “wisdom of individual and family self-reliance and self-sufficiency.”³⁸³ In the article, he contrasted this idyllic childhood with 1970s America. He argued that the 1940s were a “magical time and place in history when a man’s word was his bond... Strong helped the weak... People stayed married once they got that way... Family worked, played, and prayed together.”³⁸⁴ His references to marriage, prayer, and men’s words reveal how, by the late 1970s, his editorials had shifted to the conservatism of the political Right.³⁸⁵ Indeed, later in the article, he described his childhood as a vanished age in which individuals spent “their time concentrating on their responsibilities... instead of endlessly crying about ‘rights.’”³⁸⁶ He even argued that in the 1940s Americans struggled “to improve themselves instead of shrilly demanding that others live up to

³⁸³ John Shuttleworth, “Why the Magazine Was Founded,” *Mother Earth News*, November 1979, *Mother Earth News* Digital CD-ROM Archive.

³⁸⁴ Shuttleworth, “Why the Magazine Was Founded.”

³⁸⁵ For a more complete examination of feminism and antifeminism in the mid-1970s with a particular focus on the debate about the Equal Right’s Amendment, the 1977 International Women’s Year, and the “pro-family” movement backlash see Marjorie Spruill’s chapter in *Rightward Bound*.³⁸⁵ Marjorie Spruill, “Gender and Americas Right Turn” in *Rightward Bound: Making America Conservative in the 1970s*, 77-84.

³⁸⁶ Shuttleworth, “Why the Magazine Was Founded.”

their ideals.”³⁸⁷ He apparently had not grown up around Americans in search of a more just and equitable society. He then went on to bemoan the rise of Gloria Steinem, Ralph Nader, and Jane Fonda, arguing that they “mean[t] well” but were tiresome.³⁸⁸

By 1979 Shuttleworth was out of step with liberal back-to-the-landers, and his editorials demonstrate the similarities between his politics, the second generation’s decentralism and conservatism, and the wider backlash to movements like second-wave feminism. In his 1979 article, he stated that he founded *MEN* in 1970 because he “just got tired of listening to the slick politicians and industrial public relations men and labor union spokesmen and other representatives... Telling me how much better my life was getting every day” when it was actually “getting steadily worse.”³⁸⁹ According to him, he founded *MEN* as a response to “big government, big business, and big labor,” which had “raped me of what was rightfully mine.”³⁹⁰ By 1979, it should be noted, Shuttleworth was engaging in some revisionist history. His 1970 interview in *MEN* had contained none of the conservatism, libertarianism, and anti-statist environmentalism that was evident in his thinking by 1979, clearly demonstrating how his back-to-the-land politics evolved over the course of the 1970s.

Unlike Stewart Brand, who looked forward and moved completely away from the rural self-sufficient wing of the back-to-the-land movement, Shuttleworth looked backwards and doubled down on the importance of small-scale, self-sufficient homesteading in the Nuclear Age. He argued that he “should make the day-to-day decisions” in his life and that his lifestyle would not harm others, whereas “an idiot in a nuclear plant a thousand miles away can make a mistake

³⁸⁷ Ibid.

³⁸⁸ Ibid.

³⁸⁹ Ibid.

³⁹⁰ Ibid.

that will endanger my life” but “the same idiot won’t endanger me at all if he is tending an open fire, operating a steam engine, or setting up a solar collector.”³⁹¹ Such a statement perfectly encapsulates Shuttleworth’s right-leaning worldview by the late 1970s. He had grown to completely distrust central government, increasingly viewed industry as corrupt and inept, and had even soured on mainstream environmentalism. This was a period in which some environmental heretics – including Brand - were advocating nuclear power, and most mainstream environmentalists believed the federal government should regulate pollution. Shuttleworth labeled them “paid apologists.”³⁹² From Shuttleworth’s back-to-the-land perspective, only a return to self-sufficiency and a decentralized rural society could bring about peace and prosperity. Compared to Brand, then, Shuttleworth’s evolving political sensibilities brought him closer to the second generation, revealing the complex ways in which back-to-the-landers who shifted to the political Right envisioned utopia.

Conclusion

From Kat Kinkade and Caroline Estes to John Shuttleworth and Stewart Brand, the third generation produced a dizzying array of political philosophies aimed at creating more harmonious, equitable societies following the profound social and political upheavals of the late 1960s. The third generation, then, was anything but apolitical. Indeed, it is evident from our three case study communities that the third wave generated a variety of political cultures and that these cultures were different from each other and from the second generation’s utopian experiments with land-trust homesteading.

³⁹¹ Ibid.

³⁹² Ibid.

Reframing the third wave of the movement as countercultural allows for new interpretations of third-generation political cultures. The early history of Heathcote reveals important continuity between the second and third generations, while at the same time reflecting significant generational differences as the ideas and practices of the Old Left gave way to the New. Similarly, Alpha Farm shows how peacenik Quakers turned towards countercultural calls for self-reformation in the late 1960s and established a lasting political culture based on consensus, egalitarianism, and mutual criticism. Members of Twin Oaks were equally committed to countercultural egalitarianism and defended their rigidly organized political structures in *TMU/AWO* and in the *Leaves of Twin Oaks*, arguing that their undemocratic system was necessary for fostering egalitarian communalism and ensuring community stability. Taken together, then, these three communities reflect key political shifts on the Left in the 1960s.

In practice, of course, such political cultures struggled to live up to their goals and not all members of the third generation pursued egalitarian communalism. Indeed, Twin Oaks's inability to create a coherent childcare plan, despite a political culture focused on long-term planning, reflects how, even for successful communities, countercultural impulses towards communalism and individualism were difficult to resolve. Similarly, Stewart Brand and John Shuttleworth's evolution in the 1970s reflects the diversity of political thought within the third generation, with Brand looking forwards to a Western, libertarian, digital utopia and Shuttleworth looking back to a nostalgic, rural past. The political aspirations of the third wave, then, reached in many different directions, though they were all rooted in the counterculture's search for community, authenticity, and rugged individualism. Indeed, such complex political sensibilities chip away at the traditional framing of American politics as conforming to a Left/Right binary and reveal the radical and conservative tendencies of the antimodern back-to-

the-land movement. As we shall see in the next chapter, reframing the movement as part of the counterculture can also shed light on third-wave economic ventures, in particular the development of hip capitalism.

Chapter 4.

The “Economics of Equality:”

Hip Capitalism at Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm in the 1970s

*Commissars and pin-stripe bosses
Roll the dice.
Any way they fall,
Guess who gets to pay the price.
Money green and proletarian gray,
Selling guns 'stead of food today.*

*So the kids they dance
And shake their bones,
And the politicians throwin' stones,
Singing ashes, ashes, all fall down.
Ashes, ashes, all fall down.*

– The Grateful Dead, “Throwing Stones,” 1987

As the third generation experimented with egalitarian political cultures, countercultural communities tinkered with alternative economic relationships between each other and the outside world in the 1970s. Like their rejection of contemporary American democracy, communities such as Alpha Farm and Twin Oaks fashioned an economic ethos of hip capitalism over the course of the 1970s. In so doing, they sought to modify capitalism rather than reject the concept wholesale.³⁹³

³⁹³ The term Hip Capitalism was coined by Susan Krieger in her work on the history of the hip radio station KSAN in San Francisco during the late 1960s and early 1970s. She argued that the station went from a new, hip, countercultural venture to a coopted organization that utilized mainstream economic practices. Krieger’s work was the first to narrate this process and established the common framing of hip capitalism as a sellout to the counterculture’s high ideals. Later scholarship has added onto Krieger’s ideas, most notably Joshua Davis in his study of Whole Foods and the overlap between the New Left’s politics of participatory face-to-face democracy and the economic activism of members of the counterculture. See Susan Krieger, *Hip Capitalism* (Beverly Hills: Sage Publishers, 1979), 22–23; Davis, *From Headshops to Whole Foods*, 3.

Hip capitalism – i.e., a form of participatory consumer capitalism linked to consumption of countercultural goods, ideas, and lifestyles – was rooted in the counterculture's complex political and entrepreneurial sensibilities.³⁹⁴ The younger generation's left-leaning politics informed their economic idealism. The counterculture's antimodern critiques of late-stage capitalism – the rise of multinational corporations, globalization, and mass consumption in the post-World War Two period – centered on how it precluded meaningful labor and separated individuals from each other and the natural world.³⁹⁵ In this critique, members of the counterculture were following the lead of many New Left activists, who, as we explored in previous chapters, retained the Old Left's disdain for contemporary socio-economic systems that bred inequality. To them, contemporary capitalism, like majoritarian democracy, was an alienating and divisive force in society that created inequalities, encouraged competition, suppressed innovation, and perpetuated violence against people and the natural world. Hip business ventures, therefore, were aimed at producing goods and services that promoted, and indeed modeled, a modified form of capitalism, in their terms an 'economics of equality,' that valued egalitarianism, non-violence, ingenuity, environmental sustainability, and offered workers meaningful labor.³⁹⁶

³⁹⁴ Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 205.

³⁹⁵ The concept of late-stage capitalism comes from the work of Marxist economic theorist Ernest Mandel, whose 1970s works surveyed important post-World War Two economic developments in Europe. Though the majority of counterculturalists were not formal Marxists, the term is useful for depicting how back-to-the-landers perceived key shifts in the global economy in the latter half of the twentieth century. See Ernest Mandel, *Late Capitalism*, 2nd Edition (London: Verso, 1999).

³⁹⁶ In his work on Stewart Brand and the WEC, Kirk primarily focused on the rise of green consumption after the 1970s, but his framing of Brand's countercultural economic sensibility supports a larger discussion of the counterculture's entrepreneurial ethos. See Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 204–9.

Hip consumer capitalism has proved to be a profitable combination over the past fifty years and reflects the broader trajectory of America's post-World War Two shift towards a neoliberal consumer-driven economy. Companies such as Whole Foods, Patagonia, Ben & Jerry's, and Apple were all founded as hip ventures, and the Dot-Com boom – and subsequent bust – in the 1990s was based on the growth of hip, techno-utopian businesses.³⁹⁷ From Ben & Jerry's Vermont ice cream and profit-sharing model to Patagonia's climbing gear and environmental activism, hip businesses have marketed themselves and their products to consumers who make purchasing decisions based on need *as well as* values. In other words, consumers in the new hip economy are offered the opportunity to not only buy goods and services, but also participate in and contribute to liberal socio-political causes. This is true even for major corporations like Apple, whose early founders framed personal computing as a way for consumers to counter centralization and conformity, most notably in the company's 1984 Superbowl advertisement targeting IBM.

It is important to recognize how such business models are rooted in the Left's tumultuous transformation in the late 1960s. As Joshua Davis has pointed out in his study of Whole Foods, hip capitalism was a logical continuation of the New Left's vision for the radical potential of face-to-face participatory democracy. It is no coincidence that as the New Left coalition fractured in the late 1960s, young leftists retreated from large-scale social activism and searched for ways that they could shape the face of American capitalism. The hope was that a new form of

³⁹⁷ For a list of hip economic businesses and reference to the Dot.com bust see Kirk, 206; For an in-depth and nuanced history of mountaineering, Yvon Chouinard, and the rise of Patagonia see Joseph Taylor III, *Pilgrims of the Vertical: Yosemite Rock Climbers and Nature at Risk*, Kindle Edition (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2011), Location 3156; On the techno-utopianism of Stewart Brand and how he was instrumental in shaping personal computing and Wired Magazine see Turner, *From Counterculture to Cyberculture*, 249.

participatory economics, rooted in countercultural values such as decentralization, natural foods, and environmental stewardship, could alter the American economy's trajectory – assuming, of course, that enough people in a free market voted with their money. In many respects, this model has wrought profound changes to American society. As Margaret O'Mara has demonstrated in her work on the personal computing movement, hip tech entrepreneurs and programmers framed the personal computing movement as a radical effort at decentralization that would reshape how Americans accessed knowledge.³⁹⁸ At the same time, however, this retreat from large-scale activism – coinciding as it did with the abandonment of radical self-determination groups such as the Black Panthers – was significant and reflects the ultimate limitations of hip capitalism as well as the countercultural back-to-the-land movement to offer a truly radical alternative to social and racial inequality in America.

This form of participatory consumer capitalism has also led to considerable critiques of these companies, and hip capitalism in general, as “sellouts” to the high ideals of the counterculture and merely façades for new forms of consumerism. The Diggers, after all, had called for the end of capitalism, and burned money in the streets. Anti-capitalist groups like the Diggers, however, were a minority within the counterculture and their political and economic radicalism did not appeal to the majority of counterculturalists. Unlike the Diggers, the wider counterculture – shifting as it did away from social activism towards individual transformation – was open to entrepreneurialism, profit, and consumption of hip goods and services because it fit within the counterculture's search for individuality and authenticity. Counterculturalists did not seek to counter capitalism per se. Instead, they decried the alienating effects of late-stage capitalism on their own lives.

³⁹⁸ O'Mara, *The Code*, 118.

Far from being a break with high ideals, members of the counterculture saw mainstream consumption of hip goods and services as an integral way of spreading their egalitarian and environmental values. This logic guided successful hip businesses as well as countercultural back-to-the-land communities. The counterculture developed hip capitalism over the course of the 1970s as back-to-the-land communities sought to create space to experiment with alternative economics. Like other hip capitalists, third-generation communities created new types of business, new forms of labor, and more environmentally sustainable consumption as one way of showcasing countercultural and decentralist alternatives to late-stage capitalism. On a more pragmatic level, too, such business ventures helped communities pay their bills and fostered local goodwill.

Members of these communities were aware that their small rural experiments were no radical threat to mainstream economic practices in the 1970s. In fact, many members of successful back-to-the-land communities counted on being non-threatening, believing that by banning drugs and starting businesses, they could ingratiate themselves to local communities, thus ensuring community survival and the slow dissemination of their ideals to the rest of society. Though the efficacy of this type of utopian economic activism is up for debate, it was not a betrayal of countercultural ideals. Instead, it was an extension of the counterculture's complex responses to Cold War America and the political reconfiguration of the Left in the 1960s. It was also a continuation of the utopian back-to-the-land movement and the enduring search for economic self-reliance.

Hip back-to-the-land business ventures were a new phenomenon in the 1970s, but they had older roots. While hip businesses blended the counterculture's focus on individual authenticity, egalitarian communalism, and environmentalism, they were based on the same

producerist and decentralist tradition that motivated earlier generations of back-to-the-landers. As we have seen, the first generation responded to rapid industrialization and urbanization at the turn of the century by latching on to the Single Tax, intensive agriculture, and the republican ideal of rural independence. Influential members of the first generation, like Bolton Hall, called for economically vulnerable white Americans to homestead on the outskirts of cities so they could avoid the degenerative effects of urban life. They also pursued cottage industries within Single Tax colonies to model alternative economic relationships. The second generation responded to the Great Depression, World War Two, and the Old Left's collapse in the 1950s in similar ways. From the maple sugaring of the Nearings to the productive homestead communities of Dayton and Bayard Lane, members of the second generation saw the back-to-the-land project as a way of ensuring economic stability and reshaping society and individuals through productive, fulfilling labor close to nature. On a basic level, then, the third generation shared the first and second's belief that rural land could secure economic liberty and provide the space and resources to experiment with economic alternatives. Indeed, in many ways, the turn towards self-reliance that second-generation leftists like Nearing undertook in the 1940s and 1950s presaged developments within the New Left and the counterculture in the late 1960s.

By the 1970s, hip back-to-the-land communities and their economic ventures were part of a much longer antiurban, antimodern tradition. The socio-economic climate of the 1970s was, however, markedly different than the 1930s or the 1890s. Whereas the first and second generation worried about scarcity and reacted to seismic economic events by seeking self-sufficiency within homestead land-trusts, the third generation was relatively affluent, was less concerned with scarcity, and pursued communal economic ventures aimed at fostering egalitarianism. In fact, unlike the second generation's reliance on land-trusts, many third-wave

communities such as Alpha Farm and Twin Oaks adopted income-sharing and communal ownership of property – both traditions being part of the American communal movement – as a primary way of ensuring communalism and egalitarianism. Such wealth sharing also had more practical purposes. By the mid-1970s, many third-wave communities incorporated as cooperatives and filed taxes as tax-exempt monastic organizations – based on an exemption made for communitarian Shakers in the 1930s – thus allowing them to save money and keep wealth within their communities.³⁹⁹ Much like its egalitarian political experiments, then, the third generation’s development of hip capitalism and the economics of equality represents a key departure from the first and second’s far less communal and inequalitarian economic mindset.

As with countercultural political cultures, the third generation’s economic experiments took diverse forms, from the Farm’s midwifery program to Tilth’s organic Pragtree farm in Washington state to Bill Coperthwaite’s Yurt business in Maine. As such, it will be necessary to narrow our scope. The remainder of this chapter focuses on the development of hip capitalism and back-to-the-land economic practices within two communities, Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm, in the 1970s because both communities were relatively successful, meaning their businesses turned modest profits and endeared them to local communities. As we shall see, rather than creating isolated utopias, countercultural back-to-the-landers sought to thwart contemporary economic trends by generating hip alternatives in rural areas, much like the generations of back-

³⁹⁹ Attaining this tax status was an arduous affair for many communities who had to prove that they shared communal property and adhered to common religious practices. Twin Oaks was an early test-case and they spent a decade fighting the IRS after they filed as a tax-exempt community in 1977. Indeed, by the late 1980s the IRS was still trying to collect 42,000 dollars from the community and Twin Oaks wound up in tax court. The community won the case. For more on how Twin Oaks placed itself within the Shaker tradition and argued that its common New Age and secular beliefs counted as common religious practice see *Twin Oaks Community, Incorporated v. Commissioner of Internal Revenue*, 87 T.C. No. 71, (VA 1987), Twin Oaks Box - Twin Oaks Taxes Folder, CCS Archive.

to-the-landers that came before them. Such hip alternatives deserve closer attention because they shed light on both the development of hip capitalism in the 1970s and the young Left's vision for social change, in particular the ways women back-to-the-landers responded to the rise of second-wave feminism. Twin Oaks was at the forefront of these shifts within the communal counterculture in the mid-to-late 1960s and offers a useful starting place.

Hip Capitalism Develops at Twin Oaks

Aside from communal ownership of property, the primary strategy that Twin Oaks used to create an internal economics of equality was through the Labor Credit System (LCS). This LCS was a key labor scheme based on Bellamy's *Looking Backwards* that Skinner developed. In Skinner's *Walden Two* the LCS functioned as a way for behaviorist communities to promote egalitarianism and ensure that all members had access to meaningful labor – the latter, as we have seen, being a principal preoccupation of the New Left as well as antimodern reformers dating back to the turn of the twentieth century. Twin Oaks's LCS essentially created a crude marketplace for labor in which specific tasks, such as cleaning bathrooms, were assigned relative weight depending on their popularity. The system, along with the community's evolving culture, also encouraged members to pursue specific types of labor to perform those tasks they were traditionally excluded from. For example, women at Twin Oaks used the system to pursue farming, mechanical repair, and construction as they became involved in second-wave feminism – a development that will be explored later in this chapter. As such, the evolution of Twin Oaks's LCS over the course of the mid-to-late 1960s and into the mid-1970s provides a window into hip back-to-the-land economic systems and how the third generation was concerned about equality, harmony, leisure, productivity, and meaningful work.

A rudimentary system of labor credits had been used at Walden House, the mid-1960s urban commune that most of the initial Twin Oaks founders had created in Washington, DC. It appears, however, that the system was not initially used at Twin Oaks for the first few months of 1967. Instead, the community had defaulted to the hippie method and everyone was “doing their own thing.” This worked for a time, but it quickly became apparent that some dull and onerous tasks were being avoided, and the founders of Twin Oaks decided to readopt Skinner’s LCS. The second issue of the *Leaves of Twin Oaks* in 1967 contained an examination of the new system. According to the article, Twin Oaks members had generally been able to get dishes washed, the garden hoed and other projects finished, but after just five weeks, they “came to see that we needed more organization in order to get more work accomplished in order to divide the duller jobs more equally.”⁴⁰⁰ The first iteration of the LCS required members to sit in a circle and pass out notecards that had work assignments written on them. Unwanted cards were passed clockwise in the circle until everyone had a full hand with enough credits to fill the quota of desirable tasks. The system worked, though it was unwieldy and eventually broke down when the community welcomed more members over the next year.

A year later, this cumbersome system was replaced by a sign-up sheet and a LCS manager who would randomly assign jobs if members were equally interested in a task. At this point the system, it was expected, would lead to an economics of equality and especially a “psychological equality” in which everyone could feel that they were “not envious of anyone else’s work.”⁴⁰¹ In other words, there would be an equitable distribution of desirable, fulfilling,

⁴⁰⁰ Kathleen Kinkade, “Labor Credits,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, September 1967, 2, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁰¹ Kathleen Kinkade, “Labor Credits - Theory and Practice,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, December 1968, 5, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

and authentic labor – qualities that members of Twin Oaks found lacking in contemporary Cold War society. Members were aware of the potential efficiency problems if everyone was allowed to cycle through skilled positions, such as working on the newsletter, in an effort to find what worked best for them. The early founders, however, believed in Skinner who had argued in *Walden Two* that efficiency would slowly improve once individuals were subjected to conditioning and motivation through behavioral engineering. Moreover, specialization was a suspect component of late-stage capitalism which members of the counterculture associated with factories, government bureaucracy, and academia – a sentiment that connected them to early antimodern reformers such as Bolton Hall

By 1969, however, efficiency had failed to materialize, revealing the limitations of Skinner’s utopian vision for members of the counterculture and their critique of mainstream society. In that year’s May edition of the *Leaves*, there was a short article on “Incentive in a Cooperative Economy,” which quoted Skinner’s antimodern assertion in *Walden Two* that when “a man is working for himself instead of for a profit taking boss... waste is avoided... workmanship is better.”⁴⁰² According to the article, Twin Oaks’s members had not yet seen a rise in efficiency and the article concluded “whether the community itself has become to some extent ‘the system’ and the individual members tend to think of their labor credits simply as a means of placating the system sufficiently...or whether conscientious workmanship is a behavior that has to be carefully taught we are not sure.”⁴⁰³ By 1969, then, Skinner’s LCS and the underlying hip economic assumptions of Twin Oaks members had not yet borne fruit.

⁴⁰² Kathleen Kinkade, “Incentive in a Cooperative Economy,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, May 1969, 10, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁰³ Kinkade, “Incentive in a Cooperative Economy,” 10.

Efficiency and productivity remained elusive, and by 1970 the Twin Oaks leadership changed the LCS again to encourage specialization and did away with the sign-up system. In that year's October *Leaves*, the new system was discussed at length when the LCS managers gave their report. The LCS crew observed that "what we became discontented with as the years passed...was the overall quality of the work done... Under the old system you might clean the kitchen one morning and somebody else clean up the next, while you went on to hammock weaving, which you only had five hours of."⁴⁰⁴ Such a system did not lend itself to quality craftsmanship, and the managers correctly concluded that the old LCS was one of the main impediments holding back Twin Oaks's cottage industries.

The answer that the LCS crew put forward was to encourage specialization, signing up for large chunks of time, and important changes to how members signed up for jobs. The managers noted that "specialization meant signing up in blocks of 14 to 21 hours, and this made the old competition and random assignment system untenable... What we are working with now is a simple preference list."⁴⁰⁵ Under the new preference list, each member ranked their desired tasks from 1 to 40 and then the LCS crew went through and assigned jobs. One crucial change was that instead of assigning credit hours based upon group preferences, individual preferences would now be considered. For example, if you managed to get your first preference, those hours would only be worth .7 credits each, whereas a job further down on your preference list could be valued at 1.5 credits per hour. This change also made it more difficult to sign up for as much bathroom clean-up as possible to maximize leisure and was a way to balance the interests of individuals with the needs of the community.

⁴⁰⁴ Labor Credit Crew, "New Labor Credit System," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, October 1970, 3, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁰⁵ Labor Credit Crew, "New Labor Credit System," 3.

Specialization and individual preferences turned out to be effective changes to the LCS. By 1973 and 1974, production, particularly of hammocks, had become more efficient and profitable as Twin Oaks gained a reputation for quality craftsmanship across the country. At the same time, affluence and specialization made members of Twin Oaks uneasy because they ran counter to the hip economic philosophy that drove their countercultural, utopian endeavors. Even though the new LCS included individual preferences, the system now lacked flexibility and forced members to spend large amounts of time in activities that they might not find enjoyable or fulfilling. Hip capitalism, it seems, did not have ready answers to these thorny issues.

As these changes took hold and as more money came into the community, important questions were raised about new issues such as affluence, vacation, leisure, and the relationship between individual producers and the LCS itself. In 1973 the LCS crew lowered the weekly quota from 40 to 35 hours because too many members were taking extended vacations away from the community as a response to increased hourly quotas. Justifying their decision, the LCS managers wrote in the June *Leaves*, “we figured that a quota of 35 would ease off the pressure and with the pressure reduced, people might tend to work more for the intrinsic positive reinforcers of getting a job done than for the negative reinforcer of keeping one’s credit balance in the black.”⁴⁰⁶ Apparently, people were starting to fray around the edges as the hammock industry, the construction company, and the other cottage industries took off. There were also growing worries that members were working for leisure instead of working for satisfaction, straying too close to a mainstream economic system they wanted to avoid and for which the LCS had been created to address.

⁴⁰⁶ Orin, “The Labor Revolution Is Only Just Begun,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, June 1973, 3, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

There was little consensus at Twin Oaks in 1973 over the proper relationship between satisfying labor and leisure, reflecting the complex way hip capitalism was developing in the early 1970s. In the supplement published alongside the June 1973 *Leaves*, members concluded that the purpose of the LCS was to promote individuals' welfare and their right to explore activities that satisfied them, which now included leisure outside of work. According to the supplement, the LCS was a “tool for promoting individual happiness. Organizing and budgeting our work yields more leisure time... The point is that more leisure means more opportunity for personal choice.”⁴⁰⁷ There were, however, unresolved issues within the system as it related to leisure and vacation. Since the changes made in 1970, vacation accrued monthly based upon hours worked, and many members took large chunks of vacation at inconvenient times for the community's production needs, leading to inefficiencies. It was also possible to take such long vacations that one's credit account became negative, requiring many more hours over the weekly quota. It was also conceivable that a member could generate an insurmountable debt to the community, and, as of 1973, there was no written policy on how to remedy such a debt. Prosperity and leisure, it seems, had created unforeseen consequences for Twin Oaks's hip economic experiments.

By 1975 there was even discussion of doing away with the LCS. Indeed, divisions arose between those in the community who were having trouble getting out of the red and those who still saw the LCS as the most important mechanism within the community for ensuring that all members contributed equally and that all had equal access to satisfying labor. These debates peaked in 1975 when some members began questioning the economic system of equality. One member, Will, wrote an article that called for an end to the LCS. Couching his plea in the

⁴⁰⁷ Orin, “The Labor Revolution Is Only Just Begun,” 3.

counterculture's preoccupation with equality and personal fulfillment, he stated that "expecting each person to do an equal amount of work is itself inequalitarianism [sic], for we are all unique individuals with different capacities and talents.... Having a quota of required work is not only inequalitarian, it undermines more powerful kinds of motivation" such as satisfaction at doing work at the spur of the moment.⁴⁰⁸

Will's comments reflect ongoing tensions within Twin Oaks over defining equality and what kinds of hip economic systems were most effective. Member comments were published alongside Will's article, and the LCS managers proposed an important modification to the LCS based on Will's critique. The planners admitted that "in the past few months some folks have been questioning the psychological equality of our system. It is clear that some people have a hard time making quota every week while others habitually do many hours more."⁴⁰⁹ Ultimately, the planners passed a proposal that every member be given three weeks of off-the-commune vacation and made it impossible for members to get into a labor credit hole while working within the community. From now on as soon as a member's balance hit zero, the LCS managers would work with the offending member to rectify the debt. These debates surrounding the LCS demonstrate the uneasy tension that often arose between the counterculture's commitment to community and its focus on individual fulfillment. Indeed, once communities attained a level of prosperity and productivity that allowed for vacation and leisure, they struggled to work out the limits of individual autonomy since back-to-the-land communities were supposed to be primarily about allowing individuals to find their authentic selves. By modifying the system to allow for

⁴⁰⁸ Will, "On Work," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, January 1975, 5 Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁰⁹ Susan, "Labor Credit Evolution," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, January 1975, 4, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

leisure and a set amount of vacation, the LCS crew managed to move past the controversy, though the community continued to struggle with producing equality over the course of the 1970s. It is notable that Twin Oaks still uses the system to ensure important tasks get done around the community.

The LCS was not the only hip system that Twin Oaks experimented with as they strove to create equitable, non-hierarchical economic relationships. However, it was the one that drew the most critiques from other countercultural communities for being too rigid, highlighting the diversity of third-wave economic experiments. These critiques started in the community's early days. In an article on "Products and Methods" in the second issue of the *Leaves* in 1967, Dusty wrote about Walden Two's critics. He proudly noted that "it is always the methods, behavioral engineering... technocratic administration, socialistic economy, etc., that people typically criticize. People seldom criticize the products – lots of leisure time for creative pursuits, cultural facilities, well-mannered children, minimal personal hostilities, economic security, variety of jobs, etc."⁴¹⁰ Dusty's focus on the products of the Twin Oaks experience, though it was less than a year old, leads to a succinct description of hip capitalism's goals and methods. For him, well-managed back-to-the-land utopias offered the best chance to create economically stable and nonhierarchical settings, which in turn would enable people to produce the work and leisure required for creative outlets for self-discovery.

For members of Twin Oaks, more equitable economic relationships were not reserved for their internal benefit. The counterculture's utopian economic schemes – based as they were on the New Left's socio-political vision – also focused outwards, aiming to reform mainstream

⁴¹⁰ Dusty, "Products and Methods," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, September 1967, 7, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

society by selling products and services that were rooted in countercultural values such as egalitarianism, non-violence, and environmental stewardship. Outreach to rural neighbors by creating organic food co-ops, hip construction companies, and other initiatives was a critical component of hip capitalism's utopian aspirations to remake American society on a local level. Within these economic ventures, we can see the influence of the New Left on the third generation and the complex ways in which third-wave communities developed hip capitalism over the course of the 1970s.

Members of Twin Oaks were aware of how they fit into the larger movement for radical social change in the late 1960s and framed their economic and political experiments as non-threatening beacons to local communities that would model countercultural values. In the April 1971 *Leaves*, for instance, Eric published an opinion piece entitled "Twin Oaks and the Revolution," a revision of Rudy's "Twin Oaks and the Larger Movement" article from 1968. In a sweeping overview of world history, he asserted that all systems of government that make people unhappy (in his behaviorist words, not "reinforced") are doomed. Turning to America, he noted promising revolutions against racial and sexual repression as well as larger movements combating American imperialism and militarism, but eventually concluded that since America's population was "overwhelmingly conservative or middle-of-the-road," revolutionary groups like the Black Panthers were too "antagonistic" to affect real change.⁴¹¹ Such statements, coming as they did from white, middle-class members of Twin Oaks, are deeply revealing of the political retreat that members of the counterculture undertook in the late 1960s and early 1970s as the New Left coalition disintegrated. Indeed, Rudy's arguments clearly demonstrate the wider white

⁴¹¹ Eric, "Twin Oaks and the Revolution," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, April 1971, 12, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

Left's shift from collective action towards personal politics – a shift that circumscribed the supposed radicalism of the third generation's rural utopian schemes.

Instead of antagonizing mainstream society or supporting the self-determination of Black Americans, Eric imagined that Twin Oaks and its community allies could “reinforce” cooperative, egalitarian practices by pursuing non-threatening activities like cottage industries. While Eric aligned himself with the anti-imperial, anti-racist, and anti-sexist aims of revolutionary groups in the late-1960s, he did not denounce engagement with capitalism. He even argued that Twin Oaks's hip economic system would not “represent an economic threat” to exploitative capitalism “for a very long time,” making it an effective tool for ensuring community survival and modeling hip values – a sentiment which, given the socio-political upheavals of the late 1960s and the election of Nixon, made sense from a white liberal perspective.⁴¹² He also took heart in the emergence of other back-to-the-land communities and stated that “as we turn from the forces of revolution, we find that we are no longer alone on the frontier. Around us are friends and new communities.”⁴¹³ He saw alliances with other communities as crucial for creating a new decentralized society that was cooperative and egalitarian. This vision drove Twin Oaks's intercommunal vision over the course of the 1970s. Writing a year later in the February *Leaves*, the editor, Trogan, wrote, “we look forward to the day when small communities across the continent work together as part of a decentralized,

⁴¹² It is important to recognize that Rudy's only reference to capitalism is to note that Twin Oaks was non-threatening economically. While he did ally himself with Marxists and other revolutionaries, it is clear from his article that he saw Twin Oaks's entrepreneurial outreach to locals as critical for modeling less exploitative, more egalitarian economic relationships. Eric, “Twin Oaks and the Revolution,” 12.

⁴¹³ Ibid..

cooperative society.”⁴¹⁴ By this time, Twin Oaks was beginning to partner with other communities, including Heathcote, to support one another by sharing labor, coordinating the production of goods, and teaching specialized skills over the course of the 1970s, which will be explored further in the following chapter.

As Twin Oaks was reaching out to other like-minded communities, it was also continuing to develop outwardly facing hip economic ventures aimed at modeling the economics of equality. Beginning in the late 1960s, Twin Oaks experimented with cottage industries that would provide meaningful work and would be profitable enough to ensure adequate leisure for members. Though the hammock business was established in 1967, it took six years for it to start turning consistent profits. In the meantime, members experimented with a variety of hip economic ventures ranging from operating a local grocery store to establishing a blacksmithing operation to running a construction company to managing and printing underground publications on Twin Oaks’s printing press.

Some of these endeavors, such as the grocery store, failed – and generated debates about how much to engage in mainstream capitalism or the local community in Louisa County. When the grocery store was leased in 1970, members questioned whether entering a retail business would make them exploitative capitalists. The problem with the grocery business was that markup took money directly out of the pockets of local residents, a proposition that irked Twin Oaks’s egalitarian business ethos. Noting that they lived in a very poor county, they concluded that “a retail grocery store in our present economic system can be and should be a service to the people, provided the retailer does not make more money than the average income of his

⁴¹⁴ Trogan, “Community News,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, February 1972, 8, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

customers.”⁴¹⁵ They decided to cut back their markup once profit reached a specific dollar amount. A year later, however, they decided to give up the grocery business due to shoplifting and the thin margins of the notoriously difficult grocery business.⁴¹⁶ Conscientious hip capitalists at Twin Oaks, it seems, were unable to compete when local residents took advantage of their lax oversight and their unwillingness to raise prices.

The Glorious Mud construction company, their next venture, turned out to be more sustainable. By November 1972, members were looking to get into what they termed a “basic industry,” which they contrasted with the luxury hammock market. The fear was that with rising inflation and an unstable economy in the mid-1970s, the already tenuous hammock business might falter. One member observed that “even in today’s monopoly ridden economy, there are few corners here and there for small businesses and we have been hoping to find a suitable one for ourselves.”⁴¹⁷ That new industry turned out to be construction. The community had already started building many of its own buildings and when Aaron, an ex-contractor, joined Twin Oaks it finally had the expertise to sell members’ labor to the local community. Indeed, the construction business's twin attractions were that it provided members with new skills and demonstrated to local that members of Twin Oaks were non-threatening and hardworking. By 1973 they were building houses in Louisa County and were feeling more financially secure, though they had difficulty collecting money from some clients.

⁴¹⁵ “The Store,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, May 1970, 2, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴¹⁶ “The Store Dies,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, April 1971, 3, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴¹⁷ “The Construction Industry,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, November 1972, 4, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

It is important to recognize economic ventures like the construction company, the grocery business, and the hammock shop were extremely important to members of Twin Oaks because they enabled the community to end the practice of individual outside work. Beginning in the late 1960s, a significant portion of Twin Oaks members had been required by the LCS to sign up for outside labor, most of which was menial, in local cities such as Richmond. This was a widely despised task because it took community members away from the community and made them dependent on urban society, thus undermining the basic goal of rural self-reliance. Indeed, the *Leaves* often referred to outside work in the “Richmond slave market,” revealing the community’s overwhelming white composition, its desire for rural independence, and a recurring republican framing of urban space as a site of degeneration – “slave market” was eerily similar to David Greyson’s phrasing nearly a century before.⁴¹⁸ Outside work was common in most third-generation communities since most could not make ends meet without an infusion of outside wealth. It was a practice that Margaret Grundstein grappled with as she and her friends sought rural self-sufficiency in Oregon. The development of hip business ventures that promised members full participation, new “basic” skills, and the opportunity to shape local communities was therefore of the utmost importance for third wave back-to-the-land communities.

Aside from bringing workers back from cities like Richmond, Twin Oaks members hoped that their hip businesses would slowly lead to radical change within the community and model better economic relationships with locals. More specifically, Twin Oaks' members believed that Glorious Mud’s non-hierarchical system would model egalitarianism to the poor, conservative residents of Louisa County. Though a manager ran construction crews, the Glorious

⁴¹⁸ Gabriel, “Twin Oaks Construction Company,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, March 1973, 6, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

Mud manager was not a contractor. In fact, the manager's goal was to enable workers, and their apprentices, to approach work communally and implement decentralized decision-making. Gabriel, the construction crew's labor manager, wrote a long explanation of how the crew system was revolutionizing construction work in the August 1973 *Leaves*. He argued that "the radicalism of the crew thing lies not in the fact there are divisions of labor on the basis of the type of work to be done but in the political relationship of boss to worker... We are aiming for a situation which is completely devoid of the boss-worker contradiction."⁴¹⁹ Any reading of women members' experiences would demonstrate that such pronouncements about power relations never quite came to pass, as we shall see later in this chapter. But the intent, at least, was to create a very different participatory economy that would flatten relationships between workers and managers and appeal to the local community in Louisa County, especially with the growing cluster of hip back-to-the-landers that had settled around Twin Oaks and Charlottesville.

As members of the construction crew marveled at their seemingly radical experiment, they also realized how their hip business made them more dependent on their surrounding community, revealing the complex interplay between hip capitalism's outward focus and the back-to-the-land search for self-reliance. Such interplay is evident in Gabriel's grandiose conclusions to his Glorious Mud article where he stated that "the glorious mud crew thing is essentially a microcosmic socialist economy in which each person is guaranteed economic security in exchange for Cos [a gender-neutral pronoun] assuming the responsibility in maintaining the society."⁴²⁰ While Gabriel reveled in such a "microcosmic socialist economy," it is apparent from his writing that socialism and communalism were internal Twin Oaks goals. In

⁴¹⁹ Gabriel, "The Continuing Saga of the Twin Oaks' Construction Company," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, August 1973, 3, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴²⁰ Gabriel, 3.

contrast, the practice of hip capitalism was leading Twin Oaks into more outward, traditional relationships with locals. Indeed, by the following spring, Twin Oaks member Daniel noted in the *Leaves* that by 1974 members of Twin Oaks were “more involved in the local economy, more dependent on local goodwill for our livelihood.”⁴²¹ This made them appreciate “the fact that it feels much better to be friendly with the people than to be mutually suspicious, and of the fact that our not putting energy out there creates bad, not neutral, vibrations. We are part of Louisa County and we cannot ignore that reality.”⁴²² By 1974, then, Twin Oaks was pursuing hip business ventures as a way of modeling what they perceived to be more egalitarian, non-hierarchical relationships between workers and managers and demonstrating to locals that members of Twin Oaks were hard-working and non-threatening. In so doing, members of Twin Oaks were continuing the logic of New Left political mobilizing while at the same time retreating from large-scale collective actions such as Vietnam War protests – a development that reflects the larger trajectory of Left politics in the late 1960s and 1970s. This shift proved to be a profitable combination over the course of the 1970s, particularly once the hammock shop gained national attention. Before delving into the hammock shop or Twin Oaks’s use of the LCS to empower women, however, it will be important to explore the history of hip capitalism in another successful back-to-the-land community: Alpha Farm.

Hip Capitalism at Alpha Farm

As Twin Oaks developed Glorious Mud and the hammock business, other third generation back-to-the-land communities pursued a similar set of countercultural goals and

⁴²¹ David, “Louisa County, We Are Here,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, March 1974, 7, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴²² David, “Louisa County, We Are Here,” 7.

developed their own local hip business enterprises. Though the early founders of Twin Oaks focused inwards on reformation through the LCS in the late 1960s and slowly developed outwardly facing hip businesses in the 1970s, other communities like Alpha Farm understood from the beginning that local outreach was a cornerstone of their hip economic vision. In many respects, this difference stemmed from the different political climates that drove Alpha Farm and Twin Oaks' members to leave urban space. Members of Twin Oaks moved to rural Virginia before the events of 1968 and 1970, whereas by 1971, members of Alpha Farm, responding to the fracturing of the New Left, went back to the land at the height of the counterculture's embrace of participatory economics and the belief that social change would occur through local activism.

Along similar lines, by 1971, Alpha Farm's founders understood that other alternative communities like Morning Star Ranch and Drop City had foundered when local communities became antagonistic to "freeloading hippies," making it difficult to buy staples in town and leading to increased surveillance from local law enforcement. In their words, the early founders recognized that "cliquishness and isolation tends to create hostilities, a sense of unreality, and in the long run has destroyed many a community."⁴²³ Therefore the founders of Alpha Farm set out to create positive relationships with locals by showing they were equally committed to rural Oregon's "ethic of hard work and independence."⁴²⁴ Over the course of the 1970s, members of Alpha Farm undertook a series of hip economic ventures ranging from selling ceramics to

⁴²³ These quotes come from an undated internal document on the community's early history written presumably by Estes, as she was the author of many such documents. Based on how much it covers, the document was written in the mid-1970s. Caroline Estes, "Initiation and Early History," n.d., 6, Alpha Farm Box - Information Material 1976-2006, CCS Archive.

⁴²⁴ "Book People Book Order 1973," 5, Alpha Farm Box - Book Receipts 1973-1974 Folder, CCS Archive.

opening a group of local stores to picking up a mail route. Creating and maintaining such ventures was, however, quite difficult.

The early economic outlook of Alpha Farm was tenuous at best. The first person to move onto the property was Linda Williams in 1971, who arrived in April after driving across the country in a VW bug from Philadelphia. Linda began a garden to feed other members who would arrive in early summer. Two more families joined her in late Spring, but the Estes did not arrive from Philadelphia until mid-summer. The final founding member, Glenn Hovemann, did not arrive until October because he had to finish his alternative service as a conscientious objector to the still-raging Vietnam War. Over the course of 1971, the community generated no income and was mostly funded by gifts from friends back east and from surplus money that the Estes and Hovemann were able to send from their outside work. The group managed to survive on this money and their meager savings accounts during the first year of the community's existence. Over the next few years, the situation continued to be tenuous. In 1973 and 1974, for instance, one of the founding families, the Sweatts, decided to leave the community for personal reasons and requested repayment of their "gifts," – i.e., their share of communal property – forcing Alpha Farm to sell its loom and weaving business in what appeared to be an acrimonious and difficult split that lasted into 1975 and 1976.⁴²⁵ Despite the community's precarious financial position, however, in the early 1970s, Alpha Farm was able to feed itself from Williams' garden and began moving forward with a series of hip businesses that reached out to the local community.

⁴²⁵ For more on this conflict see their correspondence. Caroline Estes, "Letter to Rachel and Garry Sweatt," July 20, 1975, Alpha Farm Box - Materials re Rachel and Gary Sweatt 1974-1975 Folder, CCS Archive.

While fixing up various buildings on the old homestead for each family to live in during 1971, community members pursued individual outside work while at the same time experimenting with communal business ventures like Alpha-Bit. Like early members of Twin Oaks, not all Alpha Farm members worked on the commune or lived there full-time. Indeed, in the early 1970s, the community relied on the wealth generated through individual outside work. Caroline's husband Jim Estes, for instance, was a journalist who worked for a series of Oregon newspapers over the course of the 1970s. His outside work was at times a strain on Caroline since he lived in Salem during the week, but the community benefited from his steady income. As at Twin Oaks, Alpha Farm hoped that hip business ventures, in particular Alpha-Bit, would someday enable all members to live and work within the community while at the same time modeling the economics of equality to the outside world.

Alpha-Bit was the community's primary way of interacting with locals, though it was a precarious venture in the first few years. Luckily for Alpha Farm, Hovemann's parents moved to Mapleton and bought the building that housed the café and bookstore.⁴²⁶ They allowed Alpha Farm to use the building rent-free for two years. During those two years, however, Alpha Farm still struggled to turn a profit. Part of this financial instability was rooted in local wariness about hippie outsiders. Recalling how Alpha-Bit was received in 1972, a local Mapleton businessman, Larry Kezar, told a local reporter in 1976 that "the local people were very cautious of them when they first arrived... There was some doubt about their motivations and about what was happening at that farm."⁴²⁷ This hostility was confirmed by Judy Lazarus, an early member of Alpha Farm, who recalled, "when we first opened the store there were people in Mapleton who wouldn't

⁴²⁶ Estes, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Caroline Estes Interview," 4.

⁴²⁷ Mike Thoele, "Alpha," *Eugene Register-Guard*, January 11, 1976, 5, Alpha Farm Box – Newsletters Folder, CCS Archive.

allow their kids to go to ‘that hippie place.’”⁴²⁸ It was an uphill battle for Alpha Farm to convince locals that they were not a hippie menace, though they managed to slowly change the hearts and minds of the local community over the next four years.

Alpha Farm’s Alpha-Bit business approach was to be as open as possible about their community and its liberal economic goals. In an undated history of the community from the mid-1970s, Caroline Estes recalled that “creating a common ground for meeting the public was a priority...to offer... useful services – a healthy-food café, well-selected books, and crafts. The name – a bit of Alpha Farm – reflected the true purpose of extending to the public a certain kind of atmosphere where there was a lightness of spirit, friendship even to strangers, and an openness of who we are and what we’re about.”⁴²⁹ Indeed, Alpha-Bit served as an effective space for commune members to interact with locals, make money, and become part of the local community. Such interactions often verged on comical. Recalling her conversations with, in her words, “redneck” local timber workers, Estes noted that Alpha-Bit workers often had to explain why the café did not sell white bread and the health benefits of avocados. Estes even recounted an exchange between herself and a local logger on the topic of alfalfa sprouts. When asked if he wanted some on a sandwich the logger incredulously stated “Sprouts? Alfalfa sprouts? I feed alfalfa to my horses.”⁴³⁰ Though locals were wary of the “hippie” food served in the café, they warmed to the food over time and the fact that most of it was produced organically on the farm by hardworking hippies.

Alpha-Bit, the company, also extended itself beyond the café in the mid-1970s. By 1974, Alpha Farm members had convinced locals to harvest cascara bark – a native medicinal plant

⁴²⁸ Thoele, "Alpha," 5.

⁴²⁹ “Book People Book Order 1973,” 6.

⁴³⁰ Estes, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Caroline Estes Interview," 13.

used by indigenous groups – from the local woods for sale as a laxative in the natural health market, and Alpha-Bit was the collection station.⁴³¹ Indeed, the sustainable harvesting of cascara bark was one of a number of ways that members of Alpha Farm tried to reshape the local economy, which, as we have seen in the previous chapter, was beginning to run out of logging jobs. Such eclectic hip business even extended to construction, and they found – just as Twin Oaks had – that construction was a good business for a commune. In the 1975 Alpha Farm newsletter, Caroline marveled that Alpha-Bit was “becoming another spot where we constantly are with people” including visitors from Eugene and “local ‘regulars’” and that the business was “multi-faceted – one of the facets being that if you want a house torn down, Alpha Farm will do a clean job of it!”⁴³² Alpha Farm was particularly happy with this new work because they were able to salvage and reuse lumber for their own building projects.

Throughout all these endeavors, workers from Alpha Farm used economic exchange as a tool to model cooperation, egalitarianism, and productive countercultural labor. They also ran into difficulty when they strived for efficiency and long-term planning. Unlike Twin Oaks’s businesses, Alpha-Bit was not run by a manager and instead relied on a weekly business meeting, run via consensus, to align weekly goals and assign tasks amongst workers and the Alpha-Bit committee of planners who were responsible for the yearly budget and long-term planning for the business. Consensus decision-making coupled with the fact that there was considerable membership turnover in the mid-1970s – which made training difficult – meant that this system was often inefficient. This countercultural philosophy of work, however, was seen as

⁴³¹ Caroline Estes, “1974 Alpha Farm Newsletter,” December 1974, 2, Alpha Farm Box – Newsletters Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴³² Caroline Estes, “1975 Alpha Farm Newsletter,” December 1975, 2, Alpha Farm Box – Newsletters Folder, CCS Archive.

critical to enabling individuals to pursue meaningful labor. As with many elements of life at Alpha Farm, the philosophy of work was a mixture of Quakerism and countercultural sensibilities that members hoped would spread outwards to their neighbors. Caroline Estes best captured this when she noted that “there is an interesting balance to consider here. On the one hand is energy, willpower, dedication, and stamina! On the other hand...is ‘letting go’ to the guiding spirit and not attempting to push our own way. Our ideal...is that ‘work is love made visible.’”⁴³³ The latter reference, it should be noted, had been a key ethic for the Quaker AFCS since the 1960s. For Alpha Farm members, then, hip economic labor was as much spiritual as it was financial, and they made sure that this philosophy was on display at Alpha-Bit.

Modeling virtuous labor, however, was not the only way that members of Alpha Farm aimed to reach locals. The Alpha-Bit bookstore was founded in 1971 as a place for Alpha Farm to share the books and literature that drove their back-to-the-land endeavor. The surviving book-order receipts paint a colorful picture of the liberal books Alpha Farm was selling in downtown Mapleton in the mid-1970s. A book order form from February 1973 included a host of alternative titles such as the *Tassajara Bread Book*, *Stalking the Wild Asparagus*, a copy of the Beatle’s illustrated lyrics, *Indian Legends of the Pacific Northwest*, *Diet for a Small Planet*, and *Teachings of Don Juan* by Carlos Castaneda.⁴³⁴ The order form also included more mundane titles on the history of comic books and works of science fiction, from Robert Heinlein to Isaac Asimov. Along with books, Alpha-Bit also stocked all back copies of *Mother Earth News* and the *Whole Earth Catalog*, providing transparency about the books and newspapers that were influencing their communal endeavor. While it is unclear how diverse the Alpha-Bit bookstore's

⁴³³ Caroline Estes, “Philosophies - Work and Planning,” n.d., 8, Alpha Farm Box - Information Material 1976-2006, CCS Archive.

⁴³⁴ “Book People Book Order 1973,” 6.

clientele was, it is revealing that similar titles were reordered after 1973 and that the business also ordered non-countercultural titles, for instance, securing a single copy of the *Boy Scouts Handbook* for a local family in 1973.

Demonstrating, perhaps, the utility of the counterculture's economic activism – at least on a local level – by 1976 the local community had embraced their resident hippie Quaker commune and its hip business ventures. In an exposé in the January 11th, 1976 *Eugene Register-Guard*, a local journalist quoted Alpha Farm-member Judy Lazarus, who said that the negative attitudes towards Alpha Farm had faded and that “Now the kids come in [to Alpha-Bit] all the time. Some of them even bring their dates for dinner on Saturday night.”⁴³⁵ Similarly, local business owner Larry Kezar noted that “I think everyone recognizes now that they've made some real contributions to the community.”⁴³⁶ Indeed, by this time Caroline Estes and Kate Williams were both members of the Mapleton Area Advisory Planning Council, where they advised county planners to reduce pesticide use, among other environmental recommendations. Other prominent Mapleton residents such as Walt Huntington even admitted he had been skeptical of “just what kind of books they were going to be selling” in their bookstore but concluded that “the store has really helped people get to know them. The books are fine.”⁴³⁷ It is clear in the statements from local residents, then, that parents were no longer as worried about children mingling with hippies in the café, or the suspect countercultural books in Alpha Farm's bookstore. Indeed, such openness also extended to the café menu. By the 1970s and 1980s, Estes recalled, the café's most popular sandwich was avocado, tomatoes, and sprouts on whole

⁴³⁵ Thoele, “Alpha,” 5.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid.

wheat.⁴³⁸ By the end of the 1970s, then, hip economics, aided by the fact that Alpha Farm's Quakerism was non-threatening, had created the kind of relationship that the early founders of Alpha Farm had intended, even if they were not particularly profitable.

Like Twin Oak's experiment with running a grocery store, Alpha-Bit was never intended to generate much profit, and the community ended up relying on other sources of consistent income. These other sources, however, also brought them into contact with the larger region of Oregon surrounding Deadwood. In 1973 the community successfully bid for a coveted U.S. postal route and ran mail along a 200-mile route throughout the 1970s. This provided a primary source of stable income for the community. Though the work required two members – one of whom was usually Caroline – to clock in at 5 a.m., the route did show to local neighbors that Alpha Farm members were hardworking and invested in the community. In 1975 the community's year-end newsletter was pleased to report that they often found fresh fruits and vegetables in mailboxes with notes of thanks to the community.⁴³⁹ In 1977 when their four-year contract was up for renewal, the Postal Service decided to halve their mail route for budgetary reasons. Needing the money and connection with locals, the community decided to sign another contract and ran mail into the 1980s.⁴⁴⁰

Taken as a whole, Alpha Farm's hip business ventures demonstrate how important outwardly-facing businesses were for third-generation communities to secure economic stability. Indeed, such ventures were crucial for back-to-the-land communities as they sought to bring members back from outside work and as they tried to convince locals that they were

⁴³⁸ Estes, "Timothy Miller Oral Histories: Caroline Estes Interview," 13.

⁴³⁹ Estes, "1975 Alpha Farm Newsletter," 2.

⁴⁴⁰ Caroline Estes, "1977 Alpha Farm Newsletter," December 1977, 7, Alpha Farm Box – Newsletters Folder, CCS Archive.

hardworking and that their lifestyles were non-threatening. Through such strategies, Alpha Farm was ultimately very successful at reaching out to Mapleton and Deadwood's local communities through their mail route and the multi-faceted Alpha-Bit venture. Some of this success was due to the sheer organizational and leadership talent of members like Caroline Estes, who was open with locals about the community's countercultural Quaker philosophy and framed it in non-threatening ways. Indeed, there is no doubt that Alpha Farm's sustained economic engagement with locals showed wary neighbors that Alpha Farm was there to stay and that it did not represent a radical threat to the local community or its way of life. This process reveals the complicated interplay between outwardly facing hip capitalism and the back-to-the-land impulse for self-reliance.

At the same time, however, there were clear limits to back-to-the-land hip capitalism. By using their economic ventures to sell hip products and lifestyles as non-threatening, communities like Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm were able to dampen local criticism and pursue self-reliant egalitarian communalism in peace. Yet, the development of hip capitalism came at crossroads for the American Left. By retreating from society-wide collective action against issues such as the Vietnam War, back-to-the-landers at Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm circumscribed the power of their liberal cultural mission and adopted more conservative positions. Hip capitalism, then, was at once conservative and revolutionary, much like the larger back-to-the-land movement. This novel economic ethos, however, did have limits, especially when hip systems were used to reform gendered expectations of work in back-to-the-land communities as we shall see in the case of Twin Oaks.

The Economics of Equality: Gendered Work and the Third Generation

One of the ways we can track the movement's counterculture sensibilities regarding individual transformation through hip economic pursuits is to study how back-to-the-land communities developed in the context of the growing Women's Rights movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s. The rise of second-wave feminism in the 1970s was a powerful critique of mainstream society and the counterculture and the tendency of male counterculturalists to mask sexual exploitation behind calls for "free love."⁴⁴¹ On an even more basic level, second-wave feminism took aim at the counterculture and the back-to-the-land movement's tendency to romanticize traditional, "pioneer" gender roles. Indeed, in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as women moved back-to-the-land with men, many women back-to-the-landers shared experiences of being laughed at for wanting to drive tractors and share kitchen and child-rearing duties with men. However, by the mid-to-late 1970s, women on homesteads and communes began to open opportunities for themselves by breaking into traditionally male roles such as farming, plumbing, and construction. They did so while simultaneously reimagining democratic and economic systems to model more equitable relationships between men and women to the broader society.⁴⁴² This was a drastic departure for the first and second waves of the back-to-the-land movement.

⁴⁴¹ For a general narrative of gender in the counterculture see Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, chap. Bodies, Sex, and Gender; On contrasting notions of masculinity in the counterculture and a discussion of how they fit into the larger post-World War Two "crisis of masculinity" see Hodgdon's exploration of the Diggers and Gaskin's Farm. Hodgdon, *Manhood in the Age of Aquarius*, 18–22; For an important exploration of women in the counterculture and how they launched a "subtle rebellion" by rejecting suburban domesticity by adopting a modified agrarian ideal see Gretchen Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius: Women of the Sixties Counterculture* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 2009.), 18.

⁴⁴² Lemke-Santangelo has followed a similar process and narrated how hip women's focus on their "natural" and "essential" identity infused the New Age movement's interest in spirituality,

Gender inequality and the promotion of women's domestic labor were basic components of the first and second generation's back-to-the-land philosophy. In the early-to-mid 1960s the second generation of back-to-the-landers, from the Nearings to Borsodi to Loomis, still adhered to idealized agrarian notions of domesticity for women in which women were expected to find meaning in their labor as mothers and homemakers. As such, the School of Living's reaction to second-wave feminism offers insight into such generational differences.

In the early 1960s, the School of Living was falling out of step with the rest of society when it came to thinking about women's work. When Betty Friedan published *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963, her work did not appeal to women at the School of Living. Indeed, by the following year, GR's pages contained long articles devoted to refuting portions of Friedan's book. This was a fascinating development considering how Friedan's discussion of self-actualization was so similar to the School of Living's calls for meaningful work – revealing perhaps that proper gender roles were more important to the second generation's antimodern vision than satisfying labor. In the June edition of the magazine, Mildred Loomis provided an exhaustive review of the book that ended with a call for women readers to respond to a series of leading questions such as “Is your home sufficient fulfillment for you? Do we women in productive homes (homesteads) have less of the frustration of women in suburban homes?...Could it be that the feminine mystique is a mistake?”⁴⁴³ Such leading questions elicited enough responses that two months later a detailed refutation of Friedan's book – based on Ralph Borsodi's philosophy – was published by Rose Smart.

holistic medicine, eco-feminism, antinuclear activism, and food politics. Indeed, many women were leaders of the movement by the 1980s. Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius*, 174.
⁴⁴³ Loomis Mildred, “Is A Woman's Place In The Home Or In A Career Or Just Where?,” *The Green Revolution*, June 1964, 2. School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

Smart, another prominent second-generation follower of Loomis and Borsodi, argued that Friedan had overlooked the self-actualizing potential of women's work on homesteads such as raising children and canning food. In an article entitled "Dear, Dear Betty Friedan, Let's Get Together on a Homestead," Rose Smart focused on Friedan's thesis that middle-class, suburban women had so far been unable to find fulfillment in marriage and raising children. In a clear statement about how "creative homesteading" provided her with fulfillment, she stated:

Our homes are meaningful to us... We interpret our knowledge and psychology to mean that the most important job in the world for women (and men) is the rearing of secure, integrated, creative children. We find it fulfilling and challenging to stay home to ensure this as long as the children are at school. We see that a home with space, land and beauty around it is required to fulfill our biological task as mothers.... That women should get out of the sterile homes presented them as the end product of the Industrial Revolution and its pimp, Madison Avenue, is a most logical deduction on her [Friedan's] part. That she could find nothing more than the equally sterile out of the home world... must be due to the fact that she is not yet aware of any other type of home.⁴⁴⁴

For Smart, self-actualization through creative, productive homesteading in a rural setting with plenty of space was the answer to suburban women's angst. This perspective, rooted in first and second-generation ideology, assumed that female biology necessitated raising children and running households, at least until the end of a woman's childbearing years. For Borsodi and Loomis, women who pursued careers outside of the home and did not have children were a product of industrial capitalism and, therefore, unnatural and a degenerative force in society. Smart offered an open invitation for Friedan to visit the Heathcote center and discuss homesteading as an alternative. It is unclear if Friedan ever even acknowledged the invitation.

Smart's arguments were in keeping with the School of Living's founding antimodern philosophy. Borsodi and Loomis envisioned small, productive homesteads equipped with small

⁴⁴⁴ Rose Smart, "Dear, Dear Betty Friedan, Let's Get Together on a Homestead," *The Green Revolution*, August 1964, 1, School of Living Box – The Green Revolution Folder, CCS Archive.

and intermediate technologies, such as pressure cookers, which would enable homemakers a modicum of leisure while at the same time subverting “factory culture.” Indeed, the home and the homemaker were central to Borsodi’s vision. In *This Ugly Civilization*, first published in 1929 and republished in 1975, Borsodi lamented that the home was no longer a place where families lived rich lives outside of industrial labor. According to him, the factory had made the family “into individuals who express themselves and what their jobs enable them to buy; individuals who devote themselves to spending rather than to the work of creating homes.”⁴⁴⁵ Central to this framing was a static and idealized vision of family life, with a man pursuing outside labor while his wife ran the household and educated the children. As a result, many second generation back-to-the-landers believed early twentieth-century capitalism had perverted families and alienated individuals by forcing them to define themselves by their consumption rather than encouraging fulfilling labor close to nature. It seems, then, that the second generation developed back-to-the-land practices and beliefs in response to contemporary forms of consumer capitalism, much like the younger generation.

It is easy to dismiss these mid-1960s critiques of Friedan as the product of generational differences in the back-to-the-land movement, with surviving members of the second generation adhering to more old-fashioned notions of women’s roles. Yet, many of the early back-to-the-land communes in the late 1960s also reproduced Victorian spheres of domesticity that relegated women to childcare, kitchen work, and laundry duties.⁴⁴⁶ Early residents of Twin Oaks had to

⁴⁴⁵ Ralph Borsodi, *This Ugly Civilization*, 91.

⁴⁴⁶ It should be noted that countercultural domesticity was seen as different. Women in back-to-the-land communities like The Farm viewed communal women’s work as crucially different than the type of alienated labor their mothers had pursued in suburbs. Indeed, they believed that housework and cooking with natural ingredients set them apart from their mothers, who had been encouraged to serve TV meals and abandon cooking so they could pursue outside work. Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius*, 77.

confront these issues almost from the very beginning of setting up the community in rural Virginia. The founding eight members moved from Washington, D.C. to their new 123-acre tobacco farm in June 1967. Their first order of business was to unpack the school bus, choose a name for their new community, experiment with labor regimens, and start putting out their newsletter, the *Leaves of Twin Oaks*. Writing a year later, Kat Kinkade surveyed the community's experience with organizing labor in their attempts to develop an "economics of equality." According to the article, in the first months of the community's existence, the eight founders decided to adopt the "anti-structure hippie approach" but quickly abandoned it.⁴⁴⁷

The founders dropped the "hippie approach" not only because, as we have seen, important work was not getting done but also because a gendered division of labor had emerged. Kinkade observed that "having come from the outside society, it was easy for us not to notice that the work began to polarize, the men getting up from the table and leaving the women with the housework, meals, dishes."⁴⁴⁸ This was not the economics of equality that they were looking for, and they returned to the LCS to make sure work was completed with the burden shared by all members. They also built gender equality into the new LCS. To encourage people to sign up for skilled jobs such as working on the community's cars, they instituted an apprenticeship rule which gave labor credits to learners, teachers, and, in particular, women. This rule was crucial for the community's goal of encouraging women to pursue jobs outside of the household because it incentivized male managers to teach women.

The apprenticeship rule's implementation demonstrates that, from almost the very beginning, Twin Oaks showed interest in equalizing opportunities for men and women in the

⁴⁴⁷ Kinkade, "Labor Credits - Theory and Practice," 5.

⁴⁴⁸ *Ibid.*,

community and ensuring that women had the opportunity to explore labor that would fulfill them. Not all countercultural back-to-the-land communities, it should be noted, were as invested in gender equality as Twin Oaks. Stephen Gaskin's countercultural community, The Farm, in rural Tennessee, for instance, was hierarchical, and women were encouraged to pursue traditional gender roles.⁴⁴⁹ Twin Oaks's ongoing focus on women's equality does, however, track with wider trends on the Left in which countercultural women used hippie rhetoric to carve out more space for themselves and break out of those traditional roles. Indeed, by the late 1960s and early 1970s, Twin Oaks was not alone in its pursuit of women's liberation. In Oregon, for instance, Margaret Grundstein grappled with similar issues, and the state contained a growing contingent of lesbian back-to-the-land communities over the course of the 1970s.⁴⁵⁰ As such, Twin Oaks was part of an expanding segment of hip back-to-the-land communities that used internal systems and rural isolation to pursue gender equality.

Twin Oaks's dedication to this economics of equality persisted into the 1970s as the Women's Rights movement gained prominence. Members of Twin Oaks were proud to be at the forefront of liberating women within the counterculture. Numerous exposés on women in the community were published in the pages of the *Leaves*, and the newsletter discussed feminist film screenings. Hinting at members' sense of smug pride, when The Women's Film was screened in 1972, a member named Marjorie wrote in the *Leaves* that "it was a disappointment – not because

⁴⁴⁹ The Farm was founded by Stephen Gaskin who became the community's spiritual leader. Women at the Farm did generally engage in traditional roles. The community's most successful and lasting business was its midwifery practice which helped bring the practice of midwifery back to life after being phased out by the post-World War Two medical establishment. Lemke-Santangelo, *Daughters of Aquarius*, 84.

⁴⁵⁰ For more on lesbian communities in southwest Oregon see James J. Kopp, *Eden Within Eden: Oregon's Utopian Heritage* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2009), 15, 149; Catherine B. Kleiner, *Doin' It for Themselves: Lesbian Land Communities in Southern Oregon, 1970-1995* (PhD Dissertation: University of New Mexico, 2003).

the film is bad, but because its message is largely irrelevant to our lives here. Women are not exploited economically, sexually, or socially here at Twin Oaks.”⁴⁵¹

While they may not have been exploited, quite a bit of work was still to be done. One member, Tatiana, wrote an article entitled “no, I’m not the lady of the house, I’m the plumber” in November 1973, reflecting shifts in gender roles within the community. In it, she explored her experiences as an apprentice plumber in the community and the trouble she had in overcoming her expectations about the work’s difficulty. Noting that her naïveté about skilled construction still amazed her, she said, “it all began when Glorious Mud crews were forming, and the sign-up note was posted. I had little skill, but I knew my head was in a place where I was saying ‘I can do it’ to anything new. That was a real change in me from an older self-image filled with doubt and criticism of my competence.”⁴⁵² Tatiana went on to work on a number of projects, mostly outside of the commune, and admitted that she was sometimes still afraid of being incompetent but marveled at the way the work could make her feel enthusiastic and independent.⁴⁵³ For her and many other women writing in the *Leaves*, the LCS had enabled the kind of self-transformation that she sought in getting back to the land.

In addition to building and iterating on the LCS, Twin Oaks' members created an egalitarian atmosphere by changing the basic language that they used to refer to one another, demonstrating how important these issues were for most members. In 1971, based on the recent recommendation of a women’s liberation group in New York that pioneered the practice, the community formally adopted the nominative singular third-person gender-neutral pronoun “co”

⁴⁵¹ Marjorie, “The Woman’s Film,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, February 1972, 10, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁵² Tatiana, “No, I’m Not the Lady of the House, I’m the Plumber,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, November 1973, 7, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁵³ Tatiana, “No, I’m Not the Lady of the House, I’m the Plumber,” 7.

for each other. In the August 1971 *Leaves*, the editor explained the term “co” was being adopted because “the generalized *he* referring to both sexes should be done away with as part of our language” and that “many Twin Oaks members agree and write their articles accordingly.”⁴⁵⁴ The neutral pronoun was slowly adopted over the course of the next few years, appearing consistently in many articles in the *Leaves*, though it is unclear how widely it was used in conversation. By 1974 when Twin Oaks incorporated itself in Virginia, the term “co” was even used throughout the community’s bylaws. For instance, in describing the terms of admission for new members the bylaws stated that new members may be admitted “so long as co’s admission is consistent with the survival of the Community and the happiness of its members.”⁴⁵⁵ From the hip labor structures in the community to the language that Twin Oaks was fashioning to its basic governing documents, gender equality was an early, stated goal for the social and economic relationships between members. As hip business ventures brought members of Twin Oaks outside of the community, however, women members were often confronted by discrimination, even from other hip allies.

Contrary to Marjorie’s pronouncements, women members of Twin Oaks in the mid-1970s, especially women who ventured outside of the commune on work details, still experienced discrimination – even from hip men in the nearby counterculture settlements. In the May 1974 *Leaves*, Bree recounted one incident that occurred when she was doing electrical work for a nearby hip artists’ colony. She was on her knees threading heavy cable under a porch when the caretaker stood over her on the basement stairs with a cup of coffee and watched her.

⁴⁵⁴ Kathleen Kinkade, “About ‘Co,’” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, August 1971, as reproduced in *Journal of a Walden Two Commune: The Collected Leaves of Twin Oaks* vol. 1, 115.

⁴⁵⁵ Donna, “Bylaws of Twin Oaks Community, Inc.,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, May 1974, Government Supplement, 1, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

According to Bree, he said doubtfully, “it’s kind of nice to watch a chick doin’ heavy work for a change.”⁴⁵⁶ She found the incident dumbfounding and discovered that it touched on her insecurities of being “sure, somewhere in my gut, that I’m basically incompetent and have no business trying to do skilled work.”⁴⁵⁷

Bree spent the rest of the article discussing her experiences working on two different houses with the Glorious Mud construction crew and concluded that her overall experience as an electrician was positive and that it felt “good to have the skill,” something that felt “much more real and solid than my bachelor’s degree, that I can contribute to and share with the community.”⁴⁵⁸ Ending with an explicit statement about what doing men’s work meant to her, she wrote, “then there’s the satisfaction of being able to do work that I always thought of as man’s work. It’s hard to articulate why that makes me feel good; perhaps it is enough to say that I feel I’m cutting through some boundaries for myself and for other women.”⁴⁵⁹ For Bree, electrical work was empowering and was one of the key elements of going back to the land and living with like-minded counterculture communards.

Excitement about breaking these boundaries was a common sentiment in the pages of the *Leaves* during the 1970s, and by the end of the 1970s, feminism had become foundational to the community – though it still generated tension with male members. By 1978 women in the community were welding, working in the machine shop, driving tractors, running backhoes, doing electrical work, and repairing cars. Heidi and Joyce, two members of the auto mechanics’ group, were interviewed about their experiences in a typically male domain in the *Leaves*’ April

⁴⁵⁶ Bree, “It’s a Switch,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, May 1974, 8, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁵⁷ Bree, “It’s a Switch,” 8.

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid.

issue in 1978. Describing her rationale for working in vehicle maintenance, Heidi stated, “from a feminist perspective, I wanted to be able to relate to men on the levels and information areas they are most commonly into. I want to tap into a source of men’s power, accepting that access to information and knowledge is power.”⁴⁶⁰ Joyce concurred with Heidi and added, “I felt entirely at the mercy of people who knew all about it.”⁴⁶¹

For Joyce and Heidi, it was the LCS and the apprenticeship rule that empowered them to work in traditionally male roles as auto mechanics. On her first visit to Twin Oaks, Joyce expressed interest offhandedly in working as a mechanic to a Twin Oaks member, and after she was accepted into the community, she was heavily encouraged to pursue her interests; by this time, “women apprentices were being actively sought.”⁴⁶² While working as mechanics, however, both women still encountered male attitudes that they saw as hostile. Heidi stated bluntly, “those men who question my abilities by making assumptions about my intelligence or strength leave me quite riled. I can come back with a mild keep the peace... compliant attitude, or I can do an angry, aggressive bit.”⁴⁶³ Indeed, it was common for both of them to chafe under patronizing men who interfered with their attempts to learn, and transform themselves, through work. Joyce added that “I’ve often confronted men putting out information as positive facts when I found through experience that it is often guess and conjecture. I’m easily snowed by a person who sounds like co knows what co’s talking about.”⁴⁶⁴ Joyce’s suspicion of men’s positive statements was in keeping with the counterculture’s dedication to personal experience as

⁴⁶⁰ Heidi and Joyce, “An Interview Heidi and Joyce, Two Members of the Auto Crew,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, April 1978, 1, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

⁴⁶¹ Heidi and Joyce, “An Interview Heidi and Joyce,” 1.

⁴⁶² *Ibid.*

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*, 4.

⁴⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

the key to living an authentic life. The men's authoritative claims ran counter to the spirit of personal exploration and perpetuated a sexual hierarchy that members of Twin Oaks had been struggling against since the late 1960s.

By 1978, women like Heidi and Joyce had cause to be optimistic. In the same interview, Heidi praised the community for providing complex role models for their children, and she predicted that it would be much easier for them in the future. Tensions, however, arose later in 1978 when women members organized a woman-only conference, dubbing it *Speculum '78*. Demonstrating, perhaps, the limits to how quickly and thoroughly back-to-the-landers could embrace their own radical egalitarian philosophies, male members organized a competing and thoroughly juvenile conference that they mockingly named *Rectum '78*. That Fall's *Leaves*, which was normally circumspect when it came to internal dissension, published an article by Heidi about her feelings towards *Rectum '78*. Striking a combative tone, she began the article: "I felt intentionally injured by *Rectum '78*. I get angry when I hear the resentments towards *Speculum '78*. But, I understand it. The joining together of womyn has been resisted for years."⁴⁶⁵ She then went on to discuss Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the early suffragists and then got to the heart of the controversy, which was separatism and the evolution of gender roles.

Drawing on her experiences on the auto repair crew, Heidi offered a practical solution to the conflict. According to her, people needed "to share the wealth of 'expectations' – instead of focusing on those people who are expected to have more info and knowledge, remember that others have a source of sensibility that should be tapped... Feel like this stuff is really basic to how we operate – and if we all absorbed it – how utopian we would be! Defy tradition! Next

⁴⁶⁵ Heidi, "Speculum '78 Revisited," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, September 1978, 9, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

step: Androgyny.”⁴⁶⁶ For Heidi, back-to-the-land utopias were spaces in which all individuals could come together in community to pool their sensibilities and learn from each other in order to disrupt the unrealistic expectations that the larger society had placed on individuals, especially women. Heidi’s article was published alongside written feedback by various members demonstrating the animosity *Speculum* generated. One member, Will, who had been instrumental in the LCS controversy, wrote, “I can’t bring myself to be guilt tripped for having an enjoyable evening with some folks I share my life with. Retreat a step: equality.”⁴⁶⁷ By 1978, then, Twin Oaks’s labor system and egalitarian social system’s basic goals were still being debated as men chafed at women members who sought their own space.

The controversy surrounding *Speculum* ‘78 and *Rectum* ‘78 clearly reveals limitations within countercultural back-to-the-land communities seeking to foster an economics of equality. While male members like Will paid lip service to gender equality, many quickly turned juvenile when confronted with serious women’s issues and women members’ radical solutions. Indeed, on a more basic level, conflict over *Speculum* ’78 demonstrates that the back-to-the-landers, even within progressive communities, struggled to agree on what equality looked like. For members like Heidi and Joyce, gender equality meant the slow disintegration of gender roles so that all members, both men and women, could use their rural retreats as spaces to fully self-actualize away from mainstream society’s constraints. For members like Will, the creation of women-only spaces and the advocacy of androgyny did not fit within his countercultural search for individuality, authenticity, and community since women-only spaces, from his perspective, were exclusionary. In essence, while internal hip economic systems were geared toward fostering

⁴⁶⁶ Heidi, “*Speculum* ’78 Revisited,” 9–10.

⁴⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 10.

equality, over the course of the 1970s many members disagreed about what an egalitarian society should look like. Such disagreements reveal how the social and cultural beliefs back-to-the-landers brought from the outside world circumscribed their supposedly radical rural experiments.

Economic Prosperity and Unease at Twin Oaks

While Twin Oaks struggled to create hip economic systems within their community that empowered women and fostered equality, members were also dealing with the implications of economic prosperity resulting from their outwardly focused business ventures. In the Fall of 1974, the economic outlook of Twin Oaks was improving. The construction business and hammock shop were both bringing in enough money to support the community, revealing how hip capitalism was integral to successful back-to-the-land communities in the 1970s. Only a few years before, the community had almost foundered due to financial miscalculations and the cost of a new well, forcing them to send members to work in the nearby cities of Charlottesville and Richmond. What had started as a small cottage industry was finally generating enough income to bring outside workers back to the community.

Newfound economic stability presented Twin Oaks members with affirmation that their non-threatening business ventures were viable and that their products and values were marketable to mainstream society. Indeed, much like other hip capitalists in the mid-1970s, Twin Oaks even began outreach to other hip communities to expand hammock production. Noting this business success, hammock-shop manager Steven Juniper wrote a report in the September 1974 *Leaves* that went to great lengths to highlight the hammock business's supposed radicalism and

how Twin Oaks was partnering with other hip communities to increase production.⁴⁶⁸ Writing in the *Leaves*, he mused, “from time to time I am struck by the radical nature of our communal (and possible intercommunal) business. As the various tasks...have increasingly been spread among the members of a loosely defined crew, the non-hierarchical character of our organization has become ever more evident.”⁴⁶⁹ By 1974, then, Twin Oaks members prided themselves on their dedication to equitable, non-hierarchical labor structures and a commitment to products produced locally with ecologically sound methods. Of course, despite Steven’s insistence, Twin Oaks’s hammock shop was not fundamentally radical since the community relied on outside consumers to buy hip products both for their intrinsic value and as a way of supporting the community’s hip lifestyle and values. Indeed, on an even broader scale, the retreat from collective social activism that characterized hip capitalism following the New Left's disintegration was hardly a radical development; instead, it was a turn towards conservatism.

By 1974 Twin Oaks saw increased demand for hammocks, and it partnered with other like-minded back-to-the-land communities to increase production by starting their own allied hammock shops. The largest of these communities East Wind in Missouri, a newly founded Walden Two community started by Twin Oaks founder Kat Kinkade. Rather than competing with the Twin Oaks shop, East Wind partnered with Twin Oaks and divided sales territories, thus creating a non-competitive hip economic relationship. This relationship, however, was tested in

⁴⁶⁸ It is important to note that, like many communards, Steven did not use his last name and adopted Juniper as a reference to the main Twin Oaks community. By the mid-1970s the community was beginning to expand and spawn offshoots such as Acorn. Acorn was a community within the Twin Oaks community which built buildings on adjacent property and pursued slightly different practices but was still considered part of Twin Oaks. The practice of not using real last names makes it difficult to track down communard’s pre-back-to-the-land history.

⁴⁶⁹ David, “Learning the Ropes in the Hammock Business,” *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, September 1974, 3, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

following years as the Twin Oaks hammock business expanded into the national market. In fact, at the same time as Steven's article was published and unannounced in the fall *Leaves*, Twin Oaks was in private conversation with a national retailer.

Less than a year later, it was announced that the retailer was Pier One Imports, setting off a mad scramble to produce enough hammocks for the spring sales season, which they expected – quite naively – to be enormous. Twin Oaks could not handle the expected demand on its own and brought East Wind into the deal. By March of 1975, the usual start of the hammock buying season, Twin Oaks and East Wind had produced 3,000 hammocks, with a combined wholesale value of 60,000 dollars. This turned out to be twice as many hammocks as the market demanded. It seems, then, that while Twin Oaks's hammocks were hip and marketable, the budding capitalists at Twin Oaks overestimated the outside world's interest in hip lifestyles or the need for rainbow-colored, outdoor leisure goods.

As the anticipated hammock boom failed to materialize, Twin Oaks held a frantic meeting of the community's accountants which led to an acrimonious dispute with East Wind, revealing the limitations of their supposedly radical economics of equality. In May, Twin Oaks's community planners announced that "the community was virtually broke" and, according to Ken, "a panicked mutiny" ensued.⁴⁷⁰ It turned out that the community planners were relying on the hammock boom to cover the costs of the construction company, which, though growing, had struggled to collect bills from the nearby community. Additionally, the community had been unable to collect 17,000 dollars in unpaid hammock orders. By 1975, then, the community's economic situation was dire, which led to a breakdown of relations with East Wind. Indeed,

⁴⁷⁰ Ken, "Tales of Power," *The Leaves of Twin Oaks*, June 1975, 9, Twin Oaks Box – The Leaves of Twin Oaks Folder, CCS Archive.

hammock workers went so far as to break the spirit of communal interdependence, accusing East Wind of a breach of contract resulting from unauthorized sales trips “made into traditional Twin Oaks sales areas” that were “bungling some existing sales setups.”⁴⁷¹ Far from being radical egalitarian communalists, then, it is apparent that by the mid-1970s, hip capitalism fully suffused how members of Twin Oaks viewed their relationship to the outside world and like-minded, allied communities. After all, accusations of “bungling” sales set-ups were dire insults in the mainstream sales world.

Luckily for both communities, however, a resolution to the conflict materialized in early June when Pier One requested 2,500 to 3,000 more hammocks for an upcoming Father’s Day sale. Ken concluded that after this order “we were into megabucks.”⁴⁷² Indeed, over the course of the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, the Pier One account – coupled with the fact that the community was tax-exempt – ensured that Twin Oaks prospered and became one of the largest, ongoing back-to-the-land communities in America. As such, the history of Twin Oaks’s hip economic ventures reveals the complex ways in which entrepreneurialism and hip consumption were basic tendencies within the counterculture from the beginning. Far from being sellouts, then, third generation back-to-the-landers, much like their predecessors, viewed economic engagement with straight society as a primary way of ensuring their rural experiments survived and that such communities might one day slowly reshape the outside world.

Conclusion

⁴⁷¹ Ken, "Tales of Power," 9.

⁴⁷² Ibid.

The history of Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm's business ventures in the 1970s reveals how successful back-to-the-land communities tried to translate the high ideal of equality into practice, often with mixed results. As we have seen, members of Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm – reacting as they did to the demise of the New Left coalition and their failure to stop the war in Vietnam – created new businesses and novel economic relationships between workers and customers based in the counterculture's social and economic ethos – a new “economics of equality.” Members of Alpha Farm created Alpha-Bit as a literal piece of itself in the neighboring town of Mapleton to model how a consensus-driven group of hippies could provide healthy, natural food and sell countercultural books. Members of Twin Oaks, using LCS, created an egalitarian and well-organized social and economic system that ensured important work was done and encouraged women to participate in male-dominated roles.

Neither of these communities abandoned capitalism nor the outside world. Instead, their economic activism was part of a larger shift on the Left in the 1970s away from large-scale collective social mobilization against the war and the draft. Alpha-Bit relied on the local community to frequent its stores and even engaged locals in the emerging natural health market by buying cascara bark harvested by the locals. Managers at Twin Oaks ran – sometimes effectively and sometimes not – non-threatening hip business like Glorious Mud and the hammock shop, the latter of which generated considerable profits by the late 1970s. These businesses were central to both communities' countercultural utopianism and economic sustainability.

Hip capitalism provided mixed results for back-to-the-landers. Economic stability and affluence often created unforeseen consequences for these antimodern social experiments. Twin Oaks struggled to allocate and manage vacation for members and grappled with deeper questions

concerning the meaning of fulfilling labor on the land. Should back-to-the-landers “work to play,” or was efficient, productive labor an end in and of itself? Alpha Farm struggled with similar issues in its consensus-seeking meetings. Other matters were thornier. Hip economics developed at the same time as the new Women’s Rights movement crested. As women in back-to-the-land communities questioned why they were relegated to dishwashing rather than driving the tractor, they began reframing the counterculture’s call for individualism and egalitarianism to include women’s concerns. As we have seen in the case of the School of Living and Twin Oaks, the complicated legacy of the second generation along with prevailing attitudes towards women’s roles made carving out women’s space for fulfilling labor on the land more difficult. Twin Oaks was able to shift the community’s early direction by using the LCS to ensure that women had equal access to fulfilling labor. At the same time, however, as the 1970s progressed and as women sought more defined space to discuss issues, men at Twin Oaks used the language of equality to challenge women-only spaces.

Finally, hip capitalism and the economics of equality did not provide a roadmap for communities that attained prosperity and affluence. As we have seen with Twin Oaks, ups and downs in the hammock business in the mid-1970s created tensions between Twin Oaks and its allied communities. Indeed, economic competition, exemplified by the panic surrounding the glut of hammocks for the Pier One Imports account, was an unstable component of countercultural entrepreneurialism. This plagued many of the intercommunal interactions that occurred in the 1970s. As the next chapter will demonstrate, these issues, coupled with the movement’s turn away from social activism and the development of a New Age racial identity, effectively precluded meaningful interactions with non-white groups seeking their own version of self-reliance and self-determination in the 1970s.

Chapter 5.

“Onwards and Inwards!:)”

The Counterculture’s Transformation into the New Age Movement in the Southwest, Southeast, and Pacific Northwest

*Saint Stephen with a rose
In an out of the garden he goes,
Country garland in the wind and the rain
Wherever he goes, the people all complain.*
– The Grateful Dead “Saint Stephen,” 1969

In the late 1960s, thousands of counterculturalists, including leaders like Stewart Brand, Carlos Castaneda, members of Ken Kesey’s Merry Pranksters, and members of the Hog Farm, traveled from California and temporarily settled in New Mexico and other areas of the American Southwest. Taking advantage of the region’s remoteness – and resulting cheap land prices – hippie back-to-the-landers sought to create new societies by learning from local Native and Latinx groups that had resided in the area for hundreds of years. Indeed, hippies viewed such groups as socially egalitarian, environmentally conscientious, non-violent, and cooperative – all the virtues that white back-to-the-landers found lacking in their own lives.

This southwest migration, and underlying utopian idealism, was most famously captured in the landmark countercultural film *Easy Rider* in 1969. In the film, Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper played two hip bikers who traveled through Southwest communes and offered audiences a rich portrait of drug use, Indian play, free love, and local antagonism. In fact, local antagonism was a constant theme in the film, and the movie ended with the two bikers being gunned down by locals in rural Louisiana. In real life, as in the movie, hippies in New Mexico were, from the

very beginning, confronted with the harsh reality that they, and their unconventional lifestyles, were unwelcome in most parts of rural America. The resulting tensions – and even a short-lived shooting war – reveal how most countercultural back-to-the-landers were unprepared for – or uninterested in – understanding the complex histories and lived experiences of non-white groups.

From the perspective of local Native Americans, there was a “hippie invasion” of the Southwest in the late 1960s.⁴⁷³ The back-to-the-landers who founded Lama and New Buffalo – the two main back-to-the-land communities that *Easy Rider* based its commune on – settled near the Taos Pueblo so that they could seek advice from Taos Natives on living harmoniously with the land.⁴⁷⁴ It appears that there was some early knowledge exchange; countercultural back-to-the-landers learned how to build with adobe bricks and partake in peyote rituals.⁴⁷⁵ They also offered important support by allying with local Natives who were protesting environmental degradation in New Mexico. Indeed, members of the counterculture were crucial allies in the fight against strip-mining at Black Mesa, revealing how important environmentalism was to the counterculture.⁴⁷⁶ By and large, however, counterculture communitarians in Taos were unable to connect with the local Native community and struggled to understand, much less replicate, the complexities of tribal life, social structures, and spirituality. Back-to-the-landers also failed to engage with the important contemporary Red Power causes, such as the return of Blue Lake to the Taos people.⁴⁷⁷ In the end, then, though there were some white back-to-the-landers – in particular Stewart Brand – who became important Native allies by the end of the 1970s, the

⁴⁷³ For an insightful exploration of how counterculturalists from California attempted to support the Red Power movement, especially in New Mexico, see Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, 113–14.

⁴⁷⁴ Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, 115–22.

⁴⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 114.

⁴⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 142.

⁴⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 114.

movement as a whole failed to contribute meaningfully to Native self-determination efforts in the 1970s. As a result, Native groups in northern New Mexico viewed the majority of countercultural communards with suspicion or outright hostility. The “hippie invasion” was, after all, part of a long settler-colonial tradition.

That hippies were engaged in settler colonialism is evident in how they justified their settlement in New Mexico and how they appropriated Native American ideas and practices to suit their utopian vision.⁴⁷⁸ As Lama and New Buffalo struggled to connect with Taos Natives, another group, the Rainbow Family, formulated an entire spiritual worldview in which whites returning to the land would become New Age Indians. The Rainbow Family consisted of hippies, some of whom had lived together in the Haight-Ashbury and the Pacific Northwest before moving to the Southwest in the late 1960s. While living in northern New Mexico, the group had a number of interactions with local Native American groups. Through a religious experience – presumably involving peyote – in a Native American kiva, the group came to believe that it, and its countercultural brethren across the country, was reincarnated Native Americans – revealing their belief that all “real” Native Americans were dead or had become too westernized.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁸ In framing this practice as settler colonial, I draw on a rich, emerging scholarship led by Native scholars. Jodi Byrd, for instance, has offered a powerful critique of multicultural liberalism and the use of Indianness as a “dense presence” to frame American empire and specifically the practices of othering non-white colonial subjects. In many respects the types of activities that hippie back-to-the-landers were partaking in marked another iteration of such imperialism, though under a new guise of appropriating (and flattening) a countercultural “Indian” identity. I also draw heavily on scholarship of hippies and Natives in the 1960s, in particular Philip Deloria’s and Sherry Smith’s work. Deloria’s work on post-modern Indian play lays at the heart of how this chapter frame’s the hippies appropriation of Native culture.

However, Deloria’s work predated the emerging scholarship of settler colonialism and this chapter tries to update his work under this new lens. For more see Jodi A. Byrd, *The Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University Of Minnesota Press, 2011) xxxv; Deloria, *Playing Indian*; Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*.
⁴⁷⁹ “The Rainbow Oracle of Mandala City” (Rainbow Family Of Living Light, July 1972), 52, http://archive.org/details/the_rainbow_oracle_of_mandala_city_01_july_1972.

According to the community's founding document, the 1972 *Rainbow Oracle*, this belief stemmed from a Hopi prophesy the founders had heard, which, according to them, stated "that when the Red Man becomes as the White Man and the White Man becomes as the Red Man, then shall the warriors of the Rainbow ride."⁴⁸⁰ They believed themselves to be the "warriors of the rainbow," reflecting how members of the Rainbow Family – and many in the wider counterculture – appropriated Native culture in order to justify their own settlement of rural land.

The *Rainbow Oracle* authors made their claims to indigeneity – and their erasure of actual Natives Americans in New Mexico – explicit. The Hopi prophecy story unfolded following a full-page sketch entitled "The resurrection of the American Indian," which contained a banner around the head of a Native American man describing a vision. The banner read in part, "the family is the union of all races and all peoples; into the family is reborn the true spirit of the Indians. Thus it is foretold – the true light family will come bringing the long-lost STONE TABLET – symbol of the land, and return it to the Indians."⁴⁸¹ According to the authors, a Rainbow Family member found the stone tablet – another key component of the Hopi prophesy which foretold that "the Warriors of the Rainbow are to come bearing a sacred stone tablet" – while meditating in the kiva.⁴⁸² Heeding their own hallucinogen-fueled prophesy, the Rainbows brought the stone tablet to a local Native American reservation, residents of which, presumably chagrined, told the hippies that the stone did not belong to them but might be significant to the Family. Members of the Rainbow Family latched onto this as evidence that they were the "warriors of the rainbow" and thus heirs to Native Americans.

⁴⁸⁰ "The Rainbow Oracle of Mandala City," 53.

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 52.

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, 53.

As supposed heirs, members of the Rainbow Family believed they were duty-bound to create new back-to-the-land communities and intercommunal organizations that could bring about a utopian New Age that would unite “all races and peoples.” Indeed, creating a community of communities, or a “gathering of the Tribes,” was a common practice across the country during the 1970s and was a key element of the emerging New Age movement. According to the Rainbow Family, this New Age of racial harmony would eclipse previous ages, and the authors of the *Rainbow Oracle* believed that “the Age of Civilization has been drawn to its limit, and with our motto, ‘Ecolution or Bust’ we’re ready. We got to move on. Courage, Soul, Courage! From the Age of Civilization to the Age of Cooperation. Onward and Inward!”⁴⁸³

Inward they went, and, over the course of the 1970s, the Rainbow Family hosted annual social festivals on various parcels of Forest Service land that brought back-to-the-land communities – including Alpha Farm, Twin Oaks, Heathcote, and The Farm – together. At these annual gatherings – which attracted tens of thousands in the 1980s and were known as the Rainbow Family Gatherings – back-to-the-landers engaged in “tribal” councils run via consensus decision-making and conducted New Age spiritual rituals drawn supposedly from Native American traditions. The Rainbow Family’s appropriation of Native American practices and ideas, while representing an extreme position within the counterculture, reflects a common impulse within the third generation to borrow from non-white traditions to define liberal white identity. It is little wonder, then, that actual Native American peoples in New Mexico found it difficult to interact, let alone ally, with such hippie invaders.

Native American tribes were not the only group back-to-the-landers hoped to ally with in the Southwest, nor were they the only group that saw the hippie invasion as a continuation of

⁴⁸³ Ibid.

colonialism. The Southwest also contained a large Latinx community. Hippie back-to-the-landers were, however, even less prepared to understand the cultural and political concerns of local Latinx communities and activists than the Native American ones. Rather than appreciating the tragic history of Spanish and Mexican land grants, many hippies who traveled to New Mexico from the West Coast spent considerable time reading books on Native Americans advertised in the *Whole Earth Catalog*. Moreover, many in the local Hispanic community surrounding Taos were unhappy that these communes existed. They found the hippie lifestyle abhorrent. It offended their conservative Catholic beliefs. More importantly, the “hippie invasion” drove up land prices, took money away from social services, and resulted in further white encroachment on disputed lands. It is no wonder, then, that the situation escalated. In the early 1970s, a billboard outside of Taos read “Hippies - Stay out or Else.”⁴⁸⁴ There was even a series of physical altercations between hippies and locals that became known as the Hippie-Chicano war. The conflict eventually turned deadly in the early-to-mid 1970s. Shots were fired from both sides. In one instance, a hippie shot a local Hispanic youth who had slept with his partner. The hippie was freed after a jury failed to come to an agreement, leading to even more acrimony between hippies and the local Latinx community.⁴⁸⁵

This conflict's tenor can be seen in an article from *El Grito Del Norte*, a Spanish-English underground newspaper that reported on the Chicano movement's activism in northern New Mexico. On May 19, 1969, a reader wrote an open letter to hippies accusing them of co-opting a recent welfare protest: they had brought a coffin into the State Capitol's lobby and refused to

⁴⁸⁴ Rorabaugh, *American Hippies*, 201.

⁴⁸⁵ Iris Keltz, *Scrapbook of a Taos Hippie: Tribal Tales from the Heart of a Cultural Revolution* (El Paso: Cinco Puntos Press, 2000), 55.

leave when local Latinx activists at Welfare Rights asked it of them.⁴⁸⁶ The newspaper even published a smattering of anti-hippie quotations from the crowd, including, “If they do not like their own society, they should go home and change it,” and “They are Anglos and will take over our land, everything, in the end – like all Anglos.”⁴⁸⁷ For members of the local Latinx community – and indeed for indigenous Americans– it was outrageous for white middle-class youth to invade their land. By this point, poor Hispanics in northern New Mexico had been waging a sustained century-long struggle against the federal government and rich landowners to ensure access to land that the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo had stipulated as “commons” – meaning the land on which poor *neuvomexicanos* could graze cattle and extract resources without paying fees. Over the course of the twentieth century, these land-grants had been steadily privatized, and the federal government had even turned large portions of land-grants into Forest Service land.⁴⁸⁸ From the perspective of local Chicano activists in the 1960s, therefore, the longhair invasion of northern New Mexico was part of a string of injustices dating back to America’s imperial expansion into northern Mexico.

The Hippie-Chicano war died down by the mid-1970s, yet tensions remained.⁴⁸⁹ Indeed, two decades later, in 1995, tensions briefly reignited between New Age hippies and local groups in northern New Mexico. In 1995 the annual Rainbow Family Gathering was slated to be held

⁴⁸⁶ Faith Leibert, “New Mexico’s Longhairs,” *El Grito Del Norte*, May 19, 1969, 14.

⁴⁸⁷ Leibert, “New Mexico’s Longhairs,” 14.

⁴⁸⁸ For an in depth exploration of 1960s Chicano activism through the figure of Reies Tijerina see Lorena Oropeza, *The King of Adobe: Reies López Tijerina, Lost Prophet of the Chicano Movement* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 2019), 4–11; For an explanation of how Chicano activists fought against the legacy of land-grant confiscation by the Forest Service and local Anglo-Americans see Flannery Burke, *A Land Apart: The Southwest and the Nation in the Twentieth Century* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2017), 77–82.

⁴⁸⁹ “In Northern New Mexico, Some Seek The End of the Rainbow Gathering,” *The New York Times*, July 2, 1995, 16, accessed November 19, 2020, <http://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1995/07/02/492295.html>.

on Forest Service land near Tres Piedras, New Mexico – the Gatherings were held in different states each year. The land near the town had been Spanish land grants, and locals remained upset, as well as wary of the estimated 15,000 to 20,000 hippies that would soon descend on their small town to enjoy free access to Forest Service land.⁴⁹⁰ Indeed, in the weeks leading up to the Gathering, many residents of Tres Piedras reported that they had to compete with vagrant hippies in food stamp lines and that the local emergency room was struggling to serve locals and Rainbows. Adding insult to injury, many New Mexicans had to pay to use Forest Service land for hunting, and local loggers were barred from work during the late-spring elk calving season. The Rainbows, however, had free rein to camp and commune in late June and early July.

Luckily, there was no bloodshed between locals and hippies in Tres Piedras in 1995, but there was an important shift in how members of the third generation approached local outreach. Whereas in the early 1970s members of the Rainbow Family had sought out, however imperfectly, local knowledge and tried to ally themselves with Native causes, by the 1990s, they had abandoned any pretense of social activism. Indeed, when the cofounder of the Gatherings, Barry Adams, was interviewed by the *New York Times* shortly before the 1995 Gathering, he said he sympathized with locals but boldly declared that “we are an open culture and live in a peaceful way...The only time in this country we have any voice is at this gathering.”⁴⁹¹ Another Rainbow even proclaimed that “We’re kind of what America started out to be.”⁴⁹² The latter Rainbow was perhaps closer to the mark but not in the way he intended.

In the end, the conflict in the Southwest between the mid-1960s and the 1990s provides an illuminating glimpse of how the third generation approached outreach and how back-to-the-

⁴⁹⁰ “In Northern New Mexico, Some Seek The End of the Rainbow Gathering,” 16.

⁴⁹¹ Ibid.

⁴⁹² Ibid.

landers turned to social festivals like the Rainbow Family Gatherings over the course of the 1970s and 1980s. Though this chapter moves outside of the Southwest to explore the national movement, the controversy in the Southwest reveals three interrelated themes that the rest of this chapter seeks to tease out and explore.

First, in the 1970s, countercultural back-to-the-landers reached outwards towards mainstream society by seeking alliances with movements for self-determination and borrowing, and at times appropriating, cultural practices from non-white groups. As we shall see, back-to-the-landers sought cross-movement alliances as a way of ushering in a New Age of cooperation and, more importantly, as a way of gaining knowledge and skills that they believed were necessary for their own rural, egalitarian, and environmentally conscientious experiments. Indeed, members of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement even borrowed the language and practices of the American Indian Movement, in particular the intertribal model, once they began forming intercommunal organizations in the mid-to-late 1970s.⁴⁹³ Such simplistic – and self-centered – borrowings often precluded meaningful alliances with groups outside of the movement – after all, for many non-white groups returning to the land conjured images of sharecropping, the Bracero program, and Native allotment policies. Outreach and cultural borrowing, however, were foundational to the movement's overwhelmingly white, liberal members as they developed a novel form of countercultural whiteness over the course of the 1970s. It is worth reiterating that the movement contained less than 1 percent of non-white members.

It is a central contention of this chapter that, as the counterculture of the 1960s transformed into the New Age movement of the 1980s, countercultural back-to-the-landers

⁴⁹³ For more on this borrowing see Blansett, *Journey to Freedom*, Location 2092

across the country relied on non-white cultures, both real and imagined, to define their evolving white liberal identity – and their rural experiments – as egalitarian, cooperative, and environmentally conscious.⁴⁹⁴ In so doing, third generation back-to-the-landers distinguished themselves from previous generations – which had called for eugenics and white-only land trusts – while at the same time reproducing longstanding and deeply problematic colonial relationships that precluded meaningful interactions with non-white groups. As such, the New Age movement, at least as back-to-the-landers practiced it, was self-limiting and signified the white Left’s inward turn in the 1970s.

Moreover, in generating this novel white identity, the third generation contributed to a larger transformation of whiteness in the early-to-mid 1970s as white Americans struggled with the implications of integration, intermarriage, and multiculturalism. As scholars of America’s rightward turn in the 1970s have pointed out, over the course of the 1970s, conservative white Americans reacted to the perceived blandness and lack of authenticity provided by white suburban life – not to mention the threat of intermarriage – by seeking to revive what they thought of as purer white ethnic identities.⁴⁹⁵ On the other end of the political spectrum, countercultural back-to-the-landers sought out white and non-white traditions for surprisingly similar reasons. They too felt that white suburban identity was unappealing, but – influenced by their experiences seeking social and racial justice in the 1960s – embraced white and non-white traditions that they viewed as premodern models for living harmoniously with each other and the

⁴⁹⁴ For a discussion on how the movement coalesced in the early-to-mid 1970s see Gordon Melton, “New Thought and the New Age” in James R. Lewis and J. Gordon Melton, eds., *Perspectives on the New Age* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1992), 15–29.

⁴⁹⁵ For more on this fascinating turn and especially the Right’s appeals to Catholic immigrant groups in the deindustrializing north see Thomas Sugrue and John Skrentny “The White Ethnic Strategy,” in *Rightward Bound*, 173-174.

natural world. Members of the third generation selectively borrowed not only from Native groups but also from the Scotch-Irish mountaineers in Appalachia – a settler tradition that was being recorded by Georgia high school students and published in the wildly popular *Foxfire* series during the late 1960s and 1970s.⁴⁹⁶ The third generation's evolving white liberal identity, then, was part of a larger reconfiguration of whiteness in the 1970s and contained a complex, and often quite contradictory, combination of settler and indigenous beliefs and practices.

This chapter's second theme is the countercultural back-to-the-land movement's growing apocalyptic worldview and increasingly survivalist mentality as the 1970s progressed. As we have seen, the second and third generation shared similar environmental concerns in the 1960s and early 1970s, and third generation back-to-the-landers in New Mexico had been involved with environmental activism at Black Mesa. Over the course of the 1970s, however, the tenor of the third generation's environmental sensibility changed. Indeed, as the 1970s waned back-to-the-landers braced for what they perceived to be the imminent social and environmental collapse of mainstream America – an apocalyptic worldview resulting from seismic upheavals in the 1970s such as the Oil Crisis, the Watergate scandal, the rise of the New Right, and the effects of pollution and deforestation.

This type of apocalyptic thinking led in two directions. Many back-to-the-landers became deeply involved in anti-nuclear protests, most notably protests against the Trident missile

⁴⁹⁶ The *Foxfire* series was another common addition to most third-generation libraries but it was not intended as a handbook for going back to the land. Indeed, the leader of Foxfire, Elliott Wiginton, often griped about its use by hippie homesteaders who only wanted information on building log cabins and moonshining. See Jonathan Bowdler, *Grounding the Counterculture: Post-modernism, the Back-to-the-Land Movement, and Authentic Environments of Memory* (MA Thesis, The University of Mississippi, 2013), chap. Foxfire and Southern Milieux de Mémoire. For an in-depth analysis of the arts and crafts revival in West Virginia, which was led by the counterculture, see Carter Taylor Seaton, *Hippie Homesteaders: Arts, Crafts, Music and Living on the Land in West Virginia* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2014), 6.

submarines at Bangor Naval Base in Washington State and nuclear power plants such as the one in Seabrook, New Hampshire. At the same time, apocalyptic thinking, along with local antagonism, led many back-to-the-land communities to develop a right-leaning survivalist mentality. Indeed, by the late 1970s, many back-to-the-landers came to call the outside world “Babylon” and sought to ensure that their rural communities had the necessary tools and skills to survive America’s imminent social and ecological downfall. It is important to realize that this was not just a development on the Left. Indeed, as Kathleen Belew has demonstrated in her work on the post-Vietnam war White Power movement, white supremacists also voiced concerns about American society’s trajectory and began to move to rural Idaho and plan violent separation with America.⁴⁹⁷ As such, studying the countercultural back-to-the-land movement’s environmental outreach sheds light on how the movement mirrored larger shifts towards conservatism in the 1970s.

This chapter's final theme is the third generation’s inward turn over the course of the 1970s and 1980s as it transformed into the New Age movement. More specifically, this chapter explores how countercultural back-to-the-landers turned away from the leftist social activism many had pursued in the 1960s and instead developed intercommunal organizations aimed at labor sharing, environmental activism, mutual aid, and New Age spirituality. Such organizations' aims were both practical – they provided much-needed tools, services, and socialization – and idealistic – they were framed as central to the movement’s attempts to usher in a New Age of cooperation and harmony through personal spiritual transformation. Indeed, studying such

⁴⁹⁷ For more on how White Power activists viewed Idaho and the Pacific Northwest as a prime target for migration (they believed that its relative lack of diversity made settlement and radicalization easier) see Kathleen Belew, *Bringing the War Home* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 2019) 162.

intercommunal organizations reveals how the countercultural back-to-the-land movement was at the forefront of the New Age movement as it emerged in the mid-to-late 1970s.

Clearly, all three themes – the movement’s development of New Age whiteness, its shift towards survivalism, and turn away from leftist activism – are interrelated. The third generation’s reconfiguration of whiteness went hand-in-hand with the rise of the New Age movement and intercommunal organizations – based as they were on Native intertribal networks – which were critical spaces for back-to-the-landers to organize environmental protests, share important survival skills, and develop New Age practices, rituals, and beliefs. To tease out these complex themes – and narrow our focus – this chapter analyzes the intercommunal organizations that members of Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm created over the course of the 1970s. As we shall see, during the early-to-mid 1970s, Twin Oaks and Alpha Farm began a slow process of turning inward and away from the 1960s left-leaning activism that had preoccupied many community members. In so doing, they led the way for the New Age movement.

Turning Inwards:

Communities Magazine, Twin Oaks, and the Early Intercommunal Ideal

From sheriffs investigating runaways at Twin Oaks to local skepticism of Alpha Farm’s bookstore to the county health board’s investigation of Morning Star Ranch, back-to-the-landers confronted an uphill battle trying to convince locals of the merits of their rural experiments. In the face of such opposition, back-to-the-landers did not lose hope for the radical potential of intercommunal networking and organizing. They did, however, turn inward and focused more on fostering relationships with other like-minded communities. By the early 1970s, Twin Oaks had begun to reach out to other countercultural communities and started a national magazine,

Communities, that functioned like the *Mother Earth News* of the communal movement. Instead of connecting hippie homesteaders, *Communities* magazine served as the movement's first platform for intercommunal networking. As such, early discussions about intercommunal networking in *Communities* reveal the high hopes of movement participants in the early 1970s and how white liberal back-to-the-landers began retreating from large-scale collective activism. Indeed, reflecting a larger identity crisis for whites in post-1960s America, the third wave's high idealism continued to be racialized. Based on discussions in *Communities*, it is clear that in the early 1970s, back-to-the-landers were still trying to understand why their movement was not appealing to a more diverse audience. Furthermore, they still retained hope that by supporting – and learning from – what they considered “allied movements” for non-white self-determination, they could usher in a new era of peace, love, and harmony.

As we have seen in Chapters 3 and 4, by the early 1970s, Twin Oaks was one of the more organized and economically stable back-to-the-land communities in the United States. It had even begun an annual July conference – attended by community members from across the country, including members of Heathcote and Alpha Farm – to socialize and run seminars on living back-to-the-land and sustaining functional communities. In many ways, Twin Oaks became the training center for the communal movement that Fairfield had called for in 1969 after TMU split with the School of Living. In fact, *Communities* magazine, and the resulting intercommunal support network, grew out of a partnership between members of Twin Oaks and members of Limesaddle. Limesaddle was a community in Northern California founded in 1972 by Vincent Zager (Richard Fairfield's coeditor at the recently defunct *The Modern Utopian*), who ran the Alternatives Foundation following Fairfield's move to the School of Living. This partnership began at the Twin Oaks annual conference in 1972 where members of Twin Oaks

and the Alternatives Foundation sat down and agreed that the goal of *Communities* was to take “a giant step toward the formation of an inter-communal communication network...we see it as a positive attempt to decentralize the publishing effort and allow us to provide the maximum number of people with the most timely coverage.”⁴⁹⁸ That coverage was much more focused on organizing the new community movement and on back-to-the-land concerns than had been *The Modern Utopian*, which had reported on a number of disparate countercultural causes.

Issues of *Communities* included articles on choosing prospective members, reviews of relevant books, and discussions of the communal movement’s history, along with a community market section for buying and selling goods and a “grapevine” section that connected people interested in going back to the land. Indeed, intercommunal networking was part of *Communities*’ ultimate purpose of “building a network involving city and country collectives, co-ops, communes, and communities in the hope that a viable movement could evolve, leading to an open society that encompassed cooperation and peace.”⁴⁹⁹ For that purpose the founders of *Communities* even planned on moving outside of publishing to “provide capital for other collectives to borrow on a no-interest...basis,” “establish a land trust fund to provide farm land for needy groups,” and “encourage the formation of centers around the country that can channel people to viable alternatives” such as Twin Oaks, Limesaddle, Alpha Farm, Heathcote, and The Farm.⁵⁰⁰

Demonstrating how elements of the Left were beginning to turn away from national political protests, countercultural back-to-the-landers believed that regional, rather than national, organizations were key to creating a decentralized society that could be non-competitive and

⁴⁹⁸ “Introduction,” *Communities Magazine*, December 1972, 1.

⁴⁹⁹ “Introduction,” Back Cover.

⁵⁰⁰ Ibid.

cooperative. As such, *Communities* magazine – as a national information network – aimed to facilitate regional intercommunal organizations, which were believed to be better suited for labor sharing, mutual aid, and coordinated environmental activism. Indeed, before Twin Oaks and other communities in the southeast started Intercommunities of Virginia in 1974, *Communities* published numerous articles laying out the need – for regional federations that would bring to fruition all the hopes and dreams of the 1960s counterculture. One representative example came from Limesaddle.

In 1973 members of Limesaddle published a call for creating a communitarian village on 1,000 acres of land in northern California that they had recently settled. They stated that they ultimately wanted to create a federation to establish “a world society, a communitarian federation of peoples, free of domination and oppression, able to form their own lives and to live in peace. Political power will remain decentralized, giving people direct control over local affairs.”⁵⁰¹ The federation was also meant to link new communities with all other “alternative groups – co-ops, free schools, child-care centers, communities, work collectives, radical change organizations, the underground media”—and, in so doing, usher in a New Age of cooperation and harmony.⁵⁰² In 1973, then, it is clear that back-to-the-landers still believed in the radical promises of the counterculture to remake society into a decentralized, cooperative utopia, despite the difficulties many communities encountered when they reached out to locals.

The type of back-to-the-land utopian vision put forward by *Communities* in the early-to-mid 1970s was countercultural but still retained elements of 1960s leftist activism, and many back-to-the-landers still believed that the movement should ally with other radical groups. This

⁵⁰¹ Limesaddle, “Community Village,” *Communities Magazine*, May 1973, 2.

⁵⁰² Limesaddle, “Community Village,” 3.

was a position that would slowly fade over the succeeding years. From the very first issue of *Communities*, it was apparent that some back-to-the-landers understood, at least in part, their privileged position in American society and their responsibility to the outside world. Indeed, one article in 1972 entitled “Flight from Responsibility: The New Suburbanites” even argued that the flight to the country was itself a new form of racially coded suburban flight, one that needed to be countered by social activism. The author, Alternatives Foundation leader and *Communities* editor, Chris Elms, argued that “now in the 70s, the white sons and daughters of suburbia, hassled by polluted cities, empty suburbs, and irrelevant colleges, are taking flight to the country....this is, in essence, the suburban consciousness: seek a good life for yourself and forget about the people who have to live in the problems you’ve deserted.”⁵⁰³ He argued that new communities of back-to-the-landers needed to stay informed on radical Left politics and reach out to both local communities and groups of color.

For some back-to-the-landers in 1973, social activism was still a central component to the countercultural back-to-the-land project, though it was narrowing. Elms’ view, and that of Fairfield and others at Alternatives, was that radical change would only occur at the local, rural level – a marked change from the New Left’s anti-war and free-speech activism of the mid-1960s. This subset of movement leaders encouraged communities to do outreach by opening bookstores and coffee houses. Indeed, leaders like Elms and Fairfield even called on back-to-the-landers to “follow the Berkeley model and mobilize the progressive vote to begin to take over local councils.”⁵⁰⁴ The Berkeley model, it should be noted, was a reference to how political radicals ran for local office in Berkeley by galvanizing the student vote, leading to a series of

⁵⁰³ Chris Elms, “Flight from Responsibility: The New Suburbanites,” *Communities Magazine*, December 1972, 4.

⁵⁰⁴ Elms, “Flight from Responsibility,” 5.

successful radical political runs. In the context of the early back-to-the-land movement, then, following the Berkeley model involved infiltrating local, rural communities and organizing for political and social change on a manageable scale. This approach was at times successful outside Berkeley: as we have seen, members of Alpha Farm followed this model and became part of local advisory councils and became influential leaders in nearby communities. Nevertheless, this narrowing of political activism did represent an important shift of the Left away from national politics and towards a focus on individual transformation.

Interracial coalition building was also discussed in *Communities* in the mid-1970s. These discussions were informed by the rise of self-determination movements and the mixed success of the hippie invasion of the Southwest in the early 1970s. By this time, many countercultural back-to-the-landers no longer subscribed to the “melting pot” theory of social integration. Indeed, Elms even argued that the “integration bag never worked and probably never will.”⁵⁰⁵ It is apparent that much had changed for the youth movements of the mid-1960s, and by 1972 countercultural back-to-the-landers were embracing movements for self-determinations such as the Black and Red Power movements. As a result, back-to-the-landers turned instead to other models that would allow for racial and ethnic differences, specifically a form of multicultural pluralism. In framing this new turn, Elms argued for a new “pluralistic model” that would entail “white groups cooperating with brown groups cooperating with black groups” that “could be extended to the country. We could try for clusters of communities, some Indian, some white, some Chicano.”⁵⁰⁶ This was the essence of the early back-to-the-land utopian racial vision: a decentralized federation of separate and distinct communities who could band together for

⁵⁰⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁰⁶ Ibid.

mutual aid in order to usher in a New Age of social and racial harmony. The problem was, of course, in the execution.

Two years later, in the No. 7 issue of *Communities* in 1974, this racial vision was further refined. The Spring issue contained an article that delved into reaching out to the Black, Latino, Native American, and Asian American communities. Importantly, this utopian vision still held that going back to the land was the only way to solve social injustices and acknowledged that the history of racial injustice precluded inter-movement collaboration. In an article entitled “The Colorless Movement,” an unnamed editor (the editorial board was collective and consisted of leaders at Limesaddle and Twin Oaks) connected the counterculture with the struggles of, in their words, the “Third World” and pondered why the back-to-the-land movement was not attracting a more diverse following. The editor asked readers to contemplate “if Third World peoples came from this heritage of being on the land, living simply with morally ethical guidelines for societal harmony, why are they not participating in a movement which would engender that past for them once again?”⁵⁰⁷

After surveying the contemporary struggles of Blacks, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Americans, the author concluded patronizingly that “to state simply that they have been ‘Westernized’ is not wholly accurate; however, that term does suffice for a general blanket explanation. Their consciousness has been reorganized to view living ‘primitively’ or on the land...as a negative way of achieving one’s happiness and goals.”⁵⁰⁸ From the editor’s perspective, the irony of American history was that the children of the affluent West had decided to revolt and go back to the land while people of color struggled within a system created by their

⁵⁰⁷ “The Colorless Movement,” *Communities Magazine*, April 1974, 21.

⁵⁰⁸ “The Colorless Movement,” 21.

oppressors. As we have seen, the same point of view informed the Rainbow Family's justifications for Native appropriation in the Southwest during the same period. This perspective, of course, was profoundly simplistic and racialized since it held that people of color had existed in a harmonious, pre-modern, and natural "primitive" state to begin with and that their only logical recourse was to return to a "primitive" past. It is no wonder then, that white back-to-the-land outreach to movements for non-white self-determination largely failed.

Mirroring the School of Living's perspective on urban social unrest, many back-to-the-landers saw increased urbanization, the ravages of racial capitalism, and the federal government's violence as forces that coerced and acculturated people of color to view working within the system as the only means of achieving happiness. Though racially liberal in the context of the early 1970s, this formulation also legitimated white counterculturalists' use of the land and set them up to be white saviors who would remedy past evils. However, the editor did recognize that different groups were coerced in unique ways based in historical realities that made it difficult for them to "abruptly pivot to return to their natural ways."⁵⁰⁹ After exploring why Black, Latino, and Asian American communities were unsupportive of the white countercultural flight from cities, the editor framed another group, Native Americans, as supposedly supportive of their efforts.

The editor's framing of Native Americans clearly demonstrates how the back-to-the-land movement was at the forefront of the emerging New Age movement. Moreover, by 1974 it is evident that many back-to-the-landers believed that the New Age would be a period in which the white descendants of colonizers redeemed themselves by going back to the land, becoming like "Third World" peoples, thus legitimating their reclamation of that land. The editor claimed that

⁵⁰⁹ Ibid.

“Native American peoples view the communal movement as an indication of ‘chickens coming home to roost,’ or in other words that the ancestors of those who raped them and their land have finally seen the light.”⁵¹⁰ In essence, the white middle-class youth who were trying to bring about the New Age saw going back to the land and living like ersatz Indians as a form of redemption for their colonial ancestry – rather than an extension of it. In reality, this New Age back-to-the-land racial logic was another iteration of a longstanding colonial tradition of appropriation and erasure that precluded meaningful collaboration, as we have seen in the hippie invasion of the Southwest.

Such framing insinuated that for non-white peoples, the only viable alternative to mainstream society's oppression was to rediscover a past they had been severed from and return to their land – a point of view that served the racial interest of white back-to-the-landers as they sought out alternative antimodern identities. Crucially, however, the author did recognize that Native peoples were focused on their own internal self-determination and concluded that “There is only one recourse for Native Americans at this time and space, and that is like all other Third World peoples, to ‘get it together’ for their own peoples.”⁵¹¹ By 1974, then, though they clearly had some ideas about the best way to rebuild society, some hip back-to-the-landers had decided that the best way to be allies was to let “Third World peoples” decide their own course of action and abandon active outreach to movements for self-determination. At the same time, the author did reaffirm that Native peoples were potent protest symbols that needed to be emulated. Indeed, the author specifically drew on Red Power intertribal mobilization as a model for communal back-to-the-landers. From a third-wave perspective Native American “tribal and clan structures,

⁵¹⁰ Ibid., 22.

⁵¹¹ Ibid., 23.

the inter-tribal councils, the closeness of behavioral codes” made “western law seem almost anarchical” and “their inherent contact with the esoteric perception of nature and the universe” must be imitated.⁵¹² The turn away from outreach in favor of emulation marks an important shift in attitudes that tracks with the emergence of the New Age movement and its inward focus on hip lifestyles.

Not all back-to-the-landers agreed, of course. Some, like Chris Elms, still believed that social activism was a central part of the back-to-the-land vision. As the 1970s progressed and back-to-the-landers went about creating actual intercommunal networks, however, the social activism that Elms called for was largely abandoned – a development that reflected the wider Left’s retreat in the early-to-mid 1970s. Intercommunal organizations in the mid-to-late 1970s instead focused on mutual aid between hip communities and ultimately became New Age social networks.

Intercommunal Organizing in the mid-1970s: Intercommunities of Virginia

The intercommunal organizations created in the mid-to-late 1970s fell far short of the movement’s utopian dreams, yet they did establish long-lasting, practical relationships among hip communities. They also reinforced the sense that the movement was progressing towards an age of cooperation, at least internally. As regionalism was central to the back-to-the-land vision, most mid-to-late 1970s organizations were established to service local regions. The Northeast, for instance, had the Network for Light organization that connected thirty-three communities in New England. There was also a series of short-lived organizations in the Southwest. Of these organizations, Twin Oaks’s Intercommunities of Virginia network is the best documented. It

⁵¹² Ibid.

demonstrates the early difficulties that such groups experienced when they tried to organize a decentralized organization.

Intercommunities of Virginia was primarily a labor exchange and mutual aid organization founded in 1974 that linked a dozen countercultural communities in and around Virginia. In fact, the organization was the product of exchanges between members of Twin Oaks and Limesaddle. As we have seen, members of Limesaddle, along with their duties running the Alternatives Foundation, sought to create their own regional network in Northern California in the early 1970s. This experiment failed, however, and by 1973 the community dissolved as a result of personal conflict and insufficient money. Key members of Limesaddle and the Alternative Foundation, in particular Vincent Zager, then moved to Twin Oaks, where they supported Keith, Joel, and Will (the same Will who would go on to start Rectum '78) in creating a new intercommunal organization that could succeed where Limesaddle failed. Indeed, much of the same utopianism that characterized Limesaddle's article in *Communities* also influenced the goals of Intercommunities of Virginia. In a *Communities* article in April 1974, members of Twin Oaks explained to readers that the aim of Intercommunities of Virginia was to create "a more meaningful alternative than the isolated commune in the boondocks: each community benefits individually, and also becomes part of a larger force restructuring society."⁵¹³ To carry out such practical and idealistic goals, Intercommunities of Virginia focused on labor sharing and mutual aid as a way of helping struggling communities – as Limesaddle had been – gain the skills and resources necessary to prosper and expand.

Understanding that IC was created by Twin Oaks and shaped in its image is crucial for making sense of the organization's formal structure and early focus on labor sharing between

⁵¹³ "Introduction," *Communities Magazine*, April 1974, Inside Cover.

like-minded communities. In the 1974 *Communities*, immediately following the “Colorless Movement” article, the IC's founders described the organization’s history. According to the Twin Oaks members Keith and Joel, the IC idea emerged in the spring of 1973 after members of Twin Oaks, now including ex-Limesaddle member Vincent Zager, reached out to nearby communities to discuss labor sharing. There had already been informal arrangements to this effect, but Twin Oaks' members wanted to establish a formal system. In the July conference at Twin Oaks that year, twenty members from various groups met and “formalized some agreements about visiting and labor exchanges, and decided to encourage member swapping for short periods of time, exchanging rooms, work, and privileges at no cost to either person.”⁵¹⁴

Formalization was necessary for Twin Oaks and other allied groups because the labor credit system in Skinner’s Walden Two did not consider other communities or visitors' labor. To remedy this oversight, the founders of IC created an inventory list of community equipment and services for exchange and a list of 270 skills that IC members were willing to share and teach. According to Keith, the skills and services ranged from “teaching quantum mechanics to giving flying lessons.”⁵¹⁵ In order to ensure a systematic exchange rate, they agreed that any exchanged good or service could be paid back with an equal amount of time. As an example, they reported that “recently an architect’s work designing a building was repaid by an equal time of weaving hammocks.”⁵¹⁶ The labor exchange system was a form of mutual aid meant to help struggling communities in the southeast gain the skills and equipment to survive and prosper. Indeed, at this time, many communities in the IC network were struggling to build residences that met county

⁵¹⁴ Keith and Joel, “Intercommunities Inc.,” *Communities Magazine*, April 1974, 24, Twin Oaks Box – Intercommunities of Virginia Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵¹⁵ Keith and Joel, “Intercommunities Inc.,” 24.

⁵¹⁶ Ibid.

zoning requirements but could not afford a professional architect, making Twin Oaks's offer to exchange architectural drafting for hammock work quite appealing. As such, this form of mutual aid fits into the third wave's larger utopian dream of creating new, more humane social systems. The hope was that such a system would be a model to the rest of the movement. Thus the article in *Communities* calling for more intercommunal organizing across the country.

Mutual aid was effective at fostering cross-community relationships and exchanging needed services to struggling new communities, and the organizational and logistical help from Twin Oaks kept many communities afloat. The actual system for the equitable exchange of goods and services, complicated by countercultural distrust of cash money for reimbursement, was worked out over the course of the mid-1970s. One of the earliest documents on IC in the Twin Oaks archive from April of 1973 proposed two primary categories for mutual aid exchanges: each interaction would be "either providing 'requested services' or making a more informal 'visit.'"⁵¹⁷ When one community requested help from another, they would receive specific services such as farm labor, cabinet making, or newspaper editing. Informal visits and exchanges were those in which members, seeking a change of scenery or to learn from other communities, took the initiative to move to another community for a set period. Only requested exchanges were expected to be reimbursed in kind, and IC kept a ledger of such exchanges. Communities were encouraged to "avoid the whole money trip" by repaying "thru [sic] labor or perhaps thru [sic] barter."⁵¹⁸ The IC ledgers from 1974 and 1975 demonstrate that considerable

⁵¹⁷ Will, "Community Labor Exchange" (Twin Oaks Community, April 1973), 1, Twin Oaks Box – Intercommunities of Virginia Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵¹⁸ Will, "Community Labor Exchange," 1.

intercommunal exchange was occurring, with Twin Oaks providing much of the skilled loans and slowly creating imbalances in the system.⁵¹⁹

The imbalance of labor in and out of Twin Oaks was related to a deeper issue in this mutual aid labor arrangement. As seen in the previous chapter, by 1975, Twin Oaks had a successful national hammock business and a local construction company, but they were discovering that exchanging labor through the IC system meant that Twin Oaks managers had to invest their time and energy training outside labor in order to get any benefit from it. In a 1976 manager's report that was posted in the Twin Oaks community space, Will (who managed the IC labor exchange for Twin Oaks) stated the problem clearly. He wrote that "our construction people have had their hands full integrating new members into the construction scene, and haven't wanted to take on even skilled carpenters from other communities. Recently, Juniper's hammock shop hasn't wanted to take Labor Exchange workers except from East Wind... So the Merion and Tupelo shops have been taking some of our exchanges."⁵²⁰ Merion and Tupelo were both local offshoots of Juniper, the main Twin Oaks community, and were trying to start up their own hammock shops so they were desperate for labor. Indeed, it is important to note that by the mid-1970s, Twin Oaks was economically prosperous and had attracted more prospective members than the community could house, leading to local Virginia offshoots like Acorn, Merion, and Tupelo. By 1975, then, Juniper's hammock shop was mature, and the only outside labor it was accepting was from East Wind, which, given its location in Missouri, was not part of the IC. That left "domestic work and – in-season - garden work as the major areas in which

⁵¹⁹ Will, "Labor Exchange - A Managerial Report" (Twin Oaks Community, January 1976), 1, Twin Oaks Box – Intercommunities of Virginia Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵²⁰ Will, "Labor Exchange - A Managerial Report" 2.

Labor Exchanges can be repaid.”⁵²¹ Will asked all of the members reading his report to find additional jobs that IC workers could do to repay their debts, as gardening and domestic work was not always sufficient for reimbursing skilled labor. These types of issues carried over into the following year and are perhaps part of the reason that the IC foundered in 1976.

Between 1973 and 1976, the IC was successful in its mission of coordinating between like-minded communities, ensuring that communards did not feel isolated, and providing an intercommunal communications network for organizing environmental protest. However, it did not live up to all of its founders’ ideals. There were a number of lofty goals that did not work out for practical reasons. In 1973, the communal coalition had envisioned a cooperative food-buying scheme, and in 1974 six groups got together to buy from an organic wholesaler in Washington, DC. The group mostly bought “flours, grains, seeds, and of course peanut butter.”⁵²² Other groups opted not to join because they were already producing most of their food within their communities. There were also grand plans in 1974 to buy group medical insurance. In the 1974 *Communities* exposé on IC, Neil and Joel stated that most communities were worried about catastrophic illness and were “investigating buying a group plan from Blue Cross which gives lower rates and more flexible terms to groups of more than 50 heads of households. We already have more than that number interested.”⁵²³ It is not clear whether this scheme was carried out, as the IC newsletters from 1975 and 1976 do not mention healthcare. Along with buying healthcare and food, they also sought to create an intercommunal land search group to help back-to-the-landers from out of state find land in the growing countercultural community scene in rural Virginia.

⁵²¹ Ibid.

⁵²² Keith and Joel, “Intercommunities Inc.,” 24.

⁵²³ Ibid., 25.

None of these activities was ultimately a major way communities supported each other, but some intercommunal organizing, such as labor exchanges and nuclear energy protests, bore some fruit. At the same time, these modest successes highlight the ultimate limits of back-to-the-land intercommunal organizing in the 1970s. While labor exchanges and alternative energy fairs were ways for communities to reach out to other like-minded groups, such outreach touched a far narrower section of society than they had hoped for in the late 1960s or early 1970s. This highlights how the countercultural back-to-the-land movement was beginning to turn inwards towards New Age networks. A case in point: in 1975, the IC held an Alternative Energy fair in Charlottesville where communities “could bring their wares to sell and the proceeds would go for funding IC activities to fight nuclear power.”⁵²⁴ One added bonus of holding this fair was that IC members were able to “bring some of their own literature and do some ‘communities consciousness raising’ on the University students.”⁵²⁵ Through such outreach, members of IC did reach a wider audience. Students at the University of Virginia in the mid-1970s, however, represented a far narrower subsection of society than countercultural back-to-the-landers had hoped to influence.

These small intercommunal successes laid the foundation for later organizing in the 1980s when New Age coalitions ran intercommunal social gatherings and coordinated environmental actions. It is notable, however, that there was little discussion of racial or class privilege in the IC, and their outreach did not focus on communities of color. Instead, the IC focused on Charlottesville and the students at the University of Virginia to spread awareness about the back-to-the-land movement and alternative energy. In many respects then, over the

⁵²⁴ “Alternative Energy Fair,” *Intercommunities Newsletter*, October 1975, 5, Twin Oaks Box – Intercommunities of Virginia Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵²⁵ “Alternative Energy Fair,” 5.

course of the 1970s, the communal back-to-the-land movement turned inward. By the late 1970s, it focused far less on social activism and more on individual spiritual transformation and creating New Age networks of likeminded back-to-the-land communities.

From Mutual Aid in the mid-1970s to New Age Gatherings in the 1980s:

ComeUNITY

ComeUNITY, established in 1979 by Alpha Farm, was an intercommunal, squarely-New-Age cultural organization that did not create labor exchanges but rather planned a yearly conference. The conferences were meant to create a space for communities to both hold seminars on communal social mechanics such as consensus decision-making and foster inter-movement ties. The regional network was explicitly New Age; each conference began with sharing “heartsongs” – a New Age practice by which individuals expressed their spiritual and social desires for a meeting. The organization was structured so that decentralized “tribes” would meet locally and report on their efforts at the yearly conference. ComeUNITY had two main goals: holding the annual conference (and sharing knowledge there) and creating a decentralized network of “hubs” that would allow smaller subsets of communities to band together in mutual aid and coordinate environmental protests, which, in the late 1970s, intensified to focus on the development of Trident nuclear-missile submarines at Bangor naval base in Washington’s Hood Canal. The organization also published a bimonthly newsletter that provided information for upcoming barter fairs, so that communities could trade goods outside of the cash economy; reports from member communities; and other thought pieces.

As a Pacific Northwest network in the late 1970s, ComeUNITY also framed its effort as uniquely environmentally focused. Like IC, ComeUNITY members organized anti-nuclear

protests and energy fairs. However, they also saw their intercommunal network as bringing about a real-life version of Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia*, and they discussed the merits of decentralization and bioregional issues in the pages of their newsletter. Indeed, Callenbach's novel was used by some CU members to establish a culture of organic decision-making. In evaluating the group process at CU planning meetings, Mycall Sunanda wrote a long-form essay comparing CU with Callenbach's utopian work. He argued that "the trends of co-ops, holistic health, spiritual activities, alternative energy, communal living, hand-made arts and crafts, and bartering all compliment this Ecotopian decision making group process [sic] that unplugs from Big Brother, Uncle Sam, and plugs into the spiral of natural evolution."⁵²⁶ It is clear from Sunanda's writings, then, that ComeUNITY was created as a network for the New Age that would promote a specific set of alternative, environmentally-conscious lifestyles rather than as a tool to facilitate the social activism that had driven more politically-minded counterculturalists in the late 1960s. Indeed, though ComeUNITY was focused on facilitating environmental activism against nuclear power, there was little focus on environmental justice – a movement that was just picking up steam in the late 1970s.⁵²⁷

Though as an organization ComeUNITY reflected the New Age movement's emergence, there was little consensus over how the organization should be run or how much power it should have. Indeed, it is apparent from the pages of CU's bimonthly that not all were happy with how

⁵²⁶ Mycall Sunanda, "Ecotopia Group process" (ComeUNITY Organization, April 1980), 3, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Directory and Correspondence 1979-1980 Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵²⁷ For more on the early environmental justice movement and its links to the civil rights movement see Blum's work on Love Canal and Eileen McGurty's exploration of a black community in Warren County, North Carolina fighting against the dumping of PCBs in the mid-1980s. Eileen McGurty, *Transforming Environmentalism: Warren County, PCBs, and the Origins of Environmental Justice* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2009); Elizabeth D. Blum, *Love Canal Revisited: Race, Class, and Gender in Environmental Activism* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2008).

the conferences were being run. By the second annual conference in 1980, conflict over decision-making methodology was dredging up deeper concerns over CU's goals. In the April 1980 CU newsletter, Jerry Alder expressed his concerns about subsequent consensus councils and "how they will be run, the decisions made, and the philosophical base formed from those decisions."⁵²⁸ While Alder did not seek to do away with consensus, he was concerned that CU's large meetings, with their New Age heartsongs and lack of structure, were not facilitating effective decision-making or enabling community members to coordinate regional activism. He asked that the next planning meetings have a co-facilitator and smaller group discussions in regional groups, so that communities interested in social change could coordinate with each other.

In expressing his concerns, Adler touched off a fierce debate in the bimonthly about CU's New Age goals. For him, CU needed to empower more clearly the decentralized "hubs." CU's purpose was "to explore and help develop the Community Spirit and experience through sharing, cooperation, mutual interdependence and communal living."⁵²⁹ CU should not, however, become too centralizing. He argued that "unlike most structures that reach out farther and farther in expansionism, ComeUnity shall seek to reduce its area of direct influence. This shall foster the development of other similar gatherings throughout the Pacific Northwest, and thus embrace the spirit of regionalism."⁵³⁰ It is clear that from Alder's perspective, there was an uneasy tension between the goal of intercommunal organizing and the ideological need to decentralize because it was too easy for a centralized organization, running under consensus, to tyrannize local hubs.

⁵²⁸ Jerry Alder, "Community Politics," *ComeUNITY*, April 1980, 2, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵²⁹ Alder, "Community Politics," 2.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*, 2.

Along these lines, Alder believed that radical social change could only happen locally. He concluded that “our experience from the ’60s and ’70s is that social change occurs very slowly, social change happens at the grass roots level and that social change is a very political process.”⁵³¹ For Alder, real activism could only be achieved slowly on a local level— a notion which, as we have seen, was rooted in important shifts on the Left in the late 1960s. By the late 1970s, Alder’s perspective represented an earlier approach to collective social justice that by 1980 was in decline and out of sync with the rest of the CU members—who wanted instead to turn completely inwards towards New Age organizations and personal liberation. Indeed, it is striking that Alder’s local political vision, representing as it did an earlier turn away from national activism, was, by the 1980s a minority position in CU.

In the following issue, the CU newsletter published a contrasting perspective highlighting how far the movement had traveled by the 1980s. Rather than being a beacon for the rest of society, intercommunal regional networks like CU were seen by many as a way for New Age individuals to transform themselves while the rest of society collapsed. In response to Alder’s article, members of the High Country community in Bellevue, Washington, stated that “The Come UNITY Agreement section of the letter brought some sadness to us since the Scope is to reduce its area of direct influences....[It] just seems like a real scattering of energy will result if we start meeting at our ‘grass roots’ to become United. We’re already united on the larger side of things anyway and as for the political purpose of regionalism, we do not have consensus at all.”⁵³² It was Alder’s political model of regionalism that most upset the members of High Country. They stated that “the idea that in order to contribute to the emergence of a ‘better

⁵³¹ Ibid., 3.

⁵³² High Country, “Hello Dear Ones,” *ComeUNITY*, May 1980, 11, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

world' we need to assume a responsibility for healing the ills of society is unbalanced. The blessed Earth Mother is cleansing...the dominant society will probably take care of itself as the Plan of the Great Spirit dictates."⁵³³

From the perspective of High Country communards, the goal of CU was not to enable individual groups to do "Social Activist political" things, but rather to place "heavy emphasis...on Networking and Survival in order [sic] to facilitate individual growth and skills as caretakers of what will be left of our Earth Mother."⁵³⁴ In this apocalyptic interpretation of mainstream society's trajectory, getting together on the land and forming mutual aid networks was the only way to ensure survival. Lost from this utopian vision was any pretense that the New Age would be a multiracial utopia or that back-to-the-landers were responsible for reforming society through outreach. Instead, forward-thinking, white back-to-the-landers would be the caretakers of the land and would rely on a network of like-minded communities to survive the coming Armageddon. Such apocalyptic environmental thinking reveals the movement's complicated rightward shift over the course of the 1970s as it turned toward personal liberation and survivalism.

The Calendar of Events section of the CU newsletter contained numerous planned activities that reflected this new apocalyptic New Age mindset. For instance, the first CU newsletter included the Oct. 5-7th Harvest Moon Barter Fair in Oregon, an Oct. 6th occupation at the nuclear power plant in Seabrook, New Hampshire, land trust conferences at the School of Living, the Northeast Washington barter fair, and the Peace Conversion City protest at the

⁵³³ High Country, "Hello Dear Ones," 11–12.

⁵³⁴ Ibid.

Trident submarine base near Seattle.⁵³⁵ Such events were in keeping with the scope of CU that the High Country authors put forward. Indeed, for High Country members, networking was key because in the coming age “we need to be able to find each other when transportation breaks down...We need to know who grows what and who has skills to trade...so we can stay unified and strong during these heavy times of cleansing. New ‘political’ structures need to be set up and trade-barter alternative economy established. These things will truly facilitate the emergence of a new world.”⁵³⁶ Unlike the intercommunal networks that TMU and *Communities* had envisioned, by the 1980s, back-to-the-land networks had turned inward completely and were squarely focused on their own survival.

Members of High Country were not alone in this mode of thinking. The majority of CU issues in 1980 and 1981 are filled with articles on New Age lifestyles and information on rural survival that were not concerned with social outreach to mainstream society, which most assumed would soon crumble. One exception to this turn away from activism, however, was concerted environmental activism, particularly anti-nuclear protests. For many members of CU, IC, and even homesteaders like John Shuttleworth, nuclear power and the arms race were the direst existential threat to humanity and to living on the land in the coming age. Indeed, even the School of Living was involved in the 1970s and 1980s as it joined the Clamshell Alliance, an organization many back-to-the-landers joined that coordinated anti-nuclear protests as a reaction to Nixon’s 1975 pledge to build 1000 nuclear power plants across the country by the year 2000. In the context of the early 1980s, then, anti-nuclear protest was the one exception to reluctance toward engaging with the rest of society.

⁵³⁵ “Calendar of Events,” *ComeUNITY*, October 1979, 2, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵³⁶ High Country, “Hello Dear Ones,” 12.

The inward turn showcased in the High Country article, and in the yearly conferences themselves, was also racially coded. By the late 1970s, New Age back-to-the-land adherents like those in CU were emulating aspects of Native American spirituality and had developed a distinct New Age white identity with its own language, spirituality, and lifestyle. They were undertaking vision quests, singing their “heartsongs” at intercommunal gatherings, and defining their decentralized networks as gatherings of tribes. Gone was the use of oppositional Indianness – a common rhetorical device used by hippies in the 1960s to claim status as an oppressed group – as a call for larger social action.⁵³⁷ The transformation of the counterculture into the New Age movement, seen through the way members of CU appropriated Indianness, represents a novel reconfiguration of liberal whiteness in the 1970s and 1980s. By framing collective social struggle in universal terms – such as “we are all children of the Great Spirit/God” – members of CU understood the interplay of cultures as a hybridization process that enabled them to pick and choose between cultural practices that suited their liberal white interests. The new hybrid culture that back-to-the-landers created no longer relied on real interactions with cultural mediators, such as real Native peoples, or on complex understandings of non-white ideas and practices.⁵³⁸ New Age universalism, then, legitimated mimicry as a tool for individual transformation and allowed New Age communards to claim ersatz indigeneity and, in so doing, fashion a novel form of whiteness that allowed them to ignore that plight of non-white groups – a process indicative of the broader white Left’s abandonment of non-white movements for self-determination.

There were multiple ways in which this dynamic infused how CU was organized and the gatherings that it held. Members of CU were acutely aware that the land that they lived and

⁵³⁷ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 170.

⁵³⁸ *Ibid.*, 172.

gathered on was originally Native, and they believed that their New Age work was in some small way remedying a history of exploitation and violence. After the first CU gathering at the Breitenbush Hot Springs, Milan, a CU member from Folly Farm, recalled a spiritual experience he had after breakfast one day there. He recalled that in front of the “kitchen before starting cleaning up after ourselves, the circle of people talked of the Indian way, Breitenbush being an ancient healing and holy ground, and our community using this sacred area toward spiritual growth and awareness.”⁵³⁹ Milan, in this reminiscence, explicitly connects the “Indian Way” with his own attempts to create social and ecological harmony at the first CU gathering. He concluded his message to CU readers by noting “the Indian way was to look at the land when they came to a place and try to leave it the same or better when they left. Perhaps we did this – physically, emotionally and spiritually.”⁵⁴⁰ In their quest to go back to the land and mitigate modern society's evils, these New Age adherents framed their struggle as following a nebulous, ahistorical indigenous tradition that would legitimate their own return to the land.

That they viewed themselves as New Age Indians is evident from heartsongs that were published in the CU newsletter. Heartsongs referred to statements made by individuals at the first communal planning meeting, which kicked off each annual gathering. Generally, an eagle feather was passed around to anyone who felt the urge to express his or her current state of mind. The statements were then published in subsequent CU newsletters. After the second annual gathering in 1980, some of the heartsongs revealed how CU members were using Indianness. A representative list of these heartsongs included, “Everything we have was given to us as a gift from the Great Spirit. The Eagle checks on us to see how we are doing with the Great Spirit’s

⁵³⁹ Milan, “A Message from Milan of Folly Farm,” *ComeUNITY*, October 1979, 5, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵⁴⁰ Milan, “A Message from Milan of Folly Farm,” 5.

gift. * Give and be aware of our equals on earth. *I am a born-again Savage.”⁵⁴¹ In these heart songs, back-to-the-landers at CU mixed ecological awareness, homogenized “Native” spirituality, social consciousness, and Christian themes together to create a distinct New Age racial and cultural identity – in other words, a white liberal identity that countered the political Right’s turn to older, purer, white ethnic traditions.

Not only did New Age whiteness redefine white liberal experience and identity, but it was also key to how the CU was organized as a decentralized intercommunal network. Following debates in 1980 about the merits of centralization and decentralization, CU was organized around a system of regional “hubs.” Each hub was expected to organize smaller “clan” gatherings to pursue mutual aid and coordinate other activities. CU saw themselves as recreating a Native American social structure, drawing loosely on the intertribal organizing they saw within the Red Power movement in the 1970s and 1980s, which was reported on in the CU newsletter.⁵⁴² Indeed, regional hubs were expected to send representatives to a planning council that arranged the annual conference also known as the “gathering of the tribes.”

The overarching idea for this decentralized system was that it would fuse Pacific Northwest alternative communities into a tribe that could one day usher in the New Age. In an article in the May 1980 CU newsletter, Daniel Rott reported on planning meetings where the group discussed decentralization, noting that “We are, often in unspoken and subtle ways, building a Tribe. A Tribe with its strength and stability coming from experience, rituals, and

⁵⁴¹ “Heartsong Notes,” *ComeUNITY*, October 1980, 11, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵⁴² There are a few references to Native issues in Oregon. There was an open letter to readers in the 1981 CU chronicling the plight of Oregon Natives to regain land which asked New Age readers “Will we be next?” Brian Moore, “Letter to Readers,” *ComeUNITY*, June 1981, 3, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

customs evolving out of this ‘organic process.’”⁵⁴³ In his “Tribe” we see much of the fluidity of meaning that New Age adherents drew from New Age universalism. For them, it was possible to create a new hybrid society from a series of newly created rituals and customs that were unmoored from the cultures and historical contexts they came from. In so doing, these white, New-Age back-to-the-landers still hoped that their lessons would flow out to the rest of society. Rott hoped that CU would become “a Tribe whose health and models might prove increasingly attractive to a world tired of following values, systems, and rules which have become distant from the People’s own experience.”⁵⁴⁴ From Rott’s perspective, intercommunal networks could usher in a New Age, yet his vague reference to “People’s own experience” highlights how thoroughly white back-to-the-landers flattened distinctions between their experiences and groups of color by the 1980s. Indeed, the universalist tendency coupled with the way Indianness was appropriated by white New Age followers precluded the very utopian vision that drove them to these communes in the first place. As such, the New Age movement, at least the portion of it that grew out of the countercultural back-to-the-land movement, was self-limiting.

In the mid-1980s, however, CU was ultimately eclipsed by one of its own New Age “tribes”: The Rainbow Family of Living Light. As we have seen, The Rainbow Family had been in existence since the late 1960s, and by the mid-late 1970s, the group had a communal house in Eugene, Oregon. They were less a settled group and more a loose conglomeration of nomadic counterculturalists who had been hosting yearly cultural gatherings on U.S. Forest Service land since 1972. This attracted back-to-the-landers along with a variety of other alternative groups. By the late 1970s, they had connected with CU and relied considerably on CU for organizational

⁵⁴³ Daniel Rott, “Our Unity Grows...,” *ComeUNITY*, May 1980, 6, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵⁴⁴ Rott, “Our Unity Grows...,” 6.

help. As the annual Rainbow Family Gatherings became more popular over the course of the 1980s, CU, as an intercommunal organization that ran a yearly conference, was subsumed. The series of events that led to this reflects the limitations of decentralized New Age community networks as well as a final shift towards New Age social gatherings as the primary mode of intercommunal interaction.

In 1980 an alternative energy and music fair, named Vortex II, was formed in the Pacific Northwest by members of the Rainbow Family. The 1980 event included music but was also billed as “a more urban operation...than the Rainbow Gathering and, as so, is a chance for us to reach out to the mass culture with the Vision of the Good Life that we (Alternative Communities) have been working to create.”⁵⁴⁵ The event was massively popular but fell on the same days as the CU yearly gathering and, since so many members wanted to go to Vortex II, CU leaders had to allow members to leave and come back. Following the music festival, Rainbow Family members tagged along from Vortex II to the CU gathering, where their loud music and New Age lifestyles ruffled some CU members' feathers. Indeed, the ensuing controversy and subsequent merger of CU and the Rainbow Family represents the New Age faction's final triumph within CU and highlights the third generation's ultimate inward turn.

The controversy surrounding the Rainbow Family's exploits played out in CU's bi-monthly newsletter. In the October 1980 CU newsletter one member, Bart Jones, voiced his concern at the takeover. He recalled that the Vortex II crowd “brought a kind of energy which I wasn't ready for. The chanting was loud enough to hurt ears...for at least half an hour, these was no quiet space to stop, listen, and give shy folks a chance to follow their heart and lead a new

⁵⁴⁵ Rainbow Family, “Vortex Alliance,” *ComeUNITY*, May 1980, 4, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

song.”⁵⁴⁶ Furthermore, Jones was concerned that the Vortex people encouraged a bland universalist message that did not resonate with him, though it seemed to attract most within CU. One of CU's member communities was the Love Family, a countercultural religious community from Seattle that had recently purchased land in rural Western Washington. They were led by Love Israel and had not always gotten along with others in the CU network. According to Jones, the Vortex crowd was encouraging the worst tendencies of the Love family. He wrote that during the CU conference, he “objected most to the songs about ‘following Love,’ ‘Love is right,’ etc. The Love Family gets some mileage out of this ambiguity. It might be love; it might be that stocky man with small eyes named Love.”⁵⁴⁷ It is clear from Jones’s article that, for all of its New Age rhetoric about harmony, the CU membership contained deep divisions – after all, the Love Family’s devotion to Love Israel was at odds with Alpha Farm’s Quaker-infused, New Age spirituality. These divisions and the emphasis on universalist rhetoric as opposed to concrete mutual aid led to the dissolution of CU and its integration into the Rainbow Family by 1983.

In 1980 the Rainbow Family council decided that the 1981 Gathering would be held in Washington near the Colville reservation. As was common, local groups were expected to help plan and coordinate the event. It is apparent from the notes of the CU that the organization was working on two large projects. First, they were retooling the Hub system to make CU even more decentralized. They were planning to split CU into three regions. According to the minutes of the February 15th meeting, Caroline Estes of Alpha Farm explained that “we have three areas (and smaller regions in each area). E. Washington, W. Washington and Oregon (Puget Sound has

⁵⁴⁶ Bart Jones, “To ComeUNITY Folks,” *ComeUNITY*, October 1980, 3, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Newsletters 1979-1982 Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵⁴⁷ Jones, “To ComeUNITY Folks,” 3.

assumed the whole region).”⁵⁴⁸ Moving forward CU would be a far looser organization and those regional groups would form their own intercommunal network.

The new regional groups would make decisions about the upcoming Rainbow Gathering, the planning of which was the second main task. Planning a Rainbow Gathering was no small undertaking as the event attracted thousands of attendees from all over the country. Members of CU were tasked with contacting the local Forest Service employees, preparing the site, and reaching out to the local communities. The minutes of the February meeting show that Rainbow’s co-founder Barry Adams told the group that “between now and the Gathering – get the word out to get people right to the site – alleviate [sic] the social impact on the surrounding area ... You people who live there have credibility – get letters to the newspapers/editors....Come and explain what a community is – what you do in community – Everybody here is visionary and in touch with the earth.”⁵⁴⁹ The combination of further decentralizing and the focus on the Gathering dissipated CU. Moving forward, the Network for the New Age shifted towards planning New Age social gatherings meant to promote cultural unity rather than intercommunal mutual aid.

CU’s merger with the Rainbow Family Gatherings reflects how far the third generation had come from its 1960s roots in social and cultural activism. At the same time, however, there were also more mundane reasons for its downfall. CU’s disintegration was also sped up by attempts within the network to take over the Rainbow Gathering in 1981. On February 3rd 1981, Caroline Estes received an ominous letter from a member of the main Rainbow Family commune

⁵⁴⁸ Caroline Estes, “Notes - Part II - Sunday Come-Unity Conference at Love Family Ranch - February 15th 1981” (ComeUNITY Organization, February 1981), 2, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Materials Folder, CCS Archive.

⁵⁴⁹ Estes, “Notes - Part II - Sunday Come-Unity Conference at Love Family Ranch” 3.

in Eugene named John Jones, who was in charge of “information security” for the group. He recounted a recent experience when he drove up to meet with Barry and Garrick, both founders of the Gathering in 1970, at the Rainbow Harmony House in Seattle only to find that they had been absorbed into the Love Family.

According to Jones, members of the Love family “offered us 40 acres of land, marijuana, hashish, food, and all basic human necessities if we would stay, join, and help them get this alleged Rainbow Gathering together.”⁵⁵⁰ He quietly demurred on the question and was left alone for a brief time. While poking around he discovered a “‘Rainbow Family office’ where Garrick has moved the Rainbow Family archives.”⁵⁵¹ He also “discovered a correspondence to Garrick from Henry the Fiddler containing at least 15 feet of COMPUTER PRINTOUT SHEETs with the names, addresses, land holdings, spiritual/political beliefs and other personal data.”⁵⁵² Such a betrayal of trust by fellow New Age adherents was almost unimaginable. That the information was “gathered and inserted/programed into some unknown computer system without prior knowledge” was even worse.⁵⁵³ Though the personal computer revolution – championed as it was by counterculturalists – was in full swing, many New Age back-to-the-landers still distrusted computer systems because they were associated with Cold War machinations of the military-industrial complex. Given the survivalist mentality of many within CU by the early 1980s, however, the fact that the Love Family had lists of member’s personal information and landholdings was cause for even more alarm.

⁵⁵⁰ John Jones, “Communications from Information and Security Rainbow Family of Living Light” (Rainbow Family Of Living Light, February 3, 1981), 1, Alpha Farm Box - Miscellaneous Material 1973-2002, CCS Archive.

⁵⁵¹ Jones, “Communications from Information and Security Rainbow Family of Living Light,”

1.

⁵⁵² *Ibid.*, 1–2.

⁵⁵³ *Ibid.*, 2.

According to Jones, not only was the Love Family stealing data the group was also offering land. In perhaps the most damaging discovery Jones found a pamphlet which, according to him, offered New Age adherents “‘open land 10,000 acres.’ What land you may ask? Well there’s [sic] 30 acres here, 69 acres there, 360 acres over there, and Alpha Farm is included as are many other groups...Upon your arrival at the Valentines conference you should ask to see this booklet and the computer printouts.”⁵⁵⁴ From the published minutes of the Valentines CU meeting it does not appear that these concerns were discussed openly, and there was no mass give-away of communal land by the Love Family. Indeed, in the CU archive at CCS Jones’s letter is followed by the first edition of the *Rainbow Era Runes* (billed as “the un-official daily newspaper of the 1981 Rainbow Peace Gathering in Washington State”) along with a flyer for a fundraising event in Seattle’s Capitol Hill neighborhood on March 7th. The newsletter, issued from the Love Family Ranch, republished their own notes from the February 1981 CU gathering. The notes appear largely consistent with Caroline’s notes, though they do add that on February 14th “Carolyn [sic] began with a history of Come Unity – and the different regions/hubs/clans that have been meeting since the Equinox two years ago. She suggested that the questions we might need to address are 1) What is the future of Come Unity? 2) Is there one, are we on track, or should we lay it aside now that we are two years older and wiser.”⁵⁵⁵ Whether or not the accusations in Jones’s letter were true, it is clear that by 1981 there was internal wrangling and dissension within CU. Indeed, the Love Israel Family would soon part ways with CU. The transition away from a central CU organization to several small organizations, combined with the excitement around the Rainbow Family as a way of communing with like-minded people, led to

⁵⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵⁵ Mareba, “Come-Unity Council,” *Rainbow Era Runes*, 1981, 2, Alpha Farm Box - Come Unity Articles and Clippings 1972-1980 Folder, CCS Archive.

the organization's ultimate dissolution. Both of these factors can be attributed to the full emergence of the New Age movement.

The Rainbow Family Gatherings

Though CU dissolved in the early 1980s, other back-to-the-land communities continued to organize intercommunal networks into the 1980s and 1990s. Notably, the founders of *Communities* re-formed the Fellowship of Intentional Communities in 1986 as a resource for classifieds, information, and coordinating environmental activism. The rise and fall of CU does, however, highlight an important shift in the third generation's orientation to the outside world, especially as the Rainbow Family Gatherings became more popular in the 1970s and early 1980s. The Rainbow Gatherings were explicitly New Age gatherings that allowed white back-to-landers to reaffirm their cultural ties by playing Indian on Forest Service land. They could seek inner liberation close to the land while turning completely away from their experiences in the 1960s with grassroots social and political mobilization.

Counterculturalists had already begun this inward turn in the late 1960s and early 1970s by assuming that larger social reformation was only possible if individuals dealt with the root causes of violence, competition, and jealousy. As we have seen, however, back-to-the-landers in the early 1970s had followed the "Berkeley" model of radical local change, believing that social and economic transformation would be most effective at the local (and ideally rural) level. Indeed, many of the Southwest hippie communities had tried to reach out to local Native and Latinx communities but had had little success. As this outreach strategy failed and as members of the Rainbow Gatherings clashed with local police and forest rangers, back-to-the-landers moved even further away from their early ideals and towards the insular New Age movement. Indeed,

by the late 1970s, it became common to refer to the outside world as Babylon, assuming it was doomed to crumble before the New Age could emerge. The early history of the Rainbow Family reveals how this shift occurred and how the inward turn was intensified by the emergence of the New Age movement and its focus on a hip identity and appropriation of non-white traditions.

The origins of the Rainbow Family Gathering can be traced back to the Summer of Love in 1967, specifically the Gathering of the Tribes, a.k.a. the Human Be-in event held in Golden Gate Park. This was an event Stewart Brand organized to benefit Native American causes.⁵⁵⁶ Denizens of the Haight flocked to this event to hear the Grateful Dead give a concert and listen to speakers discuss the nobility of Native life and their oppression by the federal government. Most of the early members of what would become the Rainbow group, such as Barry Adams, Garrick Beck, and Chuck Windsong, attended the 1967 Gathering, and it was key to their early vision for hip lifestyles that emulated supposed Native American folkways.⁵⁵⁷

In the context of the Kent State killings after the invasion of Cambodia, as we have seen, the counterculture became disaffected as the New Left coalition crumbled. These early founders left San Francisco for a variety of West Coast countercultural communities, most notably in the Southwest, in order to get down to the important work of ushering in a New Age of cooperation, racial harmony, and environmental stewardship.⁵⁵⁸ They met up again in 1970 at the first Vortex

⁵⁵⁶ On Brand's role in focusing the counterculture on Native Americans see Kirk, *Counterculture Green*, 38–39; On Brand's involvement with the Human Be-in see Smith, *Hippies, Indians, and the Fight for Red Power*, 95.

⁵⁵⁷ This narrative of the early history of Rainbow draws from retrospective essays from the founders on a current Rainbow Family Website. See Rainbow Hawk, "Further Letters of Rainbow's Origins Part III," Welcome Home, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://www.welcomehome.org/>.

⁵⁵⁸ For a discussion of why Rainbows left cities and a general discussion of this early history see Michael I. Niman, *People of the Rainbow: A Nomadic Utopia* (Knoxville: Univ Tennessee Press, 2011), 32.

music concert in Oregon's Milo McIver State Park in Clackamas County, Oregon. It is important to note that Vortex I was billed as a more upbeat festival following the disastrous and violent Altamont concert in northern California in December 1969 – an event that some scholars point to signifying the end of the hippie movement. Vortex was also purposefully scheduled on the same day as Richard Nixon was planned to speak at the American Legion in Portland, Oregon. At the concert, which featured local bands for the most part, the Rainbows organized a council of 450 people that was “representative of just about every alternative group” on the West Coast. After the concert, this council got together to plan a gathering of countercultural tribes on July 4th 1972 on Table Mountain, Colorado, that would constitute a “Ghost Dance for the hippie movement” that would bring in the New Age.⁵⁵⁹ Given this reference to the Native Ghost Dance movement of the late 1800s – a movement responding to cataclysmic upheavals for western tribes in Oregon, California, and Nevada – it appears that the counterculture's apocalyptic mindset had early roots and, as we have seen, was nurtured over the course of the 1970s and developed into a right-leaning survivalist mentality.

The council at Vortex I agreed to adopt the name “The Rainbow Family of Living Light Gathering of the Tribes and World Peace and Healing Celebration” for the gathering, and believed that if enough hip human energy was gathered together they could usher in a New Age, like the Paiute Ghost Dancers of the late nineteenth century. Indeed, Peter Coyote, the Digger founder of Drop City, attended the first gathering, and recalled that on July 3, 1972 he “thought it was the end of an old world, the start of a new one....We expected that the fences would come down around the world, the prisons would crumble, the cities would be gone and the buffalo

⁵⁵⁹ Jodey Bateman, “Further Letters of Rainbow's Origins Part I,” Welcome Home, accessed September 23, 2020, <https://www.welcomehome.org/>; Hawk, “Further Letters of Rainbow's Origins Part III.”

would come back and Christ would return.”⁵⁶⁰ Though the first Gathering did not bring about the New Age, the fact that these West Coast back-to-the-landers positioned themselves and their intercommunal network this way reveals how the New Age movement was rooted in the counterculture. Reflecting the larger Left’s shift from collective action to personal transformation, they believed that by appropriating a complex and contradictory array of non-white practices within their movement, they could become egalitarian, non-violent, and environmentally aware. They also began to believe that mainstream society, rather than being transformed *positively* through the movement, was past saving, which had implications for back-to-the-landers’ countercultural identity and how the movement interacted with the outside world. After the “failure” to bring in a New Age in 1972, they continued their efforts at yearly Gatherings across the country.

By the late 1970s and 1980s, the Gatherings had become wildly popular within hip circles across the country, as we have seen in the example of CU. Indeed, as participation grew over the course of the 1970s, Rainbow Gatherings became a site of conflict between local communities, law enforcement, and Forest Service personnel, who were skeptical of a hippie invasion and worried about issues concerning drugs, sanitation, and fire. Such tension only heightened the inward turn among Rainbow participants – many of whom were back-to-the-landers – and reaffirmed their understandings of themselves as a persecuted minority. This understanding was not entirely inaccurate: a Freedom of Information Act request in the early 2000s revealed that law enforcement had been tracking the group since the mid-1970s and purposefully targeted Rainbows who traveled in search of the community’s next gathering

⁵⁶⁰ Bateman, “Further Letters of Rainbow’s Origins Part I.”

spot.⁵⁶¹ Increased surveillance and enforcement went hand in hand with Rainbows' rhetoric about Babylon, reinforcing their separatism and inward turn.

It is apparent from Rainbow community newsletters and FOIA materials that, by the mid-to-late 1980s, Gatherings members were in open conflict with local, state, and federal authorities.⁵⁶² One of the most contentious Gatherings occurred in 1987 in North Carolina.⁵⁶³ The Gathering, the largest to date in 1987 with 16,000 attendees, worried locals in rural Graham county and state and federal law enforcement harassed Rainbows during the week of July 4th. Though local event organizers had reached an agreement with the county concerning sanitation and parking, the Forest Service and other agencies ticketed cars and demanded immediate payment in the days leading up to July 4th. State troopers also closed the Gathering's main gate, forcing attendees to cross a narrow bridge and refused to allow trucks with water and medical supplies to pass through the gate. Forest Rangers even photographed the Gathering and reportedly made “obnoxious comments about women’s bodies and our children.”⁵⁶⁴ Finally, law enforcement descended on the gathering as clean-up crews finished on July 7th and made a series of arrests for skinny-dipping and marijuana possession.

Reflecting on the rise in conflict with locals and feds over the 1980s, founder Barry Adams concluded in a 1987 Gathering newsletter that “Babylon is Quaking! They spent a

⁵⁶¹ The earliest FBI documents relating to the Rainbow Family date to 1975 when the group planned a Gathering in Arkansas, leading local officials to reach out the FBI in fear of a hippie invasion. “FBI FOIA Documents” (Department of Justice, June 24, 2010), 150, <https://peopleoftherainbow.buffalostate.edu/fbi-foia-documents>.

⁵⁶² Niman was part of this FOIA request, which he used in his second edition of *People of the Rainbow*. For a list of these sources see Niman, *People of the Rainbow*, 322.

⁵⁶³ It is apparent from the FBI FOIA release in 2010 that in 1986 and 1987 the bureau was conducting considerable surveillance on the group. See “FBI FOIA Documents” (Department of Justice, June 24, 2010), 138, <https://peopleoftherainbow.buffalostate.edu/fbi-foia-documents>.

⁵⁶⁴ This quotation comes from another Family newsletter *All Most Broke*. Garrick Beck, “1987 Keeping the Peace,” *All Most Broke*, Fall 1987, 1.

million dollars, at least, on trying to harass us out of existence...we Gathered anyway” and went on to accuse the government of breaking “treaty” promises with the Rainbows, reinforcing their sense of themselves as a New-Age tribe fighting for their right to self-determination on Forest Service land.⁵⁶⁵ It is clear, then, that by the late 1980s, Rainbow members believed that they were New-Age Indians who were also being persecuted by mainstream American society. In reality, of course, their complicated racial reimagining engaged with a long-standing white tradition that they used to fashion a version of hip, liberal, whiteness that allowed them, as Deloria has aptly put it, to “have their cake and eat it too.”⁵⁶⁶ They could reap the benefits of a virtuous, back-to-the-land lifestyle, explicitly distanced from imperialist America, without engaging with real indigenous peoples whose lived experience with oppression and systematic racism could pose thorny questions to their white, middle-class movement.

Conclusion

Like other such festivals, including Burning Man, the Rainbow Family Gatherings continue to be a popular event. They are held across the world, attracting aging hippies and a younger generation of New Age enthusiasts drawn to the events' universalism, multiculturalism, and colorful experimentalism. As we have seen, these Gatherings were part of a larger intercommunal push led by third generation back-to-the-landers in the 1970s, who slowly retreated from the New Left's socio-political goals. This turn was not inevitable.

Though countercultural back-to-the-landers sought personal liberation close to nature, publications and organizations show that back-to-the-landers in the early 1970s tried to bring

⁵⁶⁵ Barry Adams, “One More Broken Treaty,” *All Most Broke*, Fall 1987, 2.

⁵⁶⁶ Deloria, *Playing Indian*, 3.

about broader societal change by creating intercommunal organizations that would appeal to allied social change movements as well as local rural communities. Indeed, this high idealism suffused the early pages of *Communities* magazine and informed the structure and goals of Twin Oaks's Intercommunities of Virginia. Though IC's history shows how difficult it was for communities to run a decentralized network, the ideal never fully died away. Later attempts such as the Federation of Intentional Communities and Twin Oaks's Federation of Egalitarian Communities continue to pursue mutual aid and environmental activism in the twenty-first century. However, they no longer claim to push for grassroots social justice or radically alter local rural communities. Indeed, the story of the counterculture's transformation into the New Age movement reveals the profound inward turn that many on the white Left undertook as they searched for alternatives to American society following the political and cultural upheavals of the late 1960s.

As the 1970s progressed, it became clear that American society was not headed into a New Age and that "naturally" allied movements such as AIM were not going back to the land like the counterculture. Reflecting key political and cultural shifts in the 1970s, back-to-the-land communities steeled themselves for a long battle of lifestyles, prepared themselves for a coming social and environmental apocalypse, and turned inward towards creating sustainable communities and social networks for themselves that suited their emerging New Age tastes. As we have seen in the case of CU and the Rainbow Gatherings, some back-to-the-land intercommunal organizations embraced the emerging New-Age movement, framed themselves as New-Age Indians, and turned to a specific set of spiritual and social practices to foster egalitarianism, non-violence, and ecological harmony. In so doing, they carved out separate and thoroughly conservative spaces for themselves such as the Rainbow Gatherings, which only

reinforced their inward focus following clashes with local communities and law enforcement. By the 1980s, then, the counterculture's rural utopianism had given way to New Age racial imaginings and an insular hip culture.

EPILOGUE

The Fourth Generation

*Sometimes the light's all shinin' on me,
Other times I can barely see.
Lately it occurs to me,
What a long, strange trip it's been.*
– The Grateful Dead, “Truckin’,” 1970

Americans have not stopped trying to go back to the land as a way of weathering overwhelming economic and political turmoil. Indeed, many of the children of countercultural back-to-the-landers have decided to follow in their parent's footsteps. I came to this project

interested in the back-to-the-land movement for a variety of reasons, some of them personal. Growing up, my favorite aunt and uncle were homesteaders in whose quirkiness I saw alternatives to my life as the kid of a Presbyterian minister in the South. Living in the rolling hills of southern piedmont Virginia, I always looked forward to the long drive to Charlottesville and to playing with my back-to-the-land cousins – most of whom were slightly older than me and therefore very cool. These back-to-the-land cousins still live in and around Charlottesville and represent a small part of the fourth generation.

My day-to-day experience growing up in southern Virginia was vastly different from that of my cousins, as were my cultural assumptions about consumption, education, and race. I was born in Richmond in the late 1980s and, at age 5, moved an-hour-and-a-half south with my father – following his graduation from seminary – to a small town named Keysville. Set in the heart of Virginia’s thriving tobacco industry, Keysville was bucolic and deeply conservative – interestingly, it is the same area Bolton Hall recommended in his 1907 *Three Acres in Liberty* for those interested in living in the South. My father’s church, Briery Presbyterian, was established before the American Revolution and was laid out in a transept style, with the main section of the cross set aside for adults – divided by gender – and the preacher’s right transepts reserved for children and their caregivers. No one in the all-white church ever sat in the other transept. That had been where slaves had sat before their emancipation. William Faulkner was right that the ghosts of the Civil War still haunt life in the South. They even followed me to school. After difficulty adjusting to the local public school, my father sent me to Fuqua Academy (formerly known as Prince Edward Academy), a recently renamed private K-12 that had been established in the late-1950s as an all-white school after Prince Edward county closed all of its public

schools as a way of avoiding integration. There was only one Black child in my class, and he was an international student.

My homesteading relations – Aunt Jacque and Uncle Fred– were in some ways the outliers in my extended family, but they were also the product of a liberal Protestant bringing. Jacque and Fred were countercultural back-to-the-landers who had first dropped out – in their words, “went off the grid” – in the early 1970s. Aunt Jacque, my mother’s sister, grew up on a Presbyterian summer camp run by my grandfather just outside of Chapel Hill, North Carolina, during the mid-1950s. In the early 1960s, she and the rest of the family moved to Virginia after my grandfather was tapped to open Camp Hanover – a Presbyterian camp on the outskirts of Richmond that was the first racially integrated children’s summer camp in the South. She and Fred – a young woodworker who grew up as the son of missionaries in the Congo – met in high school and began seriously dating at Eckerd College, a Presbyterian college in Florida, in the late 1960s. Both were influenced by the period's profound socio-political turmoil but were not drawn to collective New Left protest. Instead, both were heavily influenced by Helen and Scott Nearing, particularly their 1960s and 1970s works, *The Conscience of a Radical* and *Living the Good Life* - one of my cousins recalls that the Nearings were “demi-gods” in their household growing up. Jacque and Fred’s exposure to the Nearings and their distaste for urban living – Fred described living in cities as disorienting and overwhelming after he had lived in remote parts of the Congo – informed their decision to turn away from urban activism and towards an intentional and environmentally sustainable rural lifestyle that did not contribute to overconsumption and inequality.

Fred and Jacque were not hippie communards, but they were part of the broader counterculture. Like many others in their generation, they decided to homestead in the remote,

rural parts of West Virginia – in their case near Point Mountain in Webster County. I was born after their move to Virginia, but the rest of the family remembers marveling at their composting toilet and their lack of plumbing and electricity – Fred only signed up for electricity in 1977 in preparation for the couple’s first child Nathan. By the early 1970s, Fred was an accomplished woodworker – a skill that made building a homestead much more feasible – and was attracted to rural West Virginia because it reminded him of the more “primitive” areas of the Congo. Moreover, the state offered the opportunity to pursue his art near the Scotch-Irish mountaineers, whose arts and crafts traditions were being revived by VISTA anti-poverty volunteers as part of Johnson’s Great Society program. While Fred did not learn directly from mountaineers, he had back-to-the-land friends who did. As we have seen, this fascination with the Scotch-Irish was part of a much larger search for identity that whites across the political spectrum undertook as a response to the perceived blandness and homogeneity of mainstream American life in the 1970s. For Fred and Jacque, whose Presbyterian-American roots were thoroughly Appalachian and Scotch-Irish, this was not too much of a stretch.

Fred was particularly attracted to the art of turning wooden bowls out of whole logs, a difficult craft that required mounting a round section of tree trunk onto a home-built lathe and slowly carving it down to an exquisitely thin bowl. In fact, one of the family’s main income streams came from doing the circuits at local craft fairs – fairs organized by the state that often attracted rich urbanites across the eastern seaboard searching for “authentic” wares. Like other members of the counterculture in the 1970s, Fred and Jacque were also beginning to sour on the stale Protestantism that had shaped their upbringing. Jacque recalls attending church services at a variety of denominations and even dabbled in Catholicism – a rather alarming turn for my grandmother, who viewed Catholicism with deep distrust and perhaps a good helping of

prejudice. Reflecting how widespread the New Age movement was, Fred and Jacque also turned to neo-pagan practices and their Virginia homestead had a prominent circle of stones for tracking the sun and celebrating the solstice.

Needless to say, my homesteading aunt and uncle offered a vivid and compelling foil for my own life growing up in Keysville, and I cherished the time I got to play with my cousins. Nathan, Ryan, and Rachel were raised in a profoundly different setting than I was. Like the children of Twin Oaks, they were primarily homeschooled – in their case by my aunt, who developed a curriculum tailor-made to each child that included craft projects pulled from the *Foxfire* books and *Mother Earth News*. They were definitely not raised in air cribs or subjected to Skinner’s behaviorism. Indeed, the family once undertook a pilgrimage to the Nearing’s homestead in the late 1970s while Jacque was pregnant with Ryan. Nathan, like most toddlers, was rambunctious, and Helen Nearing pointedly asked Jacque why she was having more children if she could not control the one she had. Despite the Nearings’ legendary curmudgeonly temperament, my aunt was a fantastic teacher. She even helped nearby homesteaders in the area around Charlottesville by administering state-approved academic proficiency tests. Like many back-to-the-landers who came back from the land in the 1990s (in her case following a divorce), my aunt would even later go on to get a Ph.D. in education with a particular focus on alternative schooling.

I was jealous of my cousins’ less rigid, more liberal education – after all, they could set aside time to garden or play with the dogs while I was relegated to private, conservative education. Aside from education, my cousins also grew up eating different foods. While I ate pancakes at a McDonalds housed in a Walmart super-store (our local Food Lion grocery store in Keysville went out of business following the Walmart’s construction in the early 1990s), my

back-to-the-land cousins helped raise their own organic food, process their own honey, and ferment their own hard cider. I consumed my first alcoholic beverage with Uncle Fred when I could not fall asleep one night at the age of 12 or 13 – a reasonable amount being medicinal after all, though it did make my mom roll her eyes.

If my back-to-the-land cousins' food was healthier and their educational opportunities more liberal, so too was the entertainment that they were allowed to consume. I clearly remember nights when the extended family was invited to attend an elaborate shadow-puppet play put on by my cousins in their basement – another idea taken from *Mother Earth News*. By the 1990s, they had access to electricity, a home TV, and a personal computer. Unlike me, however, they did not watch Saturday-morning cartoons. Instead, I vividly remember watching a movie with them called *Baraka* in the mid-1990s. *Baraka* was a sequel to the 1982 experimental, and thoroughly New Age, film *Koyaanisqatsi: A World Out of Balance*. *Koyaanisqatsi* is a Hopi word meaning out of balance and the movie contained no dialogue. In the 1982 film, viewers were presented with slow-motion and time-lapse videos juxtaposing the American wilderness with bustling cities and factories – a clear call to counter the alienating effects of modern urban, industrial culture. *Koyaanisqatsi*'s 1992 sequel, *Baraka*, supplemented the first movie by incorporating New Age imagery from a variety of significant world religious sites, including Jerusalem, Angkor-wat, and areas of Bali. Indeed, one of my most poignant memories with my cousins was watching the famous Kecak monkey-dance ritual in Bali, a scene involving hundreds of chanting Native men waving their hands in mesmerizing synchrony. For the son of a relatively conservative Presbyterian preacher, this was eye-opening fare. Aside from *Baraka*, we also watched movies about Native American groups. I specifically recall watching the 1998 film *Smoke Signals*, a film based on Sherman Alexie's book *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in*

Heaven, surrounded by Uncle Fred's custom-built wooden speakers and marveling at the actual day-to-day life of Native Americans. As we have seen, there is a complicated legacy of white, middle-class fascination with indigenous culture. The fact that my cousins and I were encouraged to partake in this tradition demonstrates how widespread the practice had become within the countercultural back-to-the-land movement, though watching *Smoke Signals* was far removed from the cultural appropriation of the Rainbow Family Gatherings.

I am grateful to have been exposed to my aunt and uncle's comparatively liberal cultural politics. Following a move to Seattle in the late 1990s, I was no longer able to visit so frequently, but I still went back to stay for weeks at a time during the summers. By that time, my cousins were finishing high school or off in college, and I had more time to bond with my Uncle Fred. As members of the fourth generation, my cousins did not stay away for long. Following graduation and stints in the workforce, all three decided to buy land on adjoining lots on Charlottesville's outskirts. My cousin Ryan now runs a bustling crafts business selling custom-made polar fleece hats at the same craft fairs that drew his father. Ryan also runs a large organic garden and an expansive bee-keeping operation. For more than a decade he refused to open a bank account for his business (though he notes that he has had a personal checking account since high school), his house is powered in part by solar energy, and he used to make big batches of moonshine – another important skill learned from the *Foxfire* series, but an activity he and Nathan gave up in their 20s. Nathan, the oldest, has also gone back to the land, though he now travels the world as a National Geographic photographer – perhaps inspired by movies like *Baraka*. My cousin Rachel has also settled back into rural life and makes medicinal teas and handmade birchbark baskets – a local Native handicraft.

My fourth-generation cousins are a few of the countless children of the counterculture who have been shaped by their parent's decision to turn away from large-scale political activism and urban space in the late 1960s. As such, they represent continuity within the countercultural back-to-the-land movement. Like their parents they value rural space for its transformative effects on the individual and seek to be better stewards of their surrounding environments – a sentiment that has only intensified based on the latest science on man-made climate change. Though my cousins are homesteaders, fourth-generation communards have also continued their parents' work, in particular by creating new intentional communities called ecovillages – rural communities planned in advance that will produce zero carbon emissions. Indeed, ecovillages are in many ways the final product of a decades-long search for ways to sustainably go back to the land. One notable community that launched the ecovillages movement is named Arcosanti in Paradise Valley, Arizona. Founded in the early 1970s by Italian architect Paolo Soleri who was in search of alternative, more ecologically sound, ways of building cities, the community has served as an archetype for the thousands of smaller ecovillages that have sprung up around the country (and which now populate the pages of *Communities* magazine). Some liberal children of the third generation, then, are continuing to carry on their parents' quest while at the same time responding to the growing concern over global warming that has gripped my generation since the 1990s.

Like the third generation, the fourth generation contains a mix of conservative and progressive members that make binary political categorization of the movement difficult and messy. Even my fourth-generation cousins are hard to categorize. They have deeply liberal, progressive politics as of 2020 but their activities – Ryan's moonshining and distrust of banks and all three cousins' dedication to self-sufficient living – are in many ways conservative and

build upon the self-reliant ideas of Scott Nearing and John Shuttleworth. Moreover, the fourth generation has also been shaped by radically different historical contexts. While my cousins are in many ways remnants of the more liberal third generation, the wider fourth generation leans to the political Right as a response to major economic and political upheavals in the early 2000s.

During the tumultuous period of the Great Recession and in the first days of the Obama presidency, right-leaning Americans fled cities and suburbs as a way of securing their economic livelihoods and other rights such as gun ownership and raising their children away from liberal influences.⁵⁶⁷ Like previous generations, this right-leaning fourth wave has revived common republican ideas about rural independence, urban degeneration (this time in the form of elite liberal culture), and the importance of traditional gender relations for raising the next generation of virtuous citizens. Perhaps further demonstrating the third generation's pervasive influence, the fourth has also wholeheartedly adopted the organic movement and touts the value of appropriate

⁵⁶⁷ It is worth noting, however, that this process began during the Bush presidency and the post-9/11 war on terror. Indeed, the rise of “survivalism” was tied to the resurgence of the right-leaning back-to-the-land movement. The most prominent of these “survivalists” – also known as preppers – is James Wesley Rawles, who began survivorblog.com in 2005 as a platform to connecting with others who feared an imminent (and for most, Christian themed) apocalypse. Survivalblog.com has remained a widely popular platform for those on the Right interested in survivalism. Rawles is also a prominent Tea Party conservative, frequent guest on the Alex Jones conspiracy-theory podcast, and founded the American Redoubt movement 2011. This latter movement proposed that all conservative Christians and Messianic Jews should move the areas of Idaho, Eastern Washington, Eastern Oregon, Wyoming, and Montana in order to retain their various freedoms (especially gun rights.) It is noteworthy that this is basically the same utopia that white power activists in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, proposed for a new white homeland. The subject areas that survivorblog.com cover are also illuminating and include, “Disaster Preparedness, Self-Sufficiency, Christianity, Christian Charity – both now and post-collapse, the Second Amendment and firearms legislation, Supporting our Troops,” and other more ominous topics such as “Marksmanship, Emerging Threats, Privacy and Encryption, and Small Unit Tactics.” For more see John Rawles, “What is SurvivalBlog?,” SurvivalBlog.com, April 7th, 2021.

technology.⁵⁶⁸ Indeed, like the second generation, this new generation has also developed a clear anti-statist sensibility. However, like the larger Right, it honors veterans and martial service to America – not a sentiment espoused by Borsodi or Nearing, who were even opposed to World War Two.

By 2020 this fourth wave had even generated its own alternative to *Mother Earth News*, aptly named *The New Pioneer*. *The New Pioneer* was founded in the early days of the Great Recession and later bought by the Athlon Media Group; a company primarily focused on producing content for survivalists, gun owners, and militias. Their other titles include *Tactical Life*, *Ballistic*, *American Frontiersman*, *Survivor's Edge*, and *Guns of the Old West*. The New Pioneer's glossy pages are chock full of in-depth how-to articles on beekeeping, fermentation, and other back-to-the-land matters that would be familiar to any reader of *Mother Earth News*. What is different, of course, is the tone of *The New Pioneer*. Pictures of smiling families (overwhelmingly white), bountiful harvests, and healthy goats are interspersed with articles on the value of drones for inspecting fences and getting “clear pictures of trespassers.”⁵⁶⁹ Advertisements for the Second Amendment Foundation are commonplace.

What are we to make of an enduring American tradition that prizes the regenerative potential of rural land as an antidote to modernity, urban life, and increased interdependence but that can be employed by Americans across the political spectrum? As we have seen, over the course of the twentieth century, members of the white middle-class have reacted to profound social, political, and economic upheaval by turning to a common republican ideal of rural self-reliance as an answer to perceived social and racial degeneration. This back-to-the-land endeavor

⁵⁶⁸ Any quick search of SurvivalBlog.com or *The New Pioneer* renders a number of how to articles on composting and the importance of organic food in a healthy diet.

⁵⁶⁹ Jill Easton, “Eyes in the Sky,” *The New Pioneer*, Summer 2020, 59.

has had surprising staying power in our national consciousness. Successive generations of Americans have drawn on the tradition to envision alternatives to contemporary society and culture. Indeed, the rural ideal of self-reliance has existed within our culture since the country's founding. It served as a way for founders like Thomas Jefferson to distinguish American society from the perceived decadence and lack of freedom in contemporary Europe while at the same time justifying the early nation's settler-colonial expansion.

Americans, however, did not go *back* to the land until the late 1800s and early 1900s, during the midst of rapid urbanization, immigration, and industrialization and following the "closing" of the western frontier. Like the fourth generation, the first generation of back-to-the-landers did not easily conform to a Left/Right binary and advocated the back-to-the-land endeavor as an antimodern reaction to social instability. As we have seen in the case of Bolton Hall, the founder of the American back-to-the-land movement, the first generation pursued the back-to-the-land endeavor as a Progressive reform meant to forestall potential political radicalism by encouraging Americans and newly-arrived European immigrants to settle on the outskirts of cities. Hall's politics were a mix of progressivism and conservatism rooted in his perception that rural land offered economic stability and utopian opportunities for moral and political reform. He championed the Single Tax – a radical reform that would have upended land ownership and effectively redistributed wealth – while at the same time believing that Black Americans were well suited to industrial labor and distrusting newly-arrived southern European immigrants for their potential papist leanings. During World War I, he spent his time seeking the release of Eugene Debs while drawing on deeply conservative republican moralisms about urban and industrial degeneracy. As such, Hall was able to retreat to common settler ideas about the

importance of rural land in shaping Americans and national culture, but in ways that ultimately served his social and racial interests.

A second generation, like the fourth, learned from its elders but drew on republicanism and pastoralism in the context of vastly different destabilizing events. As we have seen in the figures of Helen and Scott Nearing, Ralph Borsodi, and Mildred Loomis, second wave back-to-the-landers – coming as they did from a variety of political perspectives – framed the flight from cities as an antimodern antidote to the ravages of the Great Depression and to the increasing power of a centralized federal government in the New Deal and World War Two periods. Scott Nearing, a lifelong socialist who lived at the Single Tax colony of Ardent, reacted to the Old Left's slow collapse by turning to single-family homesteading – much like my aunt and uncle almost half a century later. In the 1940s and 1950s he and his wife Helen appealed to their national following using common republican ideas about rural self-sufficiency and the regenerative potential of rural land to shape individuals into more independent citizens.

Ralph Borsodi, Mildred Loomis, and their School of Living organization approached the back-to-the-land project somewhat differently. Borsodi, along with Lewis Mumford, developed a philosophy of rural decentralism in the context of the expansion of the New Deal state in the 1930s. Central to Borsodi's decentralist philosophy was the assumption that modern technological developments made it possible for alternative communities to recreate rural village life – a philosophy he and Loomis tried to implement using New Deal funding in Dayton, Ohio, and later on with their own money at Bayard Lane. Unlike the Nearings, however, the School of Living organization was anti-statist and deeply libertarian, and its members envisioned an antimodern future with limited government, a single tax, and rural, communal, mutual aid.

The second generation, much like the first, framed the back-to-the-land endeavor in racial terms, believing that a return to rural life for middle-class whites would thwart urban social and moral degeneration. Like the larger American society, the second generation embraced the eugenics movement in the 1910s and 1920s and expressed early support for negative eugenic practices such as forced sterilization of “degenerate” individuals – defined by Borsodi as prostitutes, beggars, and moral “perverts.” Indeed, the second generation supported the 1924 immigration act which banned all non-white Asians and established strict quotas on southern European countries as a way of preserving the supposed racial purity of Anglo-Saxon America. Perhaps even more significantly, for the Nearings and members of the School of Living, America offered unique eugenic opportunities for whites to pursue arts and leisure away from the poisoning influences of diverse urban crowds, thus enabling them to build an American super race. For some second wave back-to-the-landers, such as School of Living members, this racial ideal continued to shape how they viewed the back-to-the-land movement into the 1960s and 1970s. As such, the second generation’s positive eugenic advocacy reveals how going back to the land served the interests of white middle-class Americans during a profound period of economic and political upheaval.

The third generation – the countercultural back-to-the-land movement – was the product of significantly different historical contexts. Growing up within liberal suburban households at the Cold War’s height, a younger generation of white liberals generated a comparatively less radical New Left political orientation than the Old Left had espoused. This younger generation focused on participatory democracy and allied with Black and Native groups' liberation struggles in the 1960s-1970s. Spurred on by direct interactions with the Nearings and the School of Living, these younger liberals turned away from New Left collective politics following a series

of disastrous socio-political events, including the People's Park riots, the assassinations of Martin Luther King Jr. and Robert Kennedy, the election of Richard Nixon, and the shootings at Kent State. Like generations before them, they turned to somewhat conservative republican ideas concerning the promise of rural land for those seeking to ensure independence and self-sufficiency.

There were, however, considerable differences between the third generation and its antecedents. As products of the counterculture and post-World War Two prosperity, the third generation formulated a back-to-the-land political and economic ideology that diverged from the back-to-the-land tradition significantly. Unlike the second generation's homestead land-trust schemes, third-wave communards drew on an imagined western egalitarian political style and – based on assumptions about technological development and the promise of a post-scarcity society – sought to create internal political cultures that fostered harmony, equality, and consensus by doing away with majoritarian democracy. In so doing, they reacted to the disintegration of the New Left coalition and turned inwards and away from mainstream collective political action. Along similar lines, third-generation communities like Alpha Farm and Twin Oaks were part of the larger development of hip consumer capitalism in the 1970s – an important continuation of the New Left's participatory politics that linked consumption of hip goods and services with socio-political support of liberal causes. However, by engaging in this novel economic practice, third generation back-to-the-landers ended up reinforcing post-World War Two trends towards a neoliberal consumer-driven economy rather than modeling a truly radical alternative to American capitalism.

Perhaps the most significant divergence between the generations concerned how the third generation framed going back to the land in racial terms. As we have seen, the countercultural

back-to-the-land movement drew on what its members considered to be premodern traditions ranging from the Scotch-Irish mountaineers to various Native American groups – both being traditions that the first and second generation had deemed beyond the pale. Following in a long settler tradition of defining whiteness in relation to non-white others, the third generation valorized Native groups and sought to emulate their perceived egalitarian, environmentally-conscious relationships with each other and the land. This was part of a much larger reconfiguration of whiteness in the 1960s and 1970s that also included conservative white Americans, but it did diverge from the second generation’s racist eugenic advocacy. As the products of liberal upbringings and experience supporting the Civil Rights movement and Native movements for self-determination, the third generation sought to create a more inclusive white identity. Yet, in believing that hybrid cultures could exist without actual cultural mediators, the third generation turned inward towards a New Age identity that forestalled meaningful interactions with Native groups and Native causes. Along similar lines, while the third generation did not adopt formal eugenics, it did share similar environmental and racial concerns about the threat of overpopulation in the developing world – a position that situates the third wave as a product of America’s post-World War Two rise as a world power.

In the end, my cousins and the wider fourth generation demonstrate an enduring impulse amongst white, middle-class Americans to reject urban space as a response to contemporary socio-political – and by the late twentieth century environmental – upheavals. While the white flight from cities over the course of the twentieth century has been an inherently self-limiting pursuit, the back-to-the-land endeavor has proven to be a surprisingly malleable cultural activity that offers antimodern dissenters – from a dizzying array of political perspectives – a way to envision social, cultural, and political alternatives to mainstream America. From Bolton Hall to

my aunt Jacque and Uncle Fred, white Americans have questioned modern society in an attempt to transform themselves, their communities, and, hopefully, mainstream society. Whether or not they have succeeded is a less important question than what their antimodern protests can tell us about the historical contexts that shaped them. More work needs to be undertaken on this most recent wave of right-leaning back-to-the-landers because, like their antecedents, their antimodern protests reveal a great deal about contemporary society and demonstrate that easy political binaries cloud our present – profoundly polarized – political landscape.

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