# FESTIVAL: COMMUNITY OR COMMUNE?

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Festival: Commune or Corporation

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# Abstract

The band Festival, established in 1971, proved to be a blending of communal living and pragmatic capitalist society. By examining the evolution of socialism since its founding including the shift into the basic tenets of Marxism in European society, one gains a greater understanding of the differences between American communitarian living and socialism in continental Europe. Festival combined elements of European socialism with the communitarian aspects of American separatist sects to create a unique corporate structure. The way members lived demonstrated a blend of ideals which took the strengths of both the capitalist and socialist systems and merged the two into a form which lasted until the twenty-first century. By conducting primary research with the band's newsletters as well as personal interviews, a complete picture may be constructed to illustrate whether members formed the structure out of idealism to the communal system or out of pragmatism to survive.

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David Struve

# The Question of Festival

In 1971, a group of students from Northwest Missouri State University formed a band named Festival. Originally created through a love of music and the desire to chase dreams, the band survived, expanded, and performed for nearly three decades. Despite their determined work and longevity, however, Festival's members never gained a massive following, nor achieved any measure of financial security, but left a fascinating example of how communal organizations could serve pragmatic economic needs without a radical political agenda.

Located on a small plot of land near Skidmore, Missouri, in the course of its history, Festival performed at three World's Fairs, played taps for the dedication of numerous monuments in Washington, D.C., released more than a dozen albums, and dedicated a decade of its members' careers to the cause of Vietnam Veterans and Prisoners of War. During the mid-1990s, the groups' members disbanded and traveled their separate ways, only meeting sporadically and never toured with each other again.

Yet perhaps as important as their multitude of achievements was the method in which it lived. Festival survived as a community, with members living together on the Farm (their name for the centralized living location). The arrangement seemed reminiscent of a commune, and some people in the surrounding region referred to Festival as such. Reactions to this mode of living illustrated the problematic distinctions between wide-ranging conceptions of the meaning of communal organization. Old performance reviews considered the members communists (to the extent that they lived communally on the same property). Yet Festival combined aspects of capitalism with

elements of communalism. For more than two decades, the group existed in a communal framework, not fully part of a business agreement, but also not a radically politicized community. Instead members lived as a pragmatic "family" with an agenda far more musical than political.

The nature of Festival can best be understood within the construct of the varied meanings of those ideas that begin with the root "commune," particularly those that outline the economic notion of "socialism." Since socialism stemmed from roots in European society, especially philosophical movements dating back to French philosophes and even to Aristotle, a brief study of those conceptual ideas created a framework to base future examples. Utilizing the basis of socialism at its founding also served to dispel the myths of either system (socialism or communism) as an evil. While many contemporary societies equate communism with the Soviet Union, the Cold War, and military strength, both "isms" existed decades and even centuries before military conflict between the East and West.

The primary ideal of socialism originated as a utopian world where each person received their basic needs. The radical version of Marxian socialism (named after its creator Karl Marx) formed at a later date, tainted opinions of socialism into a belief of transformation through revolution and societal upheaval. Yet these two different conceptions of socialism, one to create a perfect society and the other a more aggressive call-to-arms against capitalism, formed the bedrock of socialist theories. With American colonists and immigrants directly influenced by European cultures, the idea of social thought stopping at continental borders seemed ludicrous.

American utopian societies, however, showed a variety of aspects and differences from pure European socialist thought. Many formed as religious communitarian societies (living communally yet focusing on humanitarian and spiritual aspects rather than political ideology.) Because the earliest groups traveled to the colonies during the 1700s as separatist organizations, the majority introduced communal living not as a wish to overthrow capitalist systems or radical revolutionary practices, but as pragmatic methods of survival.

Each society sought to survive, and to do so required variations upon already established socialist theories. Members received the basic necessities of life (food, clothing, and shelter) in order to serve the community better, thus creating a utopian socialist society. Examining several different separatist groups created a set of rules and guidelines as well as a generalized framework for what constituted American communitarian societies.

This type of pragmatic communalism varied from the European models of socialism since members did not join for any political motivations, but out of necessity for survival. Comparing Festival to American communal societies which lasted more than two decades demonstrates that its nature bore little relationship to the ideological foundations of eighteenth-century thought, and far more kinship with American communal groups that served pragmatic, and usually economic, functions.

The chapters within this thesis approach the question of Festival's make-up through a systematic approach. Chapter one focuses on explaining the origins of socialism, seeking to elucidate the meaning of specific terms, and establishing the basis of how socialism changed and evolved throughout several centuries. Chapter two

examines the further shift from European ideals of socialism to Americanized communitarian societies. Using several long-lasting communes in the United States as a basis, one can understand the framework of pragmatism which drove many those societies and the combination of communal living with capitalist aims.

The third chapter examines Festival directly, and discovers why members lived communally. Since few people in the region remembered their accomplishments, the outlook also served as a method to rediscover a portion of history dangerously close to being lost. The original intent stemmed from a desire to create an oral history of Festival and allow the members to explain their side of events as well as dispel any misconceptions about the group while also recording individual stories and personal favorite moments.

The lifespan of Festival offers an intriguing narrative of a communal organization that lived along the boundaries of social terminology. As an organization who literally lived together as a communal "family" it suggested an ideological foundation that harmonized with the utopian vision of early European socialist, and later Marxist, thought. Its separateness from the norms of Northwestern Missouri, and the United States at large, begged this comparison, though it carried none of the other elements of Marxist radicalism. Political and economic evaluation aside, the story of Festival, a group that defied the odds of a collection of college friends from Northwest Missouri State University making their living for over two decades as a traveling band, deserves to be preserved and accurately recounted.

# Chapter 1:

## The Origins of Socialism

For several centuries, one of the most expansive and influential forces in the world has been the twin "isms," socialism and communism. Both brought changes in social structure, economics, and world policy which molded and shaped the bedrock of nation-states around the world. Despite the critical role each played in millions of lives, the vastly different ideologies from the capitalist West, as well as personal mantras, have led to a negative connotation and legacy which has tainted much of contemporary Western public opinion against the twin systems. Yet, in order to understand why socialism and communism spread so widely, and why they survived for such a lengthy period, one must understand what the two ideologies truly are, and why the West feared these revolutionary ideas.

Socialist thought began with roots in Western European utopian thought, stemming first from Aristotle and then the French philosophes of the enlightenment many centuries later. Yet that same vision transformed through the influx of Marxist reinterpretation in light of the ills of mechanized industrialization. Due to the influx of European culture, primarily English, on the North American continent, Americans adopted a wide variety of loosely utopian socialist ideals, often recast as religious movements, but Marxist radicalism shaped the reactions to these communal movements. Understanding the basis of socialist thought will facilitate the examination of Festival through socialist principles and theories to comprehend better if they follow the European model.

For millennia, the world has followed complex economic patterns. Early civilizations traded resources and basic goods to survive, and this system evolved, over time, into global trade among nations. As resources grew more plentiful, men and women specialized into certain professions. This adaptation to changing economics benefited societies, since a person could spend more time on a product, thus increasing its quality and value.

Yet a basic factor of chance was inherent in the pattern of technological evolution. Discoveries of new metals and expanding sciences created further needs which had not been required previously. The idea, termed "scarcity," explains that people possess unlimited wants, but only limited resources with which to fill them. The struggle of a society becomes, therefore, not to fill every possible want of every citizen, but to find the most effective way to fulfill the base needs of society as a whole as efficiently as possible.[1]

Following the rules of scarcity, the very land on which a person lived might have a, sometimes literal, goldmine in the ground which provided him/her with valuable tools and resources to barter and exchange. Also, different people had varying values of worth in a barter system, leading to unequal exchanges. Both expanding technology and unequal exchanges began to create a new system of unequal status and power. Those who owned more found it easier to expand their influence, lands, and wealth, further garnering extra lands with more resources in an ever-repeating cycle of proliferation.[2]

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[1] William J. Baumol and Alan S. Blinder, *Macroeconomics: Principles and Policy,* 12th Ed. (Mason, OH, 2011), 39.
[2] Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto* (Chicago, Charles H. Kerr & Company, 1906), 13.

This inequality spilled into castes and classes, where the upper tiers owned more than the lower, and could routinely count on the lower classes to provide manual labor in exchange for basic needs such as clothing, shelter, or protection. In order to keep a status quo and not lose their influence, or their wealth, those in the upper classes strove to prevent the lower classes from gaining power and rising as equals. Primarily achieved through low wages, but also lengthy workdays, taxes, and a lack of education ensured the prevention of a rising working class. Legal proceedings also worked to keep lower classes from rising in status or power, since most countries provided separate laws applying to the nobility and the peasantry.

By the medieval era, a specific term existed for men who possessed an abundance of wealth: the *bourgeoisie*. The term originally described citizens with enough wealth to live inside walled cities, but soon came to describe any banker, business owner, or guild leader. These men represented the elites of wealth, and existed in numerous forms throughout the centuries. In order to continue being competitive, however, the *bourgeoisie* needed to continue expanding its influence, both in available resources and in available markets. A key method of competition came from utilizing a more mechanized system to create goods. Technology equated to faster and more efficient methods of production while also allowing business owners to cut wages due to machines handling the difficult work, further promoting wealth inequality.[3]

Utopian Socialism, one of the earliest branches of socialism, sought to abolish the class structure and to spread resources, wealth, and opportunities equally. Citizens would receive the same housing, clothing, food, and luxury items while providing an equal amount of input into the system. An executive would theoretically then receive the same

[3] Marx and Engels, 14.

return for their labor as a worker who produced on the floor. Everyone would pay in equally to a socially held pool of resources and it would be redistributed according to need.

Socialists sought not only to remove class privileges, but the very idea of class distinction itself. Early socialists worked to erode the power of the industrialists and the *bourgeoisie* while strengthening and unifying workers.[4] Such a statement does not mean those early socialists targeted a particular class for emancipation, but wanted to free all classes at once from a society where only a select few held power and material wealth.

Originally, utopian socialists drew their influence from the ideals of the French philosophes, who in turn borrowed many of the Greek philosopher Aristotle's ideas. For this reason, socialists placed great importance on justice, logic, and reason. The ideas of rational government and rational society for all citizens appealed to them, and seemed to create a fairer society than the one which most citizens lived.[5]

While a noble goal, society was not able to sustain a reasonable government such as early socialists wanted. The French philosophes attempted to create one, and instead bore witness to the horror of the Reign of Terror and rise of Napoleon out of the ashes of a collapsed society. The idea of eternal peace instead transformed into the most brutal and bloody war ever known at that point. Attempting to "fix" government placed an emperor in power, and attempts to change social workings fared no better.[6] The French philosophers believed the best method to change society into a more equal and prosperous one involved removing guilds and other privileged companies. Instead, they

[4] Freiderich Engels, *Socialism, Utopia and Scientific,* trans. Edward Aveling (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Compay, 1907), 6.
[5] Engels, 7.
[6] Ibid., 9.

attempted to rid the entire economic system of its *bourgeois* influences, and caused a massive power vacuum which only aided those with wealth and power.[7] In short, the touted social revolution failed miserably when set into motion and it only opened a method for dictatorship to flower.

Yet France had not evolved through an industrial revolution when its citizens made the attempt. Centralizing workers into cities compacted economic and political power, which gave socialists key locations to spread ideas and reach as many people as possible in an extremely short span of time. Many socialists believed industry created the friction which leads to revolution as well as introducing the mechanical methods to sustain one because of the closeness of its workers and the methods of exchange.[8]

Ending the practice of selling oneself out piecemeal in order to survive in the world remained the primary goal of socialism, but a new generation of socialists advocated a different approach after witnessing the failures of the French Revolution. These new leaders admitted their socialist revolution would disrupt society, even going so far as to say the destruction of the *bourgeoisie* would create a chaotic society until men reached equality. They harbored no illusions of reason and justice prevailing over chaos and illogic nor of society being magnanimous and generous as wealth redistributed. Until a full redistribution of wealth could be attained, shortages and near anarchy would reign.

This reason is one of the primary ones the European elite feared a socialist revolution. The threat of a world devolving into chaos and anarchy, even if it be for a short amount of time, does little to persuade anyone to want such a change, especially if it involved the loss of one's lifestyle and fortune. While the final product would

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[7] Engels, 10.
[8] Marx and Engels, 28.

theoretically be a broad and selfless society, one where the prosperity of the whole represented the prosperity of all individuals and a systematic attempt to improve upon others, the transformation frightened the upper and middle classes, who began to demonize socialists and socialism by proxy.[9]

With the failure to create a social state in France, the individual state continued as in previous eras. Scarcity provided a continuation of circulating goods, but a global market caused demand for more products. The Industrial Revolution in Europe brought about an entirely new method of creating products more efficiently and changed the way societies viewed work.[10] Sensing an opportunity to take advantage of the sweeping changes in European life, socialists focused their attention on the mass mechanization of business in Europe.[11]

The Revolution engendered massive and unprecedented changes to nearly every industry in Europe and eventually much of the North American continent. Within only a few years, industrialists built large factories and work shifted from the home to a more recognizable and contemporary factory. Vast numbers of people flocked from farms and villages to the city in a historically unprecedented migration.

Technology may only evolve at certain speeds, however, due to limitations in available resources to continue inventing, as well as the human ingenuity. When technology failed to provide a new method of creating goods more efficiently and cheaper, it meant the working classes needed to manufacture goods either faster or for lengthier hours. In numerous instances, business owners forced workers to produce

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[9] Richard Theodore Ely, *Socialism: An Examination of its Nature, its Strengths and its Weaknesses, with Suggestions for Social Reform* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell & Company, 1894), *3.*
[10] Ibid., 50.
[11] Ibid., 107

cheaply by ignoring human physical limitations or even by removing basic safety devices to protect life or limb.

During the Industrial Revolution in Western Europe, working demographics shifted from primarily agrarian farming to an urban hourly wage in factories, which replaced working from home as the new method of production. Yet while men made up a portion of the workforce, factory owners primarily focused on hiring women and especially children. Children always constituted a major portion of the work in agrarian society when large families dominated due to the extreme amounts of physical labor and work to be done on a farm.[12] A lack of child labor laws meant business owners stipulated mandatory work days of twelve to fifteen hours at only one-sixth the pay of an adult man.

For many families, however, toiling in factories was the only option for their survival. Famines, including the Great Potato Famine in Ireland, as well as a series of poor harvests meant farmers needed different work to feed their families, and even a brutal life in the factories was better than death. Many also emigrated to the United States, spreading opinions and ideas from the European continent.

The wages did not enable a family to thrive, however, since so many people living in such close proximity created numerous problems. No safety regulations guided how landlords constructed homes, and multiple families often crowded into the same building for shelter, as well as to afford high rents. The overcrowding led to outbreaks of disease which killed thousands due to the inability to afford quality medical treatments. Low wages meant poor food quality, while farmers introduced new agricultural products the new crops cost a great deal of money and the working class did not often have a method

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[12] J.N. Hays, *The Burdens of Disease: Epidemics and Human Response in Western History* (Piscataway: Rutgers University Press, 1998), 108.

of purchasing them.[13] These conditions finalized the changes between the utopian socialism of the eighteenth century and the scientific socialism of the early nineteenth century onwards, though the beginning of scientific socialism did not mean the end of utopian socialism, merely a shift in thinking by newer generations to a more radical approach.

During the Industrial Revolution, owners introduced a clock into the workplace. The relatively simple addition upset centuries of tradition and custom as workers became beholden to an industrial routine of work, something extremely different from past experience for any of those employees. The resentment of laborers who either could not get work, or who lost jobs because of mechanization even caused rebellion and sabotage in the workplace.[14]

One of the foremost scientific socialists was Karl Marx. Born in 1818 to a middle-class, assimilated Jewish family, Marx strove to combine politics with philosophical movements, and moved to Paris in 1843 to further his studies. Any philosopher who felt unwelcome in their own nation in these years journeyed to France, and, much like only a half century before, spread their ideas in the cafés to anyone who would listen.[15]

Marx abhorred the idea of the French philosopher-style utopian society and wrote lengthy rebuttals against numerous Parisian philosophers touting the idea. Instead, Marx interwove philosophy, social politics, and economic theory into a single anti-capitalist critique. Rather than preaching on moral grounds against the individualist society, he

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[13] X. Frolich, "Buyer Be-Aware: The Ethics of Food Labelling Reform and 'Mobilising the Consumer,'" in *Global Food Security: Ethical and Legal Challenges*, ed. Carlos M. Romeo Casabona, Leire Escajedo San Epifanio, and Aitziber Emaldi Cirión (Wageningen: Wageningen Academic Publishers, 2010), 222.
[14] Kivisto, 14.
[15] Ibid., 18.

presented scientific evidence, creating an entire division of social theory, in his attempt to revolutionize society. Far from finding individualism evil, Marx saw it as a natural progression of society into a new system, one which evolved past the need for scarcity.[16]

Scientific socialism, also referred to as Marxian socialism, created logical bridges between traditional doctrine (the way people always accomplished goals) and new tactics.[17] Marx asserted that societies throughout history strove to emancipate themselves from being exploited by a series of revolutions.[18] In explaining his economic theory, Marx differentiated between "value in use" (anything which has value yet is basically free, much like oxygen or water) and "value in exchange" (anything which is only valuable because a person may get something for the original item, for example gold or silver). He continues by explaining people have an inherent value of exchange in their labor, something which possesses little value unless traded for another item.[19] The theory met with extreme criticism, but remained a core component of Marxian socialism.

Marx simply claimed labor was a foundation of value, and made no differentiation between types. In essence, Marx argued, the Industrial Revolution engendered an era when workers lost their individuality and only felt free while accomplishing basic activities such as eating or drinking.[20]

The lack of individuality in the workplace therefore led to people striving to find it at home and led to a rise of selfishness, isolation, or a general lack of empathy towards other people. Far from wanting utopian socialism in which all participants reached

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[16] Kivisto, 20.
[17] Hendrik de Man, *The Psychology of Marxian Socialism* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1928), 20.
[18] James Boyle, *What is Socialism?: And Exposition and Criticism with Special Reference to the Movement in America and England* (New York: The Shakespeare Press, 1912), 137.
[19] Ibid., 143.
[20] Kivisto, 21.

equality, Marx wanted a system where workers received fair value for their labor. He believed workers could only be granted this fair value by communal ownership of every stage of manufacturing: production, distribution, and exchange. Capitalism thrives on making surplus profits by cutting costs in any (or all) of those three stages.

This variation between laborers' exchange value and what owners paid them (their use value) was the key principle of Marxian socialism. He argued workers should not work for ten hours when they earned their exchange value back in only five. The extra five hours are surplus profit for the owner. Yet Marx did not want to destroy capital itself, just capitalism. By collectivizing and having the workers own all stages of production laborers avoided exploitation, receiving the full reward of their work.[21]

Marx's solution flies against utopian socialism since everyone will not be equal, and even against state socialism (where the state owns and operates business, but the factories are not held by the public). Therefore, all instruments of labor should be available to everyone. Any raw materials, methods of transporting goods, or even the finished goods needed to be publically owned.[22]

Rather than use capital, Marx wanted to utilize labor. In theory, each worker would receive a voucher for the number of hours he/she worked in a given day and use it to redeem for the goods they wanted. Much like utopian socialism, this system has a number of inherent flaws, though its primary one is the focus on Marx's theory of an object always having a set value without any regard for the scarcity of a product.

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[21] Boyle, 149.
[22] Alfred Naquet, *Collectivism and the Socialism of the Liberal School: A Criticism and an Exposition* (London: Swan Sonnenschein & Co., 1891), 10.

Marxian socialism ignores this basic law of economics and assigns a set value to any object regardless of its rarity.[23]

Secondly, Marx himself could not explain how he intended society to transform to a collectivist system. The basic formula for a successful collectivist revolution came from Ernest Untermann, editor of the first three American edition volumes of Marx's pamphlet *Capital*. His "plan" relied on a systematic uprising to take over political control of a nation, create sweeping changes to an economic system dating back millennia, combine the economic and political system into a single conglomeration, and transform the new combined system into a collectivist one. Any single one of those steps would require a massive undertaking, yet Marxian socialists required each one to work perfectly or the entire collectivization plan would fall apart.

A final flaw comes from the argument that not all physical labor is equal. Under Marxian socialism, a person who labored in a mine for an hour (a notoriously dangerous job during his time) and a person working on a farm for an hour (still laborious, but far safer) generated the same one-hour voucher. There was no incentive to perform dangerous tasks when simpler and safer ones provided the same reward.[24]

Society, however, requires dangerous tasks to continue running. Contemporary society still utilizes coal, and miners continue to face dangerous conditions to acquire it. With no added incentives to procure certain goods, society either evolves or falls apart. While Marx took steps to spread his ideas through books and pamphlets, the theories did not sway the average worker in large numbers due to their abstract nature. Also, capitalists condemned the ideals of Marxian socialists, as well as any socialists, since

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[23] Naquet, 11.
[24] Ibid., 14.

accepting any of their policies would mean the destruction of their fortunes as well as the inability to continue with their work.

To take political control, socialist radicals attempted rebellions, tried to unify workers into revolution, or thrust themselves into political matters by military force. Radical socialists also viewed high-ranking capitalists as targets for assassination. While not all socialists wanted to kill capitalist leaders, the attempts soured many peoples' opinion on socialism and spread uncertainty as well as fear throughout entire countries.

Even as socialism continued to spread tendrils throughout Europe, many of its ideals spread to America through immigration and the influence that the European thought and politics showed in shaping colonial American life. Most early settlements focused on profitable ventures, but several sought to escape persecution among protestant Christian denominations and created utopian societies in North America. Known as utopian or communitarian societies, these separatist settlements rejected individualism in order to focus on rationalism, respect, and fellowship. People who joined the sects sought to avoid the changes occurring in society by coming together with like-minded members.[25]

Because of the focus on morals and fellowship, the earliest communitarian settlements developed around Christian doctrines. While few, if any, of the founders of the communitarian societies read about utopian socialism, their rejection of individualism, utilization of communal land ownership, and acceptance of some gender equality showed numerous similarities to the French philosophes and the foundations of

[25] Philip Selznick, "The Jurisprudence of Communitarian Liberalism," in *Communitarianism in Law and Society* (19 – 32), ed. Paul van Seters (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2006), 20.

utopian socialism. These separatists created societies to be a center of virtue, education, and joy through religious life.[26]

Marxian socialism only spread to America in 1850, when German citizens who associated with Marx immigrated to the United States and became active in the German-American labor movements. Citizens who knew of socialism as the communitarian societies such as the Labadists or Shakers, positively received separatist communities, experienced the more radical version of socialism which called for the overthrow of capitalism and the downfall of the *bourgeoisie*.[27]

Rather than withdrawing from perceived evils of society as communitarian sects attempted, the new Marxian socialists in America called for overthrow, rebellion, and revolution. This more aggressive approach sparked numerous political movements and rallies to spread word of socialism in America, especially by the early 1900s where nearly every socialist ideology discussed publically stemmed from Marx and the more radical forms of socialism.[28] The desire to rid the nation of capitalism and replace it with socialism contrasted sharply with Americans' previous experiences with the separatist communitarian societies and their restructured version of utopian socialism.

Marxian socialism, while aggressively pushed onto immigrants, never became immensely popular in American society and remained a vocal minority. Explaining the *bourgeois* industrialists wished to remove workers' freedoms became a difficult task when every American man possessed the right to vote in governmental elections. At the height of its power in the United States, the American Socialist Party (which touted the

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[26] Albert Fried, *Socialism in America: From the Shakers to the Third International, A Documentary History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 6.
[27] Ira Kipnis, *The American Socialist Movement 1897 – 1912* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004), 6.
[28] Ibid., 4.

radical Marxian socialism) only received dues from one hundred fifty thousand members, and managed one million votes for Eugene Debs when he ran for President on a socialist platform in 1920, garnering fewer than 6% of the popular vote.[29]

The same message of radical revolution which alienated middle- and upper-class citizens in Europe failed to spark revolution and rebellion in America. Marxian socialists gained a following and elected legislators to governmental positions, but did not succeed in their loftiest goals. An unfortunate side effect of their message, however, came from Americans associating socialism with the radical Marxists. This stigma gradually soured much of public opinion against socialism as a whole in the United States, especially against communitarian societies due to their isolation and separatist nature.

The demonization of socialism in western culture stemmed from numerous reasons. The high profile failure of the French Revolution, especially after the explanation of turning society into a logical and equal society through elements of utopian socialism led to a more radical and aggressive version of socialism. This new form called for revolution and the further disruption of established societal norms, leading to a mistrust and even outright fear of socialism by European governments and elite businessmen.

American colonies, being founded and influenced by European nations, imported elements of European culture, including the communal elements of utopian socialism during the seventeenth century such as the communitarian Labadist movement. While keeping the basic elements of utopian living, these separatist movements adapted to life away from a modern European society and needed to become pragmatic to survive in the colonies. Communal living and equality helped to keep members focused on the good of

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[29] Kipnis, 5.

the whole rather than the individual, and religious aspects reinforced the moral standards those societies instilled amongst themselves.

The rise of Marxian socialism in Europe eventually led to it spreading to America due to immigration, and exposed the nation to the revolutionary call. Since earlier American communes lived separate from society, many peoples' first experiences with socialism came from the belligerent new form, which led to the association of socialists as a whole wanting to bring down capitalism, being radical revolutionaries, and seeking to disrupt society.

Despite the existence of several successful and peaceful communitarian societies in America from the 1700s until modern day, such as the Shakers, Labadists, and Oneida Community, people continue to distrust separatist movements and associate them with extreme socialists. Far from being radical sectors of socialism, however, American utopian societies shared only certain elements with utopian socialism, and proved to be far more pragmatic about their beliefs than their European counterparts.

## Chapter 2:

## The Successes and Failures of American Utopian Societies and Communes

Long thought to be a nation filled with opportunity and hope, America was home to millions of immigrants from dozens of nations throughout its history. The appeal of free land, abundant resources, or even the ability for a person to start their life over brought people of all status and creeds to the North American continent. Not all of them succeeded, some lost finances and others their lives, but immigrants continued to hold America in high regard as a second chance for their dreams.

These immigrants wished to create a paradise, not out of fire and flame like the French Revolution of 1798 or the Russian Revolution of 1917, but out of hard work and co-existence. Those citizens sought what they could not have in their own country, a freedom to act as they wished without oppression levied against them. The societies ranged from Christian sects who wanted to worship in their own manner to socialist gatherings who refused the revolutionary method so many European radicals attempted. By understanding the framework and the rationale by which these Americanized communitarian societies lived one may create a comparison with Festival, while also comprehending how communal societies in the United States changed socialist theories.

Since the seventeenth century, people created small sects in the North American countryside. Successful sects maintained effective and controlled leadership, created a system to replace members who left their society, and stated a clearly defined goal for any future endeavors. Sects failed due to a lack of decisive leadership, division within the sect, and lack of foresight to adapt to societal changes. Examining three types of sect;

utopian societies/communitarian societies, American communes, and cults as well as the internal relationship between the three will create a better understanding of how Americans adapted European ideals of utopian socialism into a uniquely American practical form.

Utopian societies/communitarian societies, hereafter referred to as utopian societies, appeared throughout Europe for millennia; though citizens created them primarily from the seventeenth century onwards as an attempt to emulate the Apostolic Church (early churches run by Jesus's disciples). The sects faced persecution for any beliefs differing from the Catholic Church or the dozens of differing Protestant denominations, but increased in number by the nineteenth century.

These societies attempted to provide a solace from the new changes sweeping world culture and how new technology uprooted established cultural norms. Europeans fled from the upheaval caused by the Industrial Revolution, turning to like-minded people to create their own groups which continued to live and work without the benefit of new machines. Radical socialists wanted to change society's course by political or military revolutions, yet many people held the hope that by living their lives peacefully and demonstrating how a small community succeeded, societies would notice and attempt to change.[30]

People in the societies strove to create communities with equality of sex, nationality, and color, often with incredible success within their collective. Some attempted to remove private property, others rid their group of slavery to boost equality

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[30] Mark Halloway, *Utopian Communities in America: 1680 – 1880* (Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 1966), 18.

and spread toleration. Each met with a measure of success, but only a select few managed to survive for more than a handful of years.[31]

The Labadists, named after its Dutch founder Jean de Labidie and one of the first American communes, settled in Maryland in 1683 after gaining success and popularity in Holland. The founding members worked hard, raising flax, corn, hemp, and tobacco, and created a financially stable and economically sound community. Wanting to add to their numbers, the Labadists quickly established rules to differentiate their settlement from others and permitted marriage only within the commune. The marriages allowed children to be born without original sin, a tempting offer for the time, as well as far different from typical Christian doctrine.[32] While the commune gained in population, at the height of its power, only one hundred members lived in Maryland.

Anyone joining the Labadists donated their earthly possessions and funds into a communally-held pool reminiscent of utopian socialism. Members who left the commune received nothing and could not rejoin. Since the commune prospered financially, however, few complained about needing to give up individual liberties or material comforts. To spread the feelings of unity and equality, members ate together and chanted as other passed out bland food so as not to excite members' palettes. Leaders forbade anything but spontaneous prayer as the meal continued, however, and men and women ate separately.[33]

As the Labadists grew in size, one member, Peter Sluyter, rose to a position of power and acted as a dictator. He ensured members did not eat more than their fair share by keeping strict records of how much each person consumed, going so far as to note

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[31] Halloway, 21.
[32] Ibid., 35.
[33] Ibid., 35.

each piece of bread and butter eaten by each member during mealtimes, though he did not follow his own restrictions. Despite restricting members from building fires, he kept one burning in his own home, forbade the smoking of tobacco while doing so himself, and eventually entered into the slave trade where he became a notoriously brutal master.[34]

Sluyter convinced the Labadists to break their agreements and divide the previously communal property into private ownership. He placed a large amount of the property under his control and amassed a fortune through selling cash crops in the colonies until his death in 1722. The Labidist experiment in America failed in 1727.[35]

The commune failed for a number of reasons. Originally, the group worked as a solidified unit, sharing equally in labor and reward. While they employed leaders who distributed punishments, no single member received more than his/her fair share. The original deed granted the Labadist colony 3,750 acres of land, an extremely generous grant by Augustine Hermann. The colonists built the commune along four necks of land, which, under the laws of the Labadists, the colonists shared equally. Since only one hundred workers resided on the parcel, much of the land remained wild.[36] On its own, the unused land created no problems, but once combined with Sluyter's ambition, problems arose.

Rather than waiting to use the land, Sluyter convinced members to raise tobacco on it to earn greater profits. Growing tobacco was an extremely arduous process, however, and the commune held too few members to raise the crop successfully. In order to continue growing foodstuffs for sustenance as well as taking advantage of peoples'

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[34] Halloway, 36.
[35] Ibid., 36.
[36] Bartlett Burleigh James, *The Labadist Colony in Maryland* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1899), 38.

love for smoking, the commune required extra labor. Again sacrificing and breaching their code, the American branch of Labadists bought slaves to work their plantations.[37]

When the head of the Labadist movement heard of Sluyter's actions, he ordered Sluyter to leave America and return to Holland with all haste. Sluyter ignored the order, proclaiming God did not wish him to do so, and also arguing that the head of the church in Holland no longer spoke for God.[38]

The failure of the commune stemmed largely from Sluyter's manipulation of the people. He helped found the colony, so his word carried a great deal of import, yet the members granted him far more power than anyone else in the group. Because the Labadist leadership remained in Holland, by members acknowledging Sluyter's influence, they placed him into a de facto position as leader in the colonies. By stressing he wanted only what was best for the group as a whole, financial security and spiritual enlightenment, the decision to support him appeared harmless.[39]

In allowing Sluyter to accumulate power until he caused commune's collapse, the members created a shift from referent power to coercive power. The referent power ensured Sluyter stayed in power through respect, yet he eventually seized power and shifted to coercive as the sole person able to administer punishments. Members no longer looked to him with respect, but rather out of fear or because they were manipulated.[40]

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[37] James, 39.
[38] Lucy Forney Bittinger, *The Germans in Colonial Times* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippencott Company, 1900), 41.
[39] Peter Guy Northouse, *Leadership: Theory and Practice* 5th Edition (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, Inc., 2010), 3.
[40] Ibid., 9.

This understanding of leadership provides a key point for whether a commune or utopian society succeeded. When the group worked together, the common goals eliminate rivalries. Workers shared in the labor only as long as the reward remains equal. By granting himself special privileges Sluyter set himself apart from the rest of his fellow members and opened an insurmountable gap which destroyed the Labadist movement in America.

While the Labadists failed, another utopian society, the Shakers, succeeded in neighboring New York. The first Shakers came to America in 1774 and settled on two hundred acres of land called Niskeyuna, near present-day Albany, after a nearly fatal sea voyage. Originally from England, Shakers believed the kingdom of Christ already existed and mankind needed only to live in a way which freed them to partake of it.[41]

As is common with most utopian societies, the Shakers succeeded in the early months of life at Niskeyuna. They worked together to clear the land, drain water, clear the forests, and erect buildings. Basic survival needs trumped any other issues, and practicality allowed them to unite under a mantra of hard physical labor for survival.[42]

Their work in improving the land (as well as several who worked trades such as blacksmithing, weaving, and shoemaking in New York to provide small incomes) allowed the settlement to grow, and they raised the first frame house in 1779. It burned to the ground within a short time and forced the Shakers to band together even further to recoup their losses.[43]

[41] Stephen Paterwic, *Historical Dictionary of the Shakers* (Lanham, Scarecrow Press Inc., 2008), XXV.
[42] Edward Deming Andrews, *The People Called the Shaker: A Search for the Perfect Society* (Toronto: General Publishing Company Ltd., 1953), 16.
[43] Ibid., 17.

Despite several members working for wages in order to improve the group, Shakers routinely refused wages and did not utilize them for their own daily work. As separatists from the Anglican Church, they wished to prove the colony at Niskeyuna could flourish under God's grace rather than financial gain. To ensure monetary influence did not destroy the colony, the Shakers lived much as a monastic order, focusing on a union of purpose rather than any economic theory. Members donated any funds they received, and utilized the surplus capital to improve the colony in ways everyone enjoyed and used.[44]

Furthering their unity, the Shakers kept a number of doctrines which ensured none of them rose above the others. Members divided and rotated labor, creating an apprentice system so everyone eventually received the same training and could theoretically work at any job necessary to the greater good. The Shakers acknowledged a person might have a natural talent for a particular task and allowed them to specialize. Having status did not exempt anyone from physical labor, and even spiritual leaders participated in work with their hands, considering it part of their sacred privilege and a test of faith.[45]

Shakers believed in equality, and elevated members to the same rank regardless of gender. While the idea could be taken as simplistic by contemporary standards, granting women the same rights and responsibilities men commanded in the late 1770s was a revolutionary and radical practice.

The final tenets of the society existed in the way workers produced goods. The Shakers created a creed of perfectionism which permeated their entire group. If anyone made a good with the intent of selling it, the finished product needed to represent the best

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[44] Edward Deming Andrews and Faith Andrews, *Work and Worship Among the Shakers* (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1974), 8.
[45] Andrews, 9.

efforts of whomever crafted it. Because of this internal creed, the Shakers commanded excellent prices for their goods. Unlike the Labadists a single person did not hold onto all finances, however, and multiple high-ranking spiritual deacons appointed by the bishop of the church provided the power of the purse.[46]

Having no members in full control of money, and requiring everyone to share in the same work meant the Shakers continued working for common goals and avoided the pitfall the Labadists made with Sluyter. Men and women rose to the rank of deacon by attaining spiritual knowledge, but attaining a position did not exempt anyone from physical labor. Those who became elders or furthered their ministry received special dispensations to work in certain shops, but Shaker rules first necessitated skill in hand labor as a test of character. Members refused anyone believed to be lacking in work ethic the right to become a deacon, elder, or minister.[47]

The Shaker's longevity separates their society from other American utopian societies. The Labadist movement survived for forty-four years in America, but Shaker communities survived for over more than hundred years with three members still following their tenets in 2012. Perhaps accidentally, since none of the founding members of the Shakers knew about other religious colonial movements, the group managed to create a society which blended the principals of socialism and capitalism, combining the two into a successful enterprise.[48] Providing everyone with a job was a characteristic of a socialist system, but the profit and reinvestment into the whole society shows distinctly capitalist elements also inherent in Shaker society.

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[46] Andrews, 9.
[47] Ibid., 45.
[48] Ibid., 45.

As time passed for the Shakers, more capitalist elements entered their society. Families bought and sold goods from other families, trading either with coin or other bartered goods. Despite growing apart and spreading from a single faction into a group of organized families, the Shakers continued to hold onto the Christian ethics which led them to America. Any member meeting difficulty or hardship encountered numerous blessings and gifts from other Shakers until times improved, such as aid for barn raisings or when fire destroyed homes.[49]

Throughout its history, the Shaker organization never contained many people, due in no small part to its complete rejection of intercourse and procreation.[50] Between 1806 and 1824, when seven new Shaker settlements began in Kentucky, Indiana, and Ohio, the movement consisted of approximately 3,500 people. At the height of their popularity, Shakers founded two more communities in New York (bringing the total to more than a dozen settlements) with over 4,500 people spread throughout Shaker society.[51]

The reason for the Shakers' eventual dissipation came from changes in economics and technology. An agrarian community focusing on a tradition of handmade goods served the settlements well in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, but the changing American economic climate and heavy industrialization caused more goods to enter the market thus lowering prices since supply outpaced demand. The dedication to physical labor equated to an aversion of industrialization, and lower output by the entire community leading to a flagging agrarian sector for the Shakers, and one which could not compete with the technologically advancing outside world.[52]

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[49] Andrews, 46.
[50] Flo Morse, *The Shakers and the World's People* (United States: Dodd Mead & Company, 1980), 6.
[51] Paterwic, XVIII.
[52] Ibid., XXVI.

Following the American Civil War (1860 – 1865), the Shaker movement collapsed both from internal and external issues. With the war disrupting the entire nation, several members of the Shaker leadership defected from the order, taking wealth with them. Despite the betrayal of several trustees, the Shakers invested well through their near century of existence to survive the loss of monetary wealth, and could have restored themselves to previous levels except for external issues. Westward expansion, cheap land, and shifting markets from the war led to fewer people looking at the small settlements in New York or the products produced in their shops despite the high quality. With fewer people buying their goods, individual Shakers left the collective to travel west and take advantage of the changing landscape.[53]

While Shaker tradition created unity, their leadership placed too much importance on tradition the group faces the risk of stagnation. By focusing so heavily on tradition, and how elder members accomplished tasks, newer generations did not advance. Honoring past traditions, and those who came before, provided role models for youth to emulate, yet the Shakers refused to adapt to a changing economy and shifting technology. Defined economically, the Shakers created a highly inefficient society. Compared to other production sources, their workers spent more time on a single project which detracted from their eventual gain. Laborious input exceeded the profitable export, driving prices up which ruined competitive interaction in the market.[54]

Originally the Shakers succeeded because of their adherence to tradition, yet eventually the tradition led to stagnation, and the flexibility of youthful membership

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[53] Paterwic, XXVI.

[54] C.A. Knox Lovell "Production Frontiers and Productive Efficiency," in *The Measurment of Productive Efficiency: Techniques and Applications*, Harold O. Fried, C.A. Knox Lovell, and Shelton S. Schmidt (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 4.

instead became a liability as the youngest left and travelled elsewhere. From these two societies, therefore, four key elements can be extrapolated. To succeed, a utopian society needs a system of unity (whether through shared experiences or tradition), equality among all members, a way to replenish their ranks (new members generally bring new ideas and prevent stagnation as well as replacing those who leave), and a hierarchy which prevents a single member from gaining coercive power (the shared work system for example).

Another commune emerged even as the Shaker movement began to crumble, forming first as an economic entity in 1841 and finally as a full community in 1844.[55] Founded by John Humphrey Noyes and his family during the second great era for American communes, the first being in the 1820s, the Putney Community originally resided in three buildings and consisted of twenty-eight adults and nine children living near the city of Putney, Vermont. In a change from the way the Labadists and Shakers ran their organizations, the Putney Community removed democracy from their ranks almost immediately, allowing John Noyes to run a theocracy and providing him with coercive power from the start.[56]

Noyes ran Putney with a series of policies which allowed no arguments. Men and women shared living quarters, though their daily tasks followed the typical pattern of men working in the fields or shops and women tending housework or educating children in a provided schoolhouse. When two members married each other rather than have Noyes choose their mates for them he expelled the pair for not asking his permission to marry. Several families refused to submit to Noyes's rule despite placing him in his

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[55] Marian Lockwood Carden, *Oneida: Utopian Community to Modern Corporation* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 18.
[56] Ibid., 19.

position and nine families left the community within the first two years. Noyes allowed them to take any possessions they donated to the cause, and gave one hundred dollars to those who had nothing.[57]

Members leaving the community so soon after its founding appeared to bode ill for its survival, but in actuality Noyes did not worry about the departures. Rather than force them to stay and invite division within the group from the beginning, he separated those who wished to stay from those who did not. In his mind, those who left would have caused problems in future endeavors, and he believed they could not be completely faithful. His ideas proved to be correct and out of the nineteen adults who continued to live at Putney, sixteen remained until death or dissolution in 1880.[58]

Those who followed Noyes believed the message he preached. Early in his life, he attended several colleges (including Dartmouth, Andover Theological Seminary, and the Yale Theological College) before questioning religious doctrine and changing his belief to that of perfectionism, the idea of living one's entire life without sin. His argument centered around having free will, which stemmed from God and therefore created independent and perfect will. After he began preaching his new belief, the seminary revoked his ministerial license.[59]

With a group of devoted members, Noyes worked to expand and define what the Putney community stood for. By 1846, Noyes and his followers agreed on communal ownership of property as well as a policy of "free love" where members ignored the concept of sexual exclusiveness among individuals. More than any other feature of the

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[57] Carden, 20.
[58] Ibid., 21.
[59] Allan Estlake, *The Oneida Community: A Record of an Attempt to Carry Out the Principles of Christian Unselfishness and Scientific Race-Improvement* (London: Harvard College Library, 1900), 19.

Putney commune, Noyes ideals on sexual freedom separated its members from any other American society.[60]

Noyes and his followers rejected the term "free love," however, and instead called the sexual freedom "complex marriage." The key aspect of this social control came from the idea of ascent and descent where younger men lay with older women while younger women lay with older men since elder members possessed more spirituality and remained beneficial influences on younger generations. The practice also ensured a measure of population control since young men generally consummated their ascension with women no longer able to conceive. To prevent pregnancy, older men practiced a self-control method which stipulated men should not have an orgasm.[61]

Critics of the Putney commune argued the sexual freedom stemmed from men wishing to take advantage of younger women, but Noyes created a system to dissuade such comments. Any sexual encounters necessitated a third party as mediator, and he permitted young members to refuse any offers. Those living at the commune argued the social system facilitated honoring elder members and placed authority in their hands. Noyes himself differentiated between two separate types of sexual encounters, clarifying he wished for those at his commune to practice amative intercourse (sexual encounters designed for increasing sociality) over propagative intercourse (sexual encounters for procreation and having children). He encouraged members to commit to a "joyful act of fellowship" which served the corporate mission.[62]

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[60] Victor Hawley, *Special Love / Special Sex: An Oneida Community Diary,* ed. Robert S. Fogerty (United States: Jon Ben Snow Foundation, 1994), 7.
[61] Ibid., 8.
[62] Ibid., 8.

Despite having his own laws in the commune, Noyes's activities attracted the attention of the Windham County police after Noyes celebrated the birth of twins fathered with a mate from Putney rather than his wife. Officials arrested Noyes and charged him with adultery on October 26, 1847. Rather than face charges, the Putney commune members fled to New York where they resettled as the Oneida commune. Somewhat surprisingly, no members left the commune during the shift from Putney to Oneida. Rather than splintering, changing location invigorated the society and changed them from a series of Putney citizens and biblical perfectionists to a fully cohesive community specializing in biblical communism and utopian beliefs.[63]

Noyes began preaching and recruiting new members shortly after the commune settled in New York. In May of 1848 the Oneida commune housed fifty-one members, but Noyes continued recruiting young men and women to create a loyal core. He strived to bring productive members, however, avoiding the stagnation which so fractured the Shakers. Instead, the Oneida commune accepted men and women from all states, though New Yorkers represented approximately 40% of new members, numerous Christian denominations, and multiple professions.[64]

Anyone who joined the commune lived in a single, large building designed by Noyes himself to foster the spirit of togetherness. Everyone ate together in a dining hall and enjoyed the services of libraries, picnic grounds, and workers even built a concert hall to showcase the members' love of the arts.[65]

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[63] Hawley, 12.
[64] Ibid., 15.
[65] William W. Zellner, *Extraordinary Groups: An Examination of Unconventional Lifestyles,* 7th ed (New York: Worth Publishers, 2001), 60.

The sexual freedom of the Oneida colony continued, but barely factored into recruitment and never became used as the sole method of convincing new members. Noyes himself spoke eloquently, almost certainly a result of his training in the seminary, and succeeded in convincing many people to join the commune. His message of absolution from sin, perfected after years of theological arguments with other clergy, resonated with those seeking a new start or even answers to religious questions.

Once a member joined, however, Noyes expected him/her to adhere to the commune's rules. The Oneida women banned tobacco, unhappy with its smell and the double-standard of allowing only men to smoke. Members also ate little meat or spicy food, much as the Labadists, forbade coffee or tea, and showed as few displays of public affection as possible to prevent embarrassment from outsiders who might see. Members almost immediately needed to change their language and ceased saying "I," replacing the word with a more communal "we."[66]

Men, especially young adults, adopted an overly critical nature of themselves after joining the commune. Far from negative feedback, however, the criticism became a tool for self-improvement, where members encouraged each other to work on their flaws by fostering a need to better oneself. No member achieved true perfection, a goal which is noble yet arguably impossible, but the effort provided a zealous support base all of whom became highly skilled at whatever task they approached since the stigma of failure did not permeate mistakes due to inexperience.[67]

As more members joined, Noyes relaxed his coercive power and allowed a shift to more communal control. He created a series of committees and departments to handle

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[66] Estlake, 66.
[67] Zellner, 67.

issues (ranging from the style of haircuts to dentistry) allowing everyone to voice their opinion. Bureaucracy, however, forced decisions to a near stand-still with many committees taking years to pass changes, such as one which spent three years before finally accepting strawberry leaves as a suitable medium for brewing tea.[68]

In order to pay for its survival, the community spent several years focusing on different industries. They crafted an agrarian sector first which, after several initial failures, provided enough food to comfortably feed all members yet failed to sell their goods on an open market. Eventually, the commune accepted Sewell Newhouse, a trapper by trade, and started manufacturing his specific brand of animal trap. Sales skyrocketed, and within twenty years the community manufactured 300,000 per year, requiring outside labor to meet with the demand in the United States and Canada. In 1877, the community began manufacturing silverware, one of its most famous contemporary products.[69]

In 1879, Noyes announced his first major decision to change the community. The Oneida colony ceased practicing the complex marriage system of free love, substituting celibacy or marriage. Anyone residing at Oneida continued to eat communally and shared property, but the decision introduced individualism into communal living.[70]

Sixteen months later, on January 1, 1881, the Oneida colony agreed to change from communal property peaceably to a joint-stock company, ending the founding community aspect of the sect, and replacing it with a capitalist venture. Noyes offered members the choice of a two-hundred-dollar annuity and guarantees for medical care in

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[68] Zellner, 63.
[69] Ibid., 73.
[70] William Alfred Hinds, *American Communities and Co-operative Colonies* (Chicago: William H. Kerr & Company, 1908), 213.

times of need or stock options.[71] The Oneida Corporation continues to produce silverware in 2012, validating Noyes's decision to focus on a business enterprise.

As one of the more successful communes in America, Oneida survived and adapted to a number of issues which destroyed other utopian societies. Members believed the same ideals, maintained strong leadership, created a system for replacements, and prevented stagnation from destroying them.[72]

Though vastly different in a number of key areas, cults show many aspects communes and utopian societies share. Typically, cults focus on a single charismatic leader, a common belief system (founded or embellished upon by the leader), numerous members, and a very high level of social cohesiveness.[73]

Cults utilize the same style of communal living upon which utopian societies thrived, and place similar emphasis on members relating to each other as family. Cults, as an outgrowth of sects, tend to follow the same belief system as utopian societies, but place more emphasis on the end times, apocalypse, or ascension than other utopian groups. Rather than showing how diligent work and dedication to beliefs improve society, cults seek to take a select few to a promised reward after death.[74] Once a member joins a cult, extracting himself/herself proves to be much more difficult than with a commune or utopian society.

Jonestown, one of the most (in)famous cults, existed from 1950 until 1978 and was named for its founder, Jim Jones. Raised in an extremely poor region of Indiana, and developed a mentality against class systems due to the negative treatment he received

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[71] Hinds, 216.
[72] Ibid., 221.
[73] Marc Galanter, ed., *Cults and New Religious Movements: A Report of the American Psychiatric Association*, (United States: American Psychiatric Association, 1989), 25.
[74] Ibid., 25.

during school. His growing hatred for class-based systems led to him learning about and idolizing Josef Stalin (the leader of the Soviet Union during World War II) for defeating the Nazis and standing against capitalism.[75]

In an attempt to escape poverty, Jones became a reverend. Despite preaching a radical style of Christianity (eventually culminating in sermons dedicated to the apocalypse and survivors creating a socialist utopia) Jones managed to gather a number of followers and form his own sect of zealous listeners. The group originated as three separate organizations: first, in 1950, the People's Temple, a Christian organization devoted to healing services, free meals for underprivileged people, and caring for the elderly. The second group originated when Jones took the People's Temple to California in 1965 and recreated the same ideals he utilized in Indiana to recruit new members. The final group constituted members from the Urban Black Church of California. Jones actively sought to add from minorities in California to bridge the gap between spiritualist church traditions and concrete action.[76]

The majority of Jones's members came from lower-class families, or low socioeconomic standing. Far from the stereotypical view of members joining cults due to brainwashing or peer pressure, many joined Jonestown for the completely rational and understandable reasons of economic advancement and accomplishing good works.[77]

While in California, Jones and his followers managed to develop a close relationship with several organizations and religious orders. Since the People's Temple allowed members of all races and belief systems, Jones created close connections with

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[75] John Hall, *Gone From the Promised Land: Jonestown in American Cultural History* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2004), 13.
[76] Mary McCormick Maaga, *Hearing the Voices of Jamestown* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998), 81.
[77] Ibid., 82.

Muslims, Jews, homosexuals and racial leaders to combat the racism his own people suffered while living and working in Los Angeles.[78] While he did not have a full commune, some ideals of utopian societies such as equality combined with Christian doctrine and led to treating minorities extremely well.

As time passed within the People's Temple, however, Jones accumulated more power and began to demand several concessions. Members no longer donated portions of their property and wealth, but needed to provide both in their entirety to the sect, which Jones controlled. Rumors leaked about Jones's directives and allowances to beat one's spouse, sexually degrade members, or beat children for misbehaving until unconsciousness.[79]

To escape the rumors, as well as to create a more communist style of life, Jones led his followers to Guyana in 1977 and founded the community of Jonestown. On November 18, 1978, the allegations of criminal wrongdoing and kidnapping members led a U.S. Senator, Leo Ryan, to journey to Jonestown to speak with Jim Jones. Ryan brought the families of several members who wished their loved ones to leave the sect. After the discussion, Jones ordered members to ambush the Senator's entourage, where People's Temple forces killed five including Ryan and a defector from the sect returning to America.[80]

After the assassination, Jones ordered his members to prepare poisoned drinks which he distributed among the nine hundred members. Parents gave their children the

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[78] Maaga, 165.

[79] Robert Hoyk and Paul Hersey, *The Ethical Executive: Becoming Aware of the Root Causes of Unethical Behavior: 45 Psychological Traps that Every One of Us Falls Prey to* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2008), 109

[80] Eugene V. Gallagher and W. Michael Ashcroft, eds, *History and Controversies: Introduction to New and Alternative Religions in America* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, Inc., 2006), 113.

drink before consuming it themselves. When federal forces arrived at Jonestown, they discovered the mass suicide.[81]

Jonestown provides an example of what may occur when a utopian society or commune breaks its own limitations. A single person wielding unquestionable coercive power where members were not allowed to leave never ends in a beneficial way for anyone involved. The style of power does not signify whether a sect will succeed or fail, but the lack of any ruling power creates an almost certainty for disaster.

Every sect needs a set of ideals which separate it from the outside world and provides a key focusing point for its members to rally behind. The ideals signify a crystalizing clarity among members which work to unify them under one belief system while ensuring they follow the will of the sect. If a person possesses the ability to leave a sect of their own free will and without repercussion, it remains a utopian society and not a cult.

Finally, a successful sect provides a method of replenishing their ranks as well as incentive to join. Whether the means were financial or ideological, people needed to join in order to prevent stagnation of ideas and an aging heirarchy.

While no series of rules stipulates whether a sect holds a certainty of success (such a concept reaches impossibility) the combination of competent leadership, replenishment of the ranks, and believable ideology create the best possible scenario for success while also mitigating the chances for radical cult-like outgrowth and failure. The legacy left by these sects, both successes and failures, as well as their original ideals of liberty, equality, and brotherhood set precedents which other groups followed. One in particular, the Festival Family, adopted several of the ideals which led to successful

[81] Gallagher and Ashcroft, 121.

coexistence in the earliest American utopian societies.  The very existence of these early models, as well as the spread of their ideals, provided a key model of pragmatic communal living even into the 1970s.

## Chapter 3:

## Festival: A History

While numerous utopian societies existed in the United States, few of them succeeded for any length of time. Their influence, however, served a key role in the formation of new groups. Yet the new groups created their own trends. Just as the earliest American societies differed from the original concepts of the French philosophes, each successive generation of American utopian collectives strayed further from the ideals of socialism.

Founded in 1970, outside of the town of Maryville in Northwestern Missouri, the musical band Festival became one of the many groups attempting to live as a utopian society. Much like the Labadists, Shakers, or Oneida Community Festival lived communally and shared wages among all members. Yet Festival was not created to be a communitarian religious experiment, nor a utopian society. From the beginning members wanted to create a band which was a financial success. To do so, they combined American business ideals with the legacy of communal living. For Festival, in the midst of the Cold War between the United States and Soviet Union, any elements of communitarianism carried the stigma of living as communists.

Festival lived as a commune, though an Americanized version of the concept which bore only a shadow of its former ties to European ideology. The variations and pragmatic approaches taken by the dozens of other utopian societies influenced Festival to create a hybrid which allowed it to survive for decades. The degree to which Festival embodied communitarian ideals can only be discovered by closely examining their foundation, ideology, and dissolution as well as comparing it to the utopian societies

which influenced them. Studying their years of development provide insight to the challenges that faced those who used communal organizations as a means of achieving success.

Festival began as a conglomeration of multiple bands working the Northwest Missouri region. Between 1968 and 1970, approximately five separate professional bands began performing, drawing members from the Northwest Missouri State University music department, during a prolific period in the program's history. The bands started by playing on campus or near Maryville on weekends each and developed a small following of loyal fans.[82]

In 1970, three of the five bands merged due to large numbers of their original members graduating. The first, FUBAR (a military acronym standing for Fucked Up Beyond All Recognition) combined with 8VA (a musical term denoting an octave in the musical scale) and one led by Britt Small known as the Maundy Memorial String Band and Kazoo Ensemble to create a brass band named Pride: The Lions of Brass. While musical genres changed, Pride emulated several of the most popular bands during the early 1970s: Blood, Sweat, and Tears; Chicago; Earth, Wind, and Fire; Bill Chase; and Maynard Fergusson. The style featured strong lead singers combined with trumpets, trombones, saxophones, drums, keyboard, guitar, and bass.[83]

In order to maximize their chances at success, many of the members rented a farm several miles outside of Maryville, Missouri, from Norman Maurer and a majority of the musicians moved to the location. Because the Farm did not provide lodging for many people, those who lived there treated it no differently from if they lived in fraternity

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[82] Donald Struve, Lead Trumpet Player of Festival, interview by author, Elk Horn, IA, January 29, 2012.
[83] Ibid.

housing. Since a large number of founding members came from Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia, the method worked as intended. A large benefit of living at the Farm stemmed from being able to practice at all hours of the day or night. Rather than having to travel to a stage (practicing in anyone's apartment or rented house in Maryville proved problematical due to neighbors and noise) Pride practiced in a barn only several dozen feet from the house. Proximity also prevented excuses from stopping the musicians from attending rehearsals as few needed to drive from Maryville to the Farm. With everyone centered in one location, musicianship increased and the group solidified into a cohesive organization.[84] Within a year, members also rented a house in Maitland, Missouri, to relieve overcrowding at the Farm, as more people joined the band and moved to a more centralized location after leases in Maryville expired.[85]

After playing for several months semi-professionally, the members of Pride decided, as a group, to shift from part-time playing (only accepting gigs on weekends or during summer months) to professional full-time musicianship. Members contacted a talent agency in Lawrence, Kansas called American Management Enterprises (A.M.E.) which booked bands to play in the upper Midwest of the United States.[86] Pride's musicians signed a seven-year contract with A.M.E. and played single, night performances in small clubs spread throughout Kansas, Nebraska, Iowa, and both North and South Dakota.

A significant problem existed with A.M.E.'s contract, however. The agency owned several band names, and wanted to continue utilizing them to ensure interest remained in any new groups the managers discovered. Therefore, Pride had to perform

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[84] Donald Struve, interview by author.
[85] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 4, September 1974.
[86] Curt Pottraz, Saxophone Player of Festival, interview by author, Savannah, Missouri, February 1, 2012.

under one of three agency-owned names: The Fabulous Flippers, The Red Dogs, or the Bluethings. All the names stemmed from successful musical groups from the early 1960s and possessed a modest following. Under the contract, however, Pride performed in one club as the Red Dogs, then travelled to a new club and played as the Bluethings. On multiple occasions, Pride returned to a club in which it performed only a few weeks prior, but played under a different name and as a different band.[87]

The multiple name changes prevented Pride from gaining steady following. While the group gained multiple fans and revisited locations to continue playing for them, the fans never knew if the Red Dogs playing at a club were the same band to which they listened a few weeks ago. A.M.E. also owned the names granted to employed bands and forced every group to pay a percentage of whatever nightly fee the group earned back to the agency simply for the use of the name. With nightly earning reaching three hundred dollars A.M.E. received 10% of the total for booking the gig, 10% for the use of the name, and 10% as manager, leaving Pride with only around two hundred dollars for each night's work. Split among ten members, the pay equated to a meager wage.[88]

As the band continued to perform, it gained popularity in the Midwest despite the continuous name changes and soon became A.M.E.'s most successful group. With the newfound following, members decided to renegotiate terms with A.M.E. and play under only a single name. After discussing issue, the agency credited Pride with the name "The Bluethings" permanently. The band did not enjoy the name (feeling it had nothing which really caused them to stand out) and changed it to "The Nation Rockin'

[87] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.
[88] Ibid.

Bluethings" for several months. Despite their best efforts, the name still did not fit the group.[89]

After several more months, the group decided to discuss terms with a lawyer and trademarked a name not owned by the agency. Pride knew its members' musicianship and skill garnered the largest following, and allowed them to be the most successful band A.M.E. owned. As the most popular group, they believed having their own name could only improve their standing and popularity among fans since the confusion about which group finally would end. At the time, one of the group's favorite songs, both personally and among fans, was called "Festival." Taking its popularity into account, on June 1, 1973, Pride officially renamed itself Festival, and no longer paid an extra percentage to A.M.E. to utilize a non-descriptive name.[90] The founding members consisted of: Paul Caraher (lights and sound), Mark Dobroth (bass and electric piano), Stan Funston (lead guitar), Rick McCambell (keyboard), Curt Pottraz (baritone saxophone and flute), Mark Reinig (drums), Britt Small (lead vocals, rhythm guitar, and low brass), Don Struve (trumpet), Ralph Taylor (trombone and conga drums), Les Wetzel (trumpet), and Maurice Wetzel (lights and sound).[91]

During the first two years on the road, Festival traveled in a converted forty-two passenger school bus. An early recruit, Keith Wetzel, utilized an off-stage talent in woodworking to convert the bus into thirds. The rear third of the bus held equipment, stored safely in wooden cabinets and counters. The group dedicated the middle and front of the bus as a sleeping section with bunk beds and mattresses, though its members needed to remove the seats in order to fit everything, meaning members sat on the

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[89] Curt Pottraz, interview by author..
[90] Donald Struve, interview by author.
[91] *Festival Newsletter* , Volume 1, June 1974.

mattresses when travelling.[92] Fitting ten people on the bus, since they traveled as an eight-piece band plus two for lights and sound, proved a difficult and crowded challenge. The smallest member (Mark Reinig) slept in the stairwell to the door and other members slept by leaning against each other.[93]

At several locations, A.M.E. agreed to provide lodging, but members routinely slept on the bus. The rooms provided by clubs were not designed for comfort or convenience, and members took to calling them "Igor Motels," named for the manager in charge of rooms. Since A.M.E. often sent bands to the same location, the company invested in hotels around the clubs and received kickbacks for every group which stayed, including acts they booked. Usually, these "Igor Motels" involved horrible smells, bug infested rooms, and existed in questionable neighborhoods.[94]

While traveling, Festival needed to pack lightly due to space restrictions. After several months of trial-and-error, the group allowed each person only a small duffle bag or any other easily packed bag which could fit into small spaces. To save space, everyone placed their toiletries and medical supplies (including deodorant, Tylenol, cologne, and other necessities) into a single group case. Members kept individual items separate by marking them with members' names on strips of tape.[95]

Festival survived as a group on very little income. Members ate breakfast squares, a nutritional bar which many equated as a taste between card board and sawdust, as well as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches. While on the road, they ate once a day, normally the afternoon meal when each member of the band received $2.00 to eat

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[92] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.
[93] Donald Struve, interview by author.
[94] Ibid.
[95] Ibid.

whatever they could at a McDonalds. In 1974, that bought two Big Mac burgers and two cartons of milk. Members kept any left-over change as their wages for that day.[96] Festival's diet improved in 1976 when the group procured a microwave oven and placed it in their bus, allowing it to cut costs by preparing hot food and utilizing multiple recipes for less money than eating at McDonalds.[97]

To manage their money, Festival appointed a single person treasurer (Les Wetzel) who held all its accounts for the members in full. Because of the low payments and large percentages A.M.E. received, each individual person received no base salary, and instead placed all the money Festival earned into a group pool held by the treasurer. Whenever someone needed funds for anything, whether repairs for the bus, or even food money, he/she received money from Les and the lockbox and bought whatever it was he/she needed. After purchasing the goods, whoever borrowed money returned any change as well as the receipt to Les for safekeeping, and he entered the withdrawal into accounting books (his off-stage job).[98] A hired accountant reviewed the books for tax purposes.[99]

Outside of travel costs, paying for instrument repair proved to be the largest financial drain upon the band's funds. Musical instruments signified a major expense and investment in Festival, but remained necessary to keep the group's sound the way members wanted. Despite musicians' best efforts, the expenditures still became tremendous when, in a single year, the band purchased a Yamaha CP-30 electric piano, two brand new Benge trumpets, new lightboxes, and remodeled a Hammond organ.[100]

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[96] Donald Struve, interview by author.
[97] *Festival Newsletter,* Volume 2, Number 5, October 1976.
[98] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.
[99] Ibid.
[100] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 3, Number 2, October 8, 1977.

Each member provided both an on-stage and an off-stage job. The jobs helped keep Festival performing by cutting as many costs as possible and members filled niche positions often with only an inclination or a hobby in a certain field. Curt Pottraz, who joined in June of 1974 as a summer job while on break from Missouri Western College, played baritone saxophone, and used his mechanical aptitude to become the primary mechanic for the group. He spent the majority of his off-stage time doing tune-ups or mechanical repairs on the bus or members' cars and stayed with the band for twenty four years.[101]

Don Struve, who graduated from Northwest Missouri State University with an eventual master's degree in music, volunteered to write charts and arrange music for the band. He often spent his nights and evenings listening to recordings of songs Festival members wanted to play on stage, transcribing it to trumpet, and finally writing the full musical scores for every instrument. The process remained laborious, but grew easier with experience and Don's eventual upgrade to utilizing a piano for all his work rather than having to write for trumpet and then all other instruments. On-stage he played lead trumpet and performed a comedy routine which became extremely popular with band members and fans.[102]

Russell Wetzel, a trombone player who joined Festival at age seventeen due to the influence of his brothers Keith, Les, and Maurice Wetzel, showed aptitude and talent with journalism and art. He eventually edited the Festival Family Newsletter and created

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[101] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.
[102] Donald Struve, interview by author.

much of the artwork and designs used for t-shirts and promotional sales. Russell also served as the band historian, keeping records of all the locations Festival played.[103]

Having specialties helped Festival to survive, yet did not ensure success. Keeping the work 'in house' helped to keep costs as low as possible, but with the band making two hundred dollars per performance Festival needed to play numerous gigs every month to keep their bills, and musicians, paid. Yet gigs did not come easily for Festival. Despite much work, well-performed songs, and dedicated players, the band routinely spent several weeks without a single job. Many of their early newsletters lament the lack of work, sometimes reaching up to six consecutive weeks or more without any income from playing.[104]

When Festival spent time on the Farm, however, they rarely wasted it. In order to pay bills, members worked multiple part-time jobs around the Maryville area such as painting houses, replacing foundations, and other types of manual labor to earn extra income. Early forms of the Festival newsletter (a quarterly pamphlet which contained tentative itinerary, poetry, and general news about the band) sold for one dollar, though the group failed to qualify for a bulk rate until 1975 and ten cents of every dollar went to paying for stamps. In many instances, Festival ignored the fee and allowed fans to receive the promotional material for free.[105]

Still playing professionally, and wishing to expand its fan base, Festival played its first international gigs in Newfoundland, Canada in August and September of 1974. While they travelled north, Curt Pottraz charted their route and discovered the bus needed

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[103] Russell Wetzel, Trombone Player and Historian of Festival, interview by author, Skidmore, Missouri, February 4, 2012.
[104] *Festival Newsletter*, Number 2, Volume 1, July 1974
[105] *Festival Newsletter*, Number 5, Volume 1, January 1975

to pass through Spokane, Washington in the most efficient route. Jim Harris, Festival's keyboard player, saw the path and convinced the band to try performing at the 1974 World's Fair. With a few days of spare time, Festival stopped in Spokane, requested a time slot, and played for crowds at the first of their three appearances at a World's Fair.[106] The experience became one of his favorite memories of his career, even though the band earned no money for the performance.

A.M.E. promised numerous gigs on the Canada trip, many for a full week of playing time (most routinely Monday through Saturday as a 'playing week') yet through miscommunications and cancellations from clubs, the group returned several weeks early after only working at a handful of the promised locales. Festival did not learn of the changes in their schedule until arriving at their destination, wasting already miniscule fuel and food funds.[107]

When Festival travelled, the group journeyed several hundred miles on an average day, only to stop, set up for a gig, perform, tear down, and then repeat the process. The near constant travel and work, however, did not prevent Festival from maintaining professional standards which garnered excellent reviews and word of mouth. Mrs. Patsie Staake, Student Activities Coordinator at Johnston Community College in Overland Park, Kansas, praised Festival's musical talent as well as their gentlemanly conduct when the group played for a masquerade party on November 1, 1974.[108] While the jobs were typical of a struggling band, no room was too small for Festival to provide their best quality performance.

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[106] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.
[107] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 5, January 1975.
[108] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 6, February 1975.

Another review by Sharon Williams of the Northwest Missourian lauded nearly every aspect of Festival's performance, from their musical talent, fancy footwork (members routinely danced while playing onstage), and even their synchronistic movements which came from endless hours of rehearsal. The band performed as a fundraiser for a Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia scholarship fund, and the show described in the review sounded to be exactly for what members strived: high energy, crowd pleasing, and enjoyable. The entire concert equated to a success for Festival, one which becomes increasingly amazing when Williams points out the group only recently finished a ten-week tour in Newfoundland and New Orleans, the latter where funds ran so low the group chose to go without food for five days in order to fuel the bus. [109] She wrote:

> Last Thursday, their show in the Den brought a packed house; students could hardly find room to stand, much less dance. And Saturday night the group did it again. Every student who stayed in Maryville for the week-end must have been in the Armory that night, and a riotous standing ovation proved quality entertainment can get a response on this campus, even if it costs a collar to get in.[110]

The last sentence illustrates Festival's dedication to its craft, as well as its drive to help others. Despite its own monetary struggles, members charged only a single dollar per student in order to make the concert affordable. The cost of entry went to the Phi Mu Alpha Sinfonia scholarship rather than the band.

Another review of the band by Peter Cameron of the Dalhousie Gazette in Nova Scotia showed favorable reactions to Festival, though his article provides a number of faulty facts about the group. While he claimed the band originated in Arkansas, he also incorrectly writes many gave up pursuits for Masters Degrees in music to follow a life on the road. In actuality, the majority of members did not attempt advanced degrees, and several left college to join the ensemble before completing their undergraduate degrees.

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[109] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 6, February 1975.

[110] Sharon Williams, review of "Festival Live Performance," Northwest Missourian, October 25, 1974.

Cameron's most interesting claim, and the only paper claiming such a fact, read Festival was a commune, and called it the "P.R. (Public Relations) section of the commune from which they come."[111]

The review, even after taking inaccuracies into account, provided Festival with yet another favorable and even glowing account. It describes the band as spontaneous and near perfection, especially in its third set, an R&B (Rhythm and Blues) medley. Cameron concludes his review by complimenting Festival's lights and sound, as well as wishing it excellent luck in future endeavors of finding a record company.[112]

At the end of 1974, Festival compiled its totals for the year. Combined, the group played 229 days out of the year, with 136 days off (though the days off included the manual labor around the Farm and practicing). Curt, Les, and Ralph Taylor drove 37,000 miles during the year, 14,000 in the first six months and 23,000 in the final six months which included the Canada trip. At approximately 25% managerial fees Festival paid A.M.E. $19,000, leaving the band with an approximate income of $57,000.[113]

The reason Festival continued to pool its funds becomes evident by examining what would happen on a salary system. If the band divided its yearly income only among the ten members on stage (though many more lived at the Farm), it equates to $5,700 per person, far below the median American income in 1974 of $11,101. Yet Festival did not record the funds dedicated to fuel, food, instrument purchases, instrument repairs, rent for the Farm and other houses, medical costs, vehicle repairs, or any other expenses. This data places members in the bottom 21.1% of American earners in 1974, all of whom

[111] Peter Cameron, review of "Festival at the Dalhousie," The Dalhousie Gazette, September 26, 1974.
[112] Ibid.
[113] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 5, January 1975.

earned under $5,000 per annum and in the bottom 9.1% of all European Americans.[114] Its hope for financial success through performing music continued to fail, and necessitated the communal fund.

Financial hardship continually plagued Festival throughout its existence. In February 1975 the Farm's water heater broke during the winter, and Les Wetzel repaired it only after wading through standing water and crawling under the main house on the Farm in frigid temperatures since its members could not afford a plumber. The water pump plagued Festival members who stayed at Norman's farm and continued to break several times, forcing it to ship water from town.[115] The ensemble also found it difficult to take weeks to practice, running short on funds whenever A.M.E. failed to book even a single gig a week.

While the group managed to avoid bankruptcy, it continued utilizing the communal fund since paying members salaries' required money they did not have. While it helped with expenses, and remained the only feasible method to continue touring, shared funds became problematical during tax season. The government charged Festival a self-employment tax which cost the ensemble a great deal of money.[116]

The IRS did not, however, charge Festival as a commune, instead considering each member self-employed. Later the government reclassified Festival as a Tribal Collective due to members' habit of eating a single meal together as a unit as well as their tendency to view the band as a family. The meal doubled as their business meetings. While the analogy did not fit Festival extremely well, it was the closest the IRS found

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[114] U.S. Census Bureau, *Household Money Income in 1974 and Selected Social and Economic Characteristics of Households*, http://www2.census.gov/prod2/popscan/p60-100.pdf (accessed on February 7, 2012).

[115] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 8, September 1975

[116] *Festival Newsletter* , Volume 1, Number 7, June 1975

which combined the familial atmosphere and work ethic of the band.[117] During the mid-1980s, the IRS forced Festival to adopt a salary system, forcing it to pay members. Since the band earned such a low profit or none at all, the change resulted in increased tax revenue for the government.[118]

Shortly after their second anniversary of professional musicianship (June 1, 1975) Festival incorporated into Festival Family Enterprises LTD. Originally the corporation founded with ten shareholders and offered shares for sale among friends and family. Incorporating provided easier methods to process tax information, prevented the self-employment tax, and gave members an option to gain group insurance in later years (though the group insurance never materialized).[119]

During their second year as Festival, the group planned to release its first album. Titled "Festival Family Presents: Festival," the group attempted to record the album on one of its Canadian tours. Problems plagued the publication of the record, and Festival experienced several interruptions recording it due to poor communication from the record company in Hallifax, Nova Scotia. The delays caused Festival to miss the promised release date communicated to fans in its newsletter, and so the group recorded a series of studio sessions as an apology and offered them to fans along with signed posters on their choice of cassette tape, reel-to-reel, or 8-track tape for only $10.00.[120]

Festival finally released its album in late 1975 with nine songs and leading with its namesake. In an attempt to build a further following, the group planned to release an

[117] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.
[118] Members' memories of the exact date disagreed, and no newsletters record the transition.
[119] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 1, Number 7, June 1975
[120] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 2, Number 2, March 31, 1976.

album every three years. The continued release of musical tracks also provided a chance to earn money and even a record contract.

The band reached its goal for the rest of its career with the albums: “Nothin’ But a Party” (1978), “Just Another Band From Skidmore” (1981), “Live on the Road” (1983), “Tattered Flags / Broken Promises” (1985), “America Called” (1987), and several others. Reliability and a sense of responsibility to its fans continued to remain an important theme for Festival, and once it set an appointment the band rarely ever failed to perform. That work ethic created a reputation for the group which aided it in earning gigs, and it was not until 1978 that Festival missed a performance due to an engine nearly exploding in its bus.[121]

Even after the release of the first album, Festival’s routine remained similar. Playing, performing, and travelling consumed the majority of members’ time. Whenever it became too much for a musician, or anyone staying at the Farm, he/she bowed out and allowed the group to locate a replacement. Early newsletters mention someone joining or leaving with regularity, though no one suffered any ill-treatment for deciding to depart, and instead received warm wishes, praise, and hopes to see the person again.

Festival replaced members through a variety of different methods. Many people signed up for the quarterly newsletter, and saw ads for what the group needed. The advertisements announced positions both on-stage and off-stage, from sewing and accounting to musicians of all kinds.[122] Members did not differentiate between professional musicians (though musical aptitude remained a definite benefit) and people who wished to help and maintained a positive attitude. With regularity, those who joined

[121] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 4, Number 1, April 16 1978.
[122] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 2, Number 2, March 1976

Festival displayed a willingness to work, desire for fun, and an optimistic mentality; all key qualities sought to ensure someone would fit into the band.

Whenever touring, members watched for people who viewed multiple performances and expressed interest in the group beyond a basic level as fans. If someone showed a willingness to help the band, Festival generally accepted their help in whatever method it came. Some donated supplies to the Farm (the group could not afford anything but the most basic of utilitarian items), others offered to feed the members, and a select few agreed to attempt the lifestyle. Don Struve listened for the key phrase, “I’d do anything to be a part of the band.” When he heard that phrase he asked for more information, such as musical experience, work ethic, or the basic talents the person possessed.[123]

Not everyone succeeded even if the group welcomed them as a member. Many fans or new employees believed Festival only traveled, played, and had fun while touring. While the group accomplished all of these goals, dispelling that myth weeded out those who wanted simply to party from those who worked.

The draw to Festival came from the aura of enjoyment members showed, whether in private or while performing. Whether a person played an instrument or handled bookwork, other members expected him/her to act professionally, but also to enjoy themselves and to take pride in their work. The ultimate goal equated to showing audiences the ensemble enjoyed spending time with each other, genuinely wanted to be together, and mold a family atmosphere out of numerous personalities and backgrounds.[124] Early in their careers, Festival witnessed numerous groups who lost jobs

[123] Donald Struve, interview by author.
[124] Carla Wetzel, Head of Promotional Materials for Festival, interview by author, February 4, 2012.

because of their attitudes and vowed to work together and resolve differences in order to prevent such an occurrence.[125]

Multiple people joined simply because of the fun the group appeared to be genuinely having on-stage, and members admitted they would not have stayed with Festival if the experience had not been positive. A member wanting solely to participate for the parties and not out of any desire or love of music failed despite support from others.[126] While no system was specifically set into place to help new recruits (such as a mentor program), the veteran members made sure to offer their help whenever possible.

After joining, each new member experienced a trial phase where he / she learned the stage routines, memorized the dozens of musical scores, and discovered their niche to fill within the group. Many left after only a few weeks after discovering the eighteen hours of work per day required keep everything running as smoothly as possible. More experienced members watched to see when newer ones “hit the wall.” After several weeks of travelling, playing, loading equipment, and spending nights driving, the recruits experienced flu-like symptoms from the stress on their bodies. If their bodies adapted to the schedule, the recruit generally stayed a few years, those whose bodies could not take the stress left within weeks. Even for those who failed, Festival thanked them for their effort; the time already put into the group, and wished them well.[127]

Other than being able to handle the schedule, Festival placed no restrictions on what type of people joined. A person’s religion did not matter, nor did their race or gender. All someone needed to be considered for a position was a love of music, willingness to work, and a positive personality. While the group preferred musicians

[125] Carla Wetzel, Head of Promotional Materials for Festival, interview by author, February 4, 2012.
[126] Donald Struve, interview by author.
[127] Ibid.

who knew their trade, and possessed skills in other fields, the members were not above teaching an instrument or letting a recruit help with mundane tasks around the Farm until a niche opened for them.[128]

This recruitment policy created a blend of musicians as well as people joining to be a part of the family mentality. Festival preferred knowledgeable musicians for on-stage performances, but acknowledged the person's willingness to work and their ability to mesh with everyone else in the group played an equally vital role. Friends, family, and those closest to members normally filled the off-stage roles, though the familial factor did not diminish the work expected from them.

Even with the need for new members, Festival maintained the majority of people who originally started back in 1971. Rick McCambell ceased playing keyboard to pursue a career in teaching and Mark Dobroth left to study art at the University of Iowa. Don Struve left the band for a short while to earn an advanced degree from Northwest Missouri State University, and returned in 1976.[129] The primary difficulty came from finding reliable bass or keyboard players, and a steady string of them came and left until Becky Brue, who later married drummer Mark Reinig, began playing keyboard. A bass player continued to elude the group, forcing existing members to alternate playing it during shows.

The struggle to find a bass player led to attempts to cover the majority of musical parts with fewer members until someone located a reliable replacement. Britt Small played bass, drums, and sang lead vocals in the same night during multiple performances

[128] Donald Struve, interview by author.
[129] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 2, Number 2, March 1976.

in 1975, and an unusual level of frustration seeped through in the newsletters when he wrote about the issue.[130]

The vexation reached such a level that Festival stressed its acceptance of auditions at any location or time and from anyone. The newsletter only listed seven requirements, though three appear to be jokes which added humor and cannot be seriously deliberated. To be considered, applicants only needed to:

1. Know how to play the bass guitar.
2. Preferably have knowledge of another instrument.
3. Be willing to play for free, live as a member of the Festival Family, ride for days in a bus, carry tons of equipment, work your tail off, and have a smile on your face 28 [sic] hours a day.
4. Like to party and play music more than anything else in the whole world.[131]

Festival found a bass player who fit all the criteria, and who accepted the lifestyle on the road, in late 1977. The match proved to be successful, however, and Ray Roth stayed with Festival until the early 1990s.

Other long-time members joined for numerous reasons. Carla Mitchell joined because the experience appeared positive, the people enjoyable, travel exciting, and because she wished to be closer to her boyfriend in the band. After marrying Russell Wetzel, she wished to remain at the Farm. With limited musical experience, she instead ran a large portion of Festival's booking and management when at the Farm, and sold promotional materials when the band toured. Carla stayed for over twenty years.[132] Jonnie K. Oleson became a member due to a relationship with lead singer Britt Small, but helped by sewing costumes for the group. Her skills proved an extremely important talent since clothing and outfits did not fit into Festival's already strained budget. She created a costume fund which existed solely out of donations, and outfitted members for

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[130] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 2, Number 4, September 1976.
[131] Ibid.
[132] Carla Wetzel, interview by author.

touring as well as helped manage the band. Jonnie and Britt married on May 29, 1976 and she stayed with the band for more than twenty years.[133]

Others followed Jonnie's lead and joined due to a relationship with members in the band. Mindy Thompson came to the Farm in early 1975 and worked on bookkeeping and daily affairs. She also wrote numerous articles for the newsletter on what occurred while the band toured. Mindy married Curt Pottraz on October 3, 1977, but the marriage did not last due to the strain of Curt touring nearly year-round.

In 1977, two new members came to the Farm and stayed for over a combined forty years. Cheryl Pickrel joined and aided Les Wetzel in bookwork and money management, but also ran the spotlight when the group performed. The two eventually married on June 3, 1979.[134] Brenda Mahanke came to the Farm in September, 1977, and acted as a technical assistant, helped Jonnie sew costumes, and learned the basics of bookkeeping. She married Donald Struve on June 1, 1980.[135]

Despite the steady influx of membership from 1975 - 1979, the majority of new people came in as off-stage help. Finding quality members to continue filling on-stage roles for a fuller sound remained a primary goal, and as more members stayed for longer periods of time, the idea of replacing them if they ever left became daunting due to the skills acquired in multiple fields. The problem plagued Festival until it disbanded since no new member could ever replace someone with twenty years of experience.

A positive side to the addition of so many off-stage members, however, arose from the aid each provided to the business side of Festival. More members at the Farm meant the musicians could focus their energy on touring rather than all aspects of the

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[133] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 2, Number 2, March 31, 1976.
[134] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 4, Number 2, November 14 1978
[135] Ibid.

company. By the late 1970s, Festival sold a number of promotional materials including posters, albums, buttons, t-shirts, and a variety of hand-made goods the members made while on the bus. Carla Wetzel helped run the promotional table and kept track of every sale.[136] While still utilizing the communal fund to survive, the hand-made goods put money directly into the members' pockets, one of the few ways individuals could earn any money for themselves.

Aside from touring, Festival continued putting out albums and single tracks. In 1978 it released several single records for radio stations and jukeboxes. Without a recording contract, however, the band could only send original songs from its albums and met with extremely limited success in having any station play its music. The recordings in 1978 became the last one with A.M.E. since Festival completed the contract that year

In late 1979 the group sold another collection of singles after the cost of a third album proved to be too much. With the proceeds, Festival reinvested funds in the band in order to produce better live albums.[137] The objective became recording its own songs near Maryville and creating a record studio.

When its third album was finally released, Festival failed to achieve a national release, and members needed to purchase two thousand five hundred copies themselves. The group sold two thousand at a band run promotional table, and sent the other five hundred to radio stations in an attempt to gain more national recognition. Fans who purchased the records chose between vinyl or cassette tape, and also ordered signed posters, t-shirts, and other promotional items.[138]

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[136] Carla Wetzel, interview by author.
[137] *Festival Fan Letter*, September 24, 1979.
[138] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 5, Number 1, April 16, 1981.

On June 1, 1980, aside from celebrating Donald and Brenda Struve's wedding, Festival's contract with A.M.E. expired, and the band became an independent corporation. Jonnie Kay assumed managerial and booking duties, and Festival focused on building its fan base in the Midwest rather than taking the difficult Canadian tours. At its peak in 1980, the group played for crowds of up to three thousand people.[139]

In 1981, Festival upgraded its transportation from modified school buses and vans to a Greyhound Scenicruiser the group nicknamed "Caesar." While a major investment and one the group needed large bank loans to afford, the bus lasted Festival until the mid-1990s and amassed over more than million miles on the road under Curt's careful care.[140]

The band quickly broke in the new bus with multiple trips to Las Vegas where Festival played numerous lounge shows and even opened in a main room at the Vegas World club for one night. The act proved popular enough that Festival returned to Las Vegas later in the year and played in a lounge for a full two weeks at Vegas World, though it never headlined. Critics offered generally positive reviews, and the praise helped lift Festival to greater heights of popularity.[141]

Though 1981 marked a large number of "firsts" for the band, 1982 also was an extremely successful year for Festival. The year marked the 10th anniversary of the group, and it celebrated by performing at the Knoxville World's Fair. For its second World's Fair the entertainment committee requested Festival perform, meaning a billing and publicity. The band proved so popular it received a personal letter of recommendation from Michael Blachly, the fair's director of Performing Arts[142]

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[139] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 5, Number 1, April 16, 1981.
[140] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 5, Number 2, November 7, 1981.
[141] *Ibid*.
[142] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.

After several gigs Festival finally reported in June, after seven years of incorporation, that the company made a profit after all its bills and loans. The achievement showed slow yet steady progress in financial aspects, and helped stockholders, many of which were friends and family of the band who bought stock when Festival incorporated. Reaching such a level took Festival one hundred ten months on the road, but validated the sacrifices and work of so many people.[143]

Shortly after returning from Knoxville, Festival began moving to a new location. Norman's Farm no longer housed enough people, and Norman requested permission to move his family to the location after summer ended.[144] No evidence exists to suggest he held any ill will against the members of the band, or their way of life.

Because the communal style of living worked, and the band finally began showing profits rather than just breaking even, Festival agreed to continue living as a community. The new Farm, situated on a twelve-acre plot of land to the northeast of Skidmore, already contained a two-story house, and members soon brought in mobile homes for families to use, rather than all under a single roof.[145]

In order to purchase the new land, Festival relied on loans, fundraisers, and donations from people its members knew. The region genuinely supported the band, and the 1982 Skidmore Punkin Show theme was a "Festival for FESTIVAL," which included a celebrity auction and numerous fundraisers to aid the band in moving. The band also received funds and support from Northwest Missouri State University, playing at the yearly Music Camp under Al Sergel, the university homecoming parade, and halftime show. The performance marked the first time the institution invited Festival to perform

[143] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume II, October 25, 1982.
[144] *Ibid*.
[145] *Ibid*.

at the parade, and offered a level of validation to the several members who graduated from Northwest Missouri State University.[146]

No funds came from the performances, yet for many members, the respect of the community and regional recognition of their musical success proved to be an extremely important motivational tool. The repeated failures to succeed on a large scale remained disheartening, but the ability to return to the Northwest Missouri region and be recognized for their achievements aided their desire to continue.

Festival's support from the surrounding region shows how much respect the group received from people. Despite early misconceptions as to what the group signified, especially in an era where people easily associated communes with the Soviet Union and the evils of the Cold War, the band worked to dispel the fallacy of being a commune. Far from being secretive about its way of life, Festival welcomed people to the Farm with regularity, holding picnics, parties, and dinners to revel in the company of others.[147]

The openness which Festival conducted its affairs aided the transition from unintentional separatists to accepted members of the community. Although members' candidness did not provide all the solutions to being accepted by the region, the band relied on kind words from community leaders who visited and learned about the tenets of the group. Curt Pottraz spent time with Marvin Summie, the owner of the Skidmore gas station, and grew to know him well from years of repeated trips into the town for fuel and automotive parts. Marvin allowed Curt to charge several of the parts until the band raised the money from future gigs to pay off accounts in full. Curt also developed a close working relationship with Jim Abrams who inspected all of Festival's vehicles (members

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[146] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume II, October 25, 1982.
[147] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 4, Number 1, April 16, 1978.

voluntarily brought their cars to the Farm and allowed others to use their vehicles for errands if asked) and helped Curt rebuild Caesar's diesel engine.[148]

While the process required several years, Festival managed to create an understanding with Skidmore and many of the people in the surrounding region. It seems highly unlikely Northwest Missouri State University would have allowed the band to play at functions or supported their musicianship if the group consisted of radical communists, nor would Skidmore residents have allowed Festival to perform at the numerous Punkin Shows with a special one to aid the band had they believed the group to be a subversive commune. The support of local people, who spent time getting to know the band members, showed Festival did not live in secret and was in fact quite open about their livelihood.

Even members' children participated in a number of community activities. The youngest members of festival, Marty Small and Jessica Pottraz, toured with their parents when not in school, but the primary focus centered on a solid education for them. Rather than homeschool the children both Marty and Jessica attended public schools, first at Horace Mann in Maryville (located at Northwest Missouri State University) and then at Nodaway-Holt.[149] The band made no effort to isolate any kids at the Farm, and five of the seven children eventually born during Festival's existence attended public schools for education. Only timing prevented the other two (Hannah Hafner and Kelli Struve) from the same pattern, since they were born in 1993 and their parents left the band before either reached the age to enter the school system while associated with Festival.

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[148] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.
[149] Ibid.

Because a majority of members toured for performances, the on-stage musicians never became fully integrated with the community. Those who stayed at the Farm, however, became friends with numerous citizens in Skidmore. During one of the numerous times the water pump broke at the farm, the janitor at the school opened the doors and allowed people to shower. Another nearby family, the Gosleys, brought freshly hunted geese to the Farm for members to eat every year, and Delbert Chestnut brought deer meat to the Farm every year. The women of Skidmore routinely invited the ladies at the farm for coffee or lunches in order to get to know them better.[150]

In contrast to the members who stayed on the farm, the musicians developed strong working relationships which translated into community support for their actions and continued existence, but rarely into a full-fledged friendship. When at the Farm, however, the musicians accomplished as much as possible for Skidmore, performing for numerous fundraisers and refusing any compensation for their time. One of the most important came from a fundraiser for the Skidmore volunteer fire department. After working with the committee for several years, the program received enough money to purchase new fire-fighting equipment and the joint effort led to lower tax rates for the entire city due to safer conditions and a well-equipped force.[151]

Citizens in the region also showed their appreciation for the band. Maryville declared July 3, 1983 to be Festival Day, celebrated by KNIM with a concert and a citation from the Mayor presented by State Representative Everett Brown. Northboro, Iowa, Skidmore, Missouri, and St. Louis, Missouri awarded Festival the keys to their

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[150] Brenda Struve, Bookkeeper of Festival, interview by author, Elk Horn, IA, February 18, 2012.
[151] Ibid.

respective cities. Such an honor marked the first time Skidmore bestowed its upon anyone in the town's one hundred year history.[152]

Because Festival's relationship with the surrounding area was generally a positive one, its touring reputation excelled. Members performed for the Missouri State Fair, South Dakota State Fair, the Miss South Dakota-USA Pageant (which used Festival's song "Dakota Woman" as the theme in 1982), and also performed at a national salute to Vietnam Veterans in Washington, D.C. culminating with the dedication of the Vietnam Memorial in 1982.[153] Unfortunately for members, while the performances showcased Festival's talents, none of them paid well.

The trip to Washington, D.C. proved to be a transformation in Festival's career. While in the city, the band journeyed to the Wall (the nickname of the Vietnam Memorial) and witnessed hundreds of veterans demonstrating against it. The overall feel of the ceremony quickly degenerated into an extremely poor atmosphere, and Festival decided to try relieving the negativity by singing. The group performed "America the Beautiful" without instruments since it did not possess a permit for any type of performance and had not been allowed to set up any equipment. Singing created the risk of being arrested by the police for illegal protestation, but the song helped change the mood of the veterans, and the police arrested no one. Instead, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund thanked the group and allowed them to participate in the wreath laying ceremony the next day.[154]

While at the ceremony, another scuffle erupted, and Festival sang "Amazing Grace" to help calm the crowd. That evening the members saw themselves on NBC

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[152] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume IV, September 1983.
[153] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume II, October 25, 1982.
[154] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume III, February 25, 1983.

News's coverage of the service.[155] Festival achieved national recognition (albeit through a short news clip) for its actions, and began to shift focus towards veteran issues and helping veterans with bitter feelings about the war. Because Britt Small served in the 173rd Airborne Brigade during Vietnam, the shift became a poignant and important one for him, and Festival took on a far more patriotic aspect than simply performing for entertainment. Concerts centered on spreading word about the plight of veterans, their ill-treatment by the populace and government, and the horrors they witnessed during the war. Shortly after leaving Washington, D.C., Festival changed its name to reflect changes in musical culture where a single band "leader" headed a group, and the band began touring as Britt Small & Festival (hereafter still referred to as Festival).

Festival's involvement in the veteran issue, while a turning point, injured members' careers and alienated fans. On its tour to Nashville the following year, playing a far more patriotic show which stressed abandonment of veterans during Vietnam as well as America's attitude towards prisoners-of-war (POWs), Festival held high hopes for a record contract. Its new political attitude and far more serious style of music, which in several cases included songs about torture and veteran abandonment, ensured the wanted deal never occurred.[156]

Being passed over for a deal surprised many members of Festival, especially after excellent showings and crowd responses at Nashville's Hall of Fame Club where the band received four standing ovations in an hour long performance, and a verbal compliment by Elvis Presley's stepmother who equated their performance of her step-

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[155] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume III, February 25, 1983.
[156] *Festival Newsletter*, 1984.

son's music as "The best since Elvis."[157] It was one of the only shows Festival performed at in Nashville where the group played few songs dealing with the Veteran issue, though the group performed "The Wall" which reached #10 on the Billboard musical chart in the pop category in 1983.[158]

Despite setbacks, Festival continued to perform nationwide and pushed the Veteran issue in nearly every show. The band again received an invitation for another World's Fair, held in 1984 at New Orleans. Festival happily agreed before turning its attention back to Washington, D.C. where the group played in front of crowds of more than 40,000 at a concert in front of the U.S. Capitol to raise awareness of POWs and veterans. The concert, at which Festival only played as an act, culminated in numerous speeches by Medal of Honor recipients, who allowed Festival's members to join them the next day for the wreath laying ceremony at the Tomb of the Unknown. General Westmoreland, the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Casper Weinberger (then the Secretary of Defense), and President Ronald Reagan placed the wreath upon the tomb.[159]

Following their trips to Washington, D.C., Festival continued to focus on the POW issue, to the near exclusion of any other performances such as state fairs or larger venues. Newsletter content changed to a far more politically focused editorial style that detailed the suffering and torment of veterans, as well as detailing Festival's concerts at dozens of veteran's hospitals. The focus continued to shift further onto Britt Small (focusing on his achievements) and away from any other band members. The newsletters also adopted a far more serious tone.[160] The change blatantly contradicted the party

[157] *Festival Family Newsletter*, 1984.
[158] Ibid.
[159] *Festival Family Newsletter*, Christmas 1984.
[160] *Festival Newsletter*, Volume 13, Number 1, March 31, 1987.

atmosphere the band personified in their early years, and even the name 'Festival' became an oxymoron with such a focus on serious issues. An attempt to explain the change in the following newsletter only briefly touched on the change, and merely stated, "…things still get pretty darn silly out there on the road."[161] Despite the song changes Festival still included a handful of comedic performance in their show, a remnant from its founding.

The business aspect of Festival continued to suffer. With few options to record due to the prohibitive price, Festival opened Max Stout Studios in 1986 and utilized a small studio in Skidmore to record and practice. Max Stout helped other small bands by offering to record for low prices with excellent quality.[162] On its own, however, the creation of a recording studio was not enough. Continued failures to gain a record contract led to financial problems, which only compounded when the bank in Skidmore collapsed and the FDIC assumed the loans. Never on solid financial footing, Festival failed to pay them. The shift to patriotic songs to the exclusion of any other styles of music also profoundly damaged the band's reputation among fairs and venues which focused on family entertainment. In 1988, Festival lost three repeat contracts at State Fairs, due to the style of music as well as the very real possibility the band neared financial collapse. Rather than shift their musicality back to a more crowd-pleasing form, Britt Small repeatedly lambasted the failures as "being beaten by the system," meaning businessmen and government officials who purposely kept the band from becoming

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[161] *Festival Family Enterprises Newsletter*, October 26, 1987.
[162] Max Stout Studio, "The Max Stout Story," Max Stout Studio, http://maxstout.com/page2.html#top (accessed February 15, 2012).

successful.[163] No evidence exists to suggest his beliefs were true, but only an outpouring of donations allowed Festival to survive.

In 1989, Festival opened another corporation called American Family Talent. Led by Jonnie Kay and Martha Marteney, the company focused on managing Festival as well as other acts which centered on family entertainment. Much like A.M.E. before it, Festival now managed other family friendly-bands, though on a smaller scale.[164] Festival continued to decline, however, and its finances reached a crisis in 1992, when it proved unable to afford a newsletter.[165]

Beginning in 1993, longtime members began to leave Festival. They moved on for a variety of reasons. Some looked at the number of years they had dedicated to the band and saw no real financial reward and no promise of stability after the difficulty of the last five years. Others wanted to start lives outside of the busy touring schedule (up to nearly 330 days a year by 1993, although the majority were low paying gigs) where they worked at a regular job with benefits and steady hours. Still more lost their passion for the music, and missed the fun the group used to experience while performing.[166] The loss of members who held key positions within the corporation and possessed decades of experience in on-stage and off-stage jobs crippled Festival's ability to continue. Losing any member necessitated finding and retraining a person to fill a specialized niche, which anchored specific sectors of Festival's business. Losing mechanics, song-writers, bookkeepers, or any position meant Festival could no longer solve problems "in-house" and needed to pay an outside worker, generally costing them far more money.

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[163] *Festival Family Enterprises Newsletter*, May 16, 1988.
[164] *Festival Family Enterprises Newsletter*, Volume 15, Number 2, November 8, 1989.
[165] *Festival Family Enterprises Newsletter*, May 1993.
[166] Curt Pottraz, interview by author.

The dissolution commenced with several members from the brass section leaving in 1993. Because of the hardships, Don Struve and his family retired from the road, though he continued to write charts and musical arrangements for several months and eventually became a high school music teacher. The guitar player and primary photographer of the band, Dan Hohn, retired shortly after for a job in Branson, Missouri. More members left in the following years, with Ray Roth (the bass player) and his wife Martha Roth (a bookkeeper and manager) travelling to Minnesota for work. Curt Pottraz found employment in the mechanical industry, driving and fixing busses, but no longer needed to keep such a hectic and busy schedule of eighteen-hour work days. John Hafner, then the baritone saxophone player, travelled to Montana with his wife and worked as a chiropractor (a degree he had earned in downtime from touring). The complete dissolution of the Festival Brass Section finalized in July, 1997 when Les and Russell Wetzel ceased touring.[167]

For several more years, Festival continued touring, though the scale of their performances shifted dramatically without a brass section, and with a heavily reduced rhythm section. The music remained the same, but required the use of taped sections to play successfully. In April, 2001, Mark and Becky Reinig stopped touring as well, leaving Festival without drums or a keyboard player. Britt Small continues to tour even into 2012, relying on recorded portions of old Festival songs to sing for veteran's hospitals, though as American Pride Entertainment and not Festival.[168]

[167] Britt Small, "The History of Britt Small & Festival," Britt Small, http://www.brittsmall.com/id11.html (Accessed March 10, 2012).
[168] Ibid.

## The Classification of Festival: Commune or Corporation?

In comparison to other successful communitarian societies in America, Festival shows both similarities and differences. Festival followed a number of practices which facilitated successful communal living. During its early years, Festival showed decisive leadership with mandatory business meetings doubling as daily meals. The band agreed on the single, decisive goal of financial gain while also living in peace and harmony through music. The music became the medium by which material gain came to be achieved. Finally, Festival devised a system of replacing members who left. While far from perfect, the system promoted smooth transitions both into and out of the group whenever the need arose.

Festival's dissolution also followed the pattern of American communitarian societies. The focus of the band shifted from the entirety of the band to a single member as was evident in the changing leader-centric newsletter format as well as the group's name evolving from Festival to Britt Small & Festival. This change placed a great deal of power into the hands of a single person and upset the balance of power within the corporation. Festival also showed levels of musical stagnation throughout the 1980s despite numerous warning signals its policy proved problematic. Its involvement in the veteran issue helped raise awareness for the cause, but systematically caused the band to lose out on revenue and gigs due to the material presented on stage. Refusing to compromise and play a multitude of shows depending on their locale meant first-time listeners at a normally upbeat concert location, such as a State fair, instead heard songs about missing soldiers, torture, and abandonment by the American Government.

Internal division within Festival, a primary reason for a communitarian society's collapse, cannot be proven. While logic implies members argued and faced problems with each other (the expectation of the group lasting more than twenty years with no friction between members borders on an impossibility) no evidence exists to show such arguments became a primary reason for the group's collapse. Evidence instead pointed to the contrary, that Festival maintained a professional and familial relationship until members departed, resolving their disagreements, conflicts, or petty problems, either personally or through the use of other bandmates as mediators.[169]

The structure of the band suggested that Festival was a communitarian society since its members lived communally for their entirety and utilized a centralized fund until forced by the Internal Revenue Service to switch to a salary system. Yet the IRS never classified Festival as a commune or communitarian society. Even in its first year of existence, the band filed taxes as self-employed. While the group maintained elements of a communitarian society throughout, those same fundamentals evolved out of pragmatism. Members lived communally for efficiency rather than ideology, and the same level of practicality explains the financial system. No one received a salary because Festival failed to earn enough to provide a steady paycheck after covering daily expenses. Although Festival's level of equality and communalism shared roots with early American communitarian societies and therefore utopian socialists, the purpose behind the actions show no desire for socialism. The argument for a basic level of Marxian socialism existed since members needed to work in order to eat, but none received labor coupons for the daily toil and Festival's system seemed again far more based on practicality since

[169] Russell Wetzel, interview by author.

none of them wished to overthrow the capitalist system and instead entered it through the stock market.

Another problem with defining Festival as a commune occurs with an examination of Festival's goals and the method members utilized to achieve those objectives. From its foundation, Festival sought to earn a profit. Within two years, the original members incorporated, entering into a capitalist market and defying the very tenets of both utopian socialism and Marxian socialism. Festival did not advocate equality of the system, actively competed against other organizations in a market system, and reaped the benefit of their labor. Within the last decade of Festival's existence, members created two more organizations which managed companies and engaged in free trade. While a large number of American communitarian societies engaged in free trade (the Labadists and Shakers actively sold goods to survive) none created so many branches of themselves or sold portions of the company to stockholders. Only the Oneida Community successfully incorporated, but renounced all claims of communalism before doing so.

Festival's patriotic mentality towards the end of its career creates more difficulty for the claim of existing as a communitarian society. While Festival showed higher levels of patriotism as it played, especially once the group entered the POW issue, none of the members wished to bring down the government. Socialist organizations rarely showed patriotic tendencies, so the leaning lends credibility to Festival existing as a business and not a commune.

Finally, the lack of any type of separatist mentality, especially since members actively issued invitations for others to attend functions at the Farm, further dispels the

myth of Festival existing as a communitarian society. Indeed, Festival seemed to have very little in the way of ideology, separatist or otherwise. Members allowed anyone to join regardless of religion, race, or creed, which showed a distinct lack of ideology. While Festival eventually became heavily involved in the veteran issue, to the extent of displaying a near single-minded obsession, its passion for the subject failed to become a full-fledged ideological policy.

Despite the confusion on Festival's classification, close examination shows a heavily capitalist society albeit with interspersed communal elements. Founding portions showed a similarity to communitarian societies, but the method members conducted themselves and sought to succeed prove Festival functioned as a business rather than a commune.