

THE WOMEN OF HOME AND EQUALITY: CONSTRUCTING THEIR OWN UTOPIAS IN
THE PACIFIC NORTHWEST

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Abstract

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This study considers both the formation of and the membership within the utopian communities of Home and Equality, Washington, and the role of gender in shaping those communities. It carefully examines why men and women founded each colony and the role of women in setting up and sustaining the political and economic frameworks along with community norms. Home and Equality are two of the utopian colonies founded near the Puget Sound region in the late nineteenth century. Limited studies have been done by historians on these two colonies but none have fully addressed the role of women and gender relations within the colonies. This thesis is the author's attempt to examine how utopian women of the Pacific Northwest constructed and contributed to the economic, social and political life of Home and Equality, while balancing radical norms against traditional gender ideas.

The women at Home and Equality created a colony that valued and supported radical ideas but occasionally accommodated traditional gender ideas. Members at Home supported co-habitation without marriage, women's rights, and women's intellectual pursuits such as writing, publishing, lectures and leading discussion groups. But, the women who worked at Home often worked in traditional jobs—as secretaries for the local store or in subsistence agriculture. When a scandalous nude bathing incident hit the local news resulting in the arrest of community

members, the local newspaper editor utilized language steeped in traditional gender imagery to gain support and empathy for the treatment of the Home colonists. Equality's women participated in governing through voting and leadership roles within the community. But, the women of Equality also worked in traditional gender-typed jobs such as cooking, cleaning, and sewing, although several women held qualifications for other non domestic positions.

These women created a colony that valued education, hard work, intellectualism and community. They established colonies supportive of gender equality and rich in radical ideas. Although both colonies were short-lived, while in existence, Home and Equality offered genuine alternatives to the challenges created by late nineteenth-century industrial capitalism.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION: UTOPIANS, GENDER, AND REGION

In her lecture, “Socialism: Caught in the Political Trap,” Emma Goldman suggested that “utopian’ is a label conferred upon every new vision for changing existing conditions.¹ Goldman, an iconic figure of the American socialist movement and later a symbol of the feminist socialist, asserted that by the early twentieth century socialism had become too corrupted and too complacent to the capitalist state that it once attempted to overhaul. She offered that perhaps “scientific” socialists, taking their lead from Marx and Engels, should consider how utopian socialists worked within the framework and parameters of a capitalistic society. Recognizing that utopian movements are sparked by individuals or groups who believe that alternative societies can be built, Goldman and many other intellectuals, religious figures, and radicals nonetheless believed that utopian movements could not correct societal flaws by withdrawing from society. However, the utopians believed that creating small colonies with guidelines, policies and infrastructure more aligned with the group’s goals could affect real change.² Colonies also allowed for utopian groups to practice liberty as they saw fit. Building upon the great tradition of enlightened liberty in the United States, colonies chose to create unconventional norms, many of which neighboring communities did not welcome. Despite neighboring communities’ lack of acceptance, unconventional norms were central to the utopian

¹ Emma Goldman, “Socialism: Caught in the Political Trap” (lecture, New York City, December 10, 1911), <http://ebookbrowse.com/emma-goldman-socialism-caught-in-the-political-trap-a4-pdf-d63824153> (accessed October 9, 2012).

² I am using the terms community, colony, society, collective and commune interchangeably, as I assert that all words seek to describe a group of people living together who intentionally differentiate themselves from other groups.

colonists. It was those unconventional norms, practiced by radicals like Goldman, which many people found appealing in both philosophy and practice.

This study considers both the formation of and the membership within utopian communities and the role of gender in shaping those communities. It carefully examines the reasons why each colony was founded and the roles women took on in setting up and sustaining the political and economic frameworks along with community norms. This study of utopian colonies examines how women worked as community builders, constructing both physically and intellectually two of the most successful utopian communities in the Pacific Northwest. The women of Home and Equality constructed and contributed to the economic, social and political life of these communities. Embracing radical norms and ideas, the radicals of Home and Equality did create new and alternative opportunities, not found elsewhere, but despite their dedication and advancement of enlightened liberty and sex equality, these colonies still accommodated traditional gender ideas.

As the United States expanded its territory in the nineteenth century, utopian groups established their own perfect societies in the far reaches of newly conquered western lands. In the nineteenth century, several utopian colonies settled parts of the West, lending a rich or in some cases enigmatic history to regional development. In nearly every case (with Robert Owen's New Harmony a notable exception because the colony was built on the grounds of an earlier utopian experiment), isolation compelled that utopian idealists completely build new communities. On the other hand, isolation allowed these utopian communities to establish their own norms without external interference, although criticism still followed from outside

communities. Community norms regarding labor policies and economic development, gender roles, religious commitment, and democratic involvement varied from colony to colony.

Although the colonies drew people from both varied regions and backgrounds, women and men experienced utopian colonies differently. In Oneida colony, women shared child rearing responsibilities which lightened the individual woman's work load, but simultaneously, the colony leader, John Humphrey Noyes, selected women's domestic partners, leaving women with little to no voice in their choice of husband, and father of their children. Yet men and women seamlessly integrated into a variety of occupations within the Oneida colony, thus breaking away from traditional sex typing. Men could knit and work in housekeeping and women worked in administrative positions.³ This atypical arrangement offered women and men an alternative experience to the more conventional gender roles found elsewhere.

In general, westward expansion in the nineteenth and early twentieth century created its own set of norms and expectations. With the Louisiana Purchase, the various explorations, and manifest destiny realized, the West became home to a variety of communities. Land speculators, gold rushers, religious missionaries and utopian idealists hoped to carve out a place for themselves in the newly conquered lands of the West. The West provided settlers with land and for those utopian idealists, an opportunity to realize and construct their own communities. The lack of easily accessible and direct authority allowed utopian developments the space and isolation needed to practice unconventional norms.

Many western states, Washington in particular, accepted the unconventional norms and not only tolerated communal lifestyles, but welcomed them. Late nineteenth-century reform movements found an intellectual home in Washington. Both the labor and populist movements

³ Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality: Three American Communal Experiments of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 104-106.

spread like wildfire in the state, drawing intellectuals, reform leaders, radicals, and suffrage leaders. A letter from Equality supervisor Ed Pelton to reformer (and later President of the Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth) Henry Demarest Lloyd described the factor that made Washington so appealing at the end of the nineteenth century: “We find this state to be particularly adapted to the work on account of the fact that the people are, mostly, well disposed towards Socialism....”⁴ Washington offered the ideal place, what some termed the “New Eden”, for utopian experiments.

Elected in 1896, Governor John R. Rogers not only encouraged utopian colonists to move to the state, he joined them. Having come from a Kansas farm background, Rogers did not shy away from utopian colonists or any plan “consistent with our laws which promises to ameliorate the condition surrounding the poorer classes now enormously increasing in number.”⁵ According to both Carlos Schwantes and G. Thomas Edwards, Rogers was likely the first United States Governor to join a utopian colony.⁶ This brought more credibility to the utopian movement in the West and certainly more acceptance. Rogers, who did not altogether agree with the utopian writings of idealist Edward Bellamy, wrote his own agrarian utopian novel—*Looking Forward: The Story of an American Farm*—romanticizing Kansas farm life.⁷ Rogers, a reform-minded governor, supported utopian endeavors. Washington offered a political, social and economic climate ripe for utopian visionaries. Responding to the beckoning climate in the second half of the nineteenth century, these fellow utopian enthusiasts settled nearly ten colonies in Washington territory and later, the state.

⁴ Quoted in Carlos A. Schwantes, *Radical Heritage: Labor, Socialism, and Reform in Washington and British Columbia, 1885-1917* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1979), 88.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 88.

⁶ G. Thomas Edwards, “Introduction to Reform and Repression,” in *Experiences in a Promised Land: Essays in Pacific Northwest History*, ed. Carlos Schwantes (Seattle: University of Washington, 1986), 155.

⁷ James Kopp, “Looking Backward,” *Columbia: Magazine of Northwest History* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2011), <http://columbia.washingtonhistory.org/magazine/articles/2011/0211/0211-a2.aspx> (accessed October 9, 2012).

Like utopian communities across the United States, the colonies of the Pacific Northwest, including Home, Equality and later Freeland differed in purpose and experience, but shared an overarching desire to offer an alternative living experience. The utopian communities were social microcosms working within the confines of a self constructed political, social and economic system. The members committed to a shared vision and ideology and to one another. They based their relationships on mutual dependence, respect for individual liberty, protection of group beliefs, and support for gender equality. An environment evolved where communal participants viewed themselves as members of a larger non-biological family, a radical concept in nineteenth century America.

For some of the communalists, membership in the colony replaced the social and economic need for the biological family. This could help to explain why single mothers, widows and older single women found these colonies attractive. Radical colonies accepted women who deviated from the traditional female archetype. While families played a significant role in colony life, communal families successfully replaced the need for the traditional biological family.⁸ Biological families were certainly present but not exclusive. Colonists at Home and Equality held communal relationships a priority, a factor indicative of their success.

What else brought these men and women to these communities and what did they anticipate by joining? Some women expected less rigid societal norms—communities which allowed greater personal and political liberty extending from shared work to shared decision making. Some men expected economic equality allowing them to meet societal and personal norms of providing for the family's economic needs. Yet for many individuals, the only change was geography. How did the place affect women's experiences? How did these utopian

⁸ William L. Smith, *Families and Communes: An Examination of Nontraditional Lifestyles* (London: Sage Publications, 1999), 12-13.

communities create a framework that allowed for members to correct societal flaws and practice individual liberty? How did these colonies create a space that allowed women to create different identities? Did those identities change over time and how did these colonies accommodate traditional gender roles and sex typing? How did living in a utopian collective impact the way that women created community and interacted within that community? This study attempts to address these questions, suggesting that the women of Home and Equality participated and constructed communities based on self interest, balancing radical beliefs against conventional attitudes.

Men and women frustrated by inaction by reform-minded politicians and divisive political party factions conceived and founded Equality in 1897. Due to the economic crisis of the 1890s and the building agrarian revolt, the reform minded Populist Party failed to unequivocally challenge the dominant Republican and Democratic Party. Although the Democratic Party in 1896 took up some Populist concerns, neither party genuinely embraced reform. It was in that political climate that the National Union of the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth (BCC) was founded. The BCC sought to reform the country by encouraging and supporting socialist organizations and activities. Support came in the form of propaganda, newspapers and eventually the establishment of its own utopian colony. Loosely associated with Social Democracy of America (SDA) through outspoken union leader, Eugene V. Debs, the BCC made plans to socialize the entire state of Washington, a place certainly receptive to such movements. Although Debs took on an ancillary role in Equality, he and other notable figures such as Henry Demarest Lloyd brought attention to the utopian undertaking.

The BCC's first attempt at colonization resulted in the creation of Equality, located in the woods south of Bellingham, Washington. Modeled after the works of reformer Edward Bellamy, reformers made Equality a socialist experiment. The BCC created a colony based on a co-operative foundation, but problems arose from distance. The executive board governed the colony from St. Louis and other far reaches at first, slowing down the decision making process. Actual onsite members, both men and women, developed the colony. After selecting the site, members began the arduous task of physically building the colony. Although the BCC had a direct hand in the creation of the colony, colony members not honorary members like Debs and Lloyd, handled the day to day operations.

The women of Equality actively participated in the founding of their colony and sustained. These women organized their labor, established primary school curricula, taught school, provided three meals each day, laundered clothes, cleaned, planted, harvested crops, milked the cows, and at times edited the colony's publication *Industrial Freedom*. Equality's women, instrumental in the colony's development, also influenced its overall success. However, their story is one that has yet been developed.

Unlike its neighbor to the North, Home Colony's founders did not belong to any external organizations half way across the continent. Instead, the founders emerged from another failed utopian experiment south of Tacoma, Washington. Traveling north of Tacoma to the Key Peninsula, former residents of the Glennis Cooperative founded Home in 1896 on the shores of Puget Sound. Although rooted in basic socialist, communal values, Home did not value one ideology over another but instead appreciated all visions and philosophies equally. The founders created a colony that championed and practiced freedom and liberty.

Like Equality, the women of Home actively participated in the development and success of the colony. However, unlike Equality, Home's founders did not intend for the colony to function cooperatively. Workers at Home did not unite economic interests or share in capital. Labor in the colony was voluntary, emphasizing individual choice and liberty. Accentuating liberty and choice allowed women the opportunity to pursue their own interests, not necessarily the concerns or desires of colony leaders. As a result, the women of Home turned towards scholarly work, providing intellectual life to the colony. They lectured, lead discussions, participated actively in debates, offered art lessons, and edited their own journals. Their involvement was indispensable and like the women of Equality, Home's female members not only participated in the colony, they created and sustained it.

In both colonies, women's roles were far from auxiliary. Women developed and influenced the overall success of both colonies. The journeys and experiences of these women is a story that has yet to be developed. Their story reveals that women in the late nineteenth century could escape both social stigma and traditional roles to find an intellectual safe haven. Their experiences, attitudes, hardships and perceptions allow us to understand why they would leave larger society and engage in and endure these utopian experiments.

Much of the early scholarship on utopian societies highlighted collective societies notable for challenging social norms or those which practiced an alternative economic system. Such scholarship is reminiscent of early women's history in its attempt to draw attention to the existence of utopianism, without providing much analysis. Calverton's *Where Angels Dared to*

Tread provides an early organizational framework for utopian histories.⁹ He divides the colonies into individual chapters with the purpose of describing their history, without making links to larger reform movements or reaching conclusions. He acknowledges both religious and economic involvement within each of the colonies, but overall, Calverton desired to provide a text that described some of the significant American colonies of the 17th-20th centuries.

Building upon earlier scholarship, Pitzer's *America's Communal Utopias* provides a similar organizational framework.¹⁰ The book contributes a chapter on each utopian community while recognizing the larger context for the development of each colony. Pitzer explained not only the foundational ideas for each colony but why the individuals sought to remove themselves from the larger society in each of their respective time periods. Pitzer's work made use of an approach known as "developmental communalism," which examines utopian movements and how these movements change over time, from origin to development and resolution. Pitzer argued that the approach allows historians to see utopian colonies as being more active: "Anything but static, as the term *utopian* immediately implied to earlier writers, the communes of the most vital historic and current movements are creatively engaged in a developmental process that both precedes and may extend well after the communal phase."¹¹ Pitzer demonstrated that utopian colonies were part of a larger movement for social change.

This approach fits well with the study of Home and Equality. Home Colony emerged from the failures of an early utopian community. When it officially dissolved, many of its members continued to live at Home. Their utopia may have legally ended but their journey to live differently from others did not. Equality's foundation was part of a larger movement born

⁹ Victor Francis Calverton, *Where Angels Dared to Tread: Socialist and Communist Utopian Colonies in the United States* (Freeport, New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1941).

¹⁰ Donald Pitzer, ed., *America's Communal Utopias* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 12.

out of political division. Although the colony morphed into a new colony (Freeland) that later dissolved, the cooperative framework and socialist beliefs extended well outside the confines of the small northwestern community. Although Pitzer links utopian movements to the larger reform periods, he does not address women's role in social, economic and political reform nor the impact of these reform movements on women and gender relationships.

Other works have moved away from the survey approach to Pitzer's developmental approach. The Friesens' *Palgrave Companion* broke down utopian communities by orthodoxy, purpose, chronology, need, and organization.¹² Miller's *The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth-Century America* segmented each colony into a chronological category such as "New Communes, 1900-1920" and "The Quiet Twenties and the Roaring Thirties."¹³ Like Calverton, the Friesens, and Pitzer, Miller's book organized utopian colonies by their respective time periods. However, unlike the other historians, in addition to detailing some of the well known and longer lasting colonies, Miller discussed lesser known utopian communities such as the Women's Commonwealth in Texas, Durham in California and the Washington colonies of Home, Equality, Burley, Freeland, and Lopez Island. Unlike his contemporaries, Miller addressed women in his study. By touching on these other colonies, Miller alerted the reader that there are far more colonies than what might be popularly understood. In grouping the colonies chronologically by chapter and then within the chapter by religious affiliation or regional location, he provided a solid structure that allows the reader to differentiate the various utopian communities and characterize each.

¹² John W. Friesen and Virginia Lyons Friesen, *The Palgrave Companion to North American Utopias* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillan, 2004).

¹³ Timothy Miller, *The Quest for Utopia in Twentieth Century America: Volume 1 1900-1960* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1998).

Using a case study approach, Arthur Bestor's much revered *Backwoods Utopias* looked not at a multitude of utopian communities but instead the history of Robert Owen's New Harmony. Bestor asserted that antebellum utopian leaders created communities to leverage the colonies against the larger society to force the conditions for change and reform.¹⁴ Bestor suggested that smaller communities had more success striving for perfection and as a result, these societies become guideposts for a larger society to emulate or mirror. To support his argument, he analyzed the New Harmony colony in southern Indiana. Although short lived, New Harmony became a model experimental community in many ways. Perhaps more Jeffersonian than credited, Owen believed that a truly happy society could not exist within the constructs of an overpopulated urban setting. Instead, those desiring satisfaction with life and liberty must seek it from the establishment of smaller, more rural communities where people, work and social life could be interconnected. Bestor advanced that New Harmony's economic ideology and educational programs offered an example from which both larger society and other utopian communities could draw from. Bestor's groundbreaking 1950 study of New Harmony provided impetus for other historians to delve into the untold stories of the American utopian communities. His analysis that small colonies hoped to stimulate larger, more radical change is certainly relevant to Washington's Equality colony—a colony that hoped to help shape the state of Washington into a socialist empire.

Over two decades after Bestor's study, Robert Fogarty's work unearthed the post Civil War communitarians and challenged Bestor's premise on the success of antebellum movements versus their post-war counterparts. Fogarty asserted that the communitarians who developed post-war responded to the problems of the era, with strong social purpose and intent to deal with

¹⁴ Arthur Bestor, *Backwoods Utopias: The Sectarian and Owenite Phases of Communitarian Socialism in America: 1663-1829* (Philadelphia: University of Philadelphia Press, 1950), 3.

the problems of the time period.¹⁵ His work provided attention to the utopian colonies of this era, since much attention had been paid to the Shakers, Oneida, New Harmony, and Brook Farm, all antebellum movements. He argued that utopian communities created “enclaves of difference,” offering people an opportunity to gain freedom through unity, cooperative planning and decision making. The colonies hoped to create new traditions and institutions to be emulated by others.¹⁶ To assert his argument that these post-war colonies responded successfully to societal problems, he provided examples of colonies from the era and demonstrated how each responded to various issues. As evidence, he drew upon the political development and downfall of the Populist Party and the economic depression of the early to mid 1890s. The utopian settlements of this time, including both Home and Equality, reacted to industrial capitalism and the lack of electoral reforms needed to strengthen democratic principles. Fogarty’s argument emphasized the significance of the late nineteenth-century colonies and defended these movements as being of equal value to antebellum utopias. But like so many other communal scholars, Bestor and Fogarty focused on the cause for colony development and less on the impact of the colony on the individual, much less, gender relations.

Regional utopian studies linked time period and the role of environment in communal development. For utopian communities with fewer members such as those in the West, the task of unearthing their story is cumbersome at best. People often settled the West in groups, so it is difficult to ascertain whether a community is truly utopian or whether it was just settled by a group of likeminded individuals who shared a cultural or immigrant background. Regional utopian studies provide a cohesive framework that allows the reader to analyze the colonies

¹⁵ Robert S. Fogarty, “American Communes, 1865-1914,” *Journal of American Studies* 2 (August 1975): 145-146.

¹⁶ Robert S. Fogarty, *All Things New: American Communes and Utopian Movements, 1860-1914* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 23, 215.

using region as a backdrop for development. This approach is particularly useful when studying the late nineteenth century because it allows the historian the opportunity to analyze how industrial capitalism triggered population growth and further westward expansion. Many people moved to the West to pursue utopian settlements in order to escape institutions and structures of the East and find a place more agreeable to reform and change.

Three studies offer a regional analysis of the western utopian experience. Robert Hine's *California's Utopian Colonies* exposed the rich history of California's multifaceted utopian movements, ranging from the 1850s to the 1970s.¹⁷ Hine offered glimpses at factors which could explain why California was home to so many utopian communities. Suggesting that overall population growth tied to high transience levels and few personal roots in the West led individuals to capitalize upon the mild climate, fertile soil, available land, and ripe political and social environment to form utopian communities across the state.¹⁸ James Kopp's recent study, *Eden Within Eden* examines the utopian history of Oregon.¹⁹ Like Hine, Kopp tied geographic features and an ability to achieve isolation as factors as to why utopian communities sprang up here in the nineteenth and later twentieth century. Charles LeWarne's *Utopias on Puget Sound 1885-1920* provided the first large scale historical examination of Washington's utopian communities.²⁰ Following in the trend of communal studies that were influenced by the 1960s and 1970s social history movements, LeWarne's book brought to light the little known history of the Puget Sound colonies. Similar to Calverton, the Friesens and Pitzer, LeWarne's purpose was to introduce the reader to the utopian communities that provided a foundational backdrop for the

¹⁷ Robert V. Hine, *California's Utopian Colonies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1983).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 9-11.

¹⁹ James J. Kopp, *Eden Within Eden: Oregon's Utopian Heritage* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2009).

²⁰ Charles Pierce LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound, 1885-1915* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975).

progressive and often radical leanings of the territory and later state of Washington.

Washington's unique political and social history and its inimitable geography attracted utopian groups to the region. LeWarne wrote the book at a time when historians of communal studies began to consider gender as category of analysis but his intent was to cultivate scholarship on the Pacific Northwest by exposing the rich history of communitarian movements in the Puget Sound.²¹

Women's historians began to analyze gender in relation to communal movements in the late twentieth century. Building off of E.P. Thompson's assertion in *The Making of the English Working Class* and Gerda Lerner's criticisms of compensatory and contribution history, Mary Jo Buhle argued that women were present at the making of their distinctive gender consciousness and self acknowledgement as a social, cultural and political group. Buhle's book, *Women and American Socialism, 1870-1920*, utilized Thompson's examination of working class culture and consciousness but added a new dimension—explaining women's roles, class, gender politics and the rise of American Socialism as a reaction to the consolidation of corporate capitalism.²² Encouraged by the earlier works of Lerner and Thompson, Buhle crafted a study that demonstrated how radical and working class women established an extraordinary presence and distinctive culture, something she argued is unique to American Socialism.

Perhaps this radical culture is not solely unique to American Socialism but also characteristic of late nineteenth century American utopian colonies. The women living at Home Colony created a culture distinct from the world outside. These radical and working class women achieved what Buhle calls "collective consciousness," linking "womanhood" and "sisterhood" to political ideology and gathering into organizations and associations closed off to

²¹ Charles Pierce LeWarne, e-mail message to author, August 8, 2011.

²² Mari Jo Buhle, *Women and American Socialism: 1870-1920* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1981), xiii-xiv.

members of the opposite sex.²³ This collective consciousness was present in Equality Colony with a mixed-set commune. In several cases, the BCC and board of directors delegated departments and jobs to women. This structure provided the women power and authority to correct problems, establish work routines and create policy that affected the entire membership.

The inner workings of that power relationship is exactly what Joan Scott so effectively articulated and, as a result, influenced a generation of women's historians. She argued that historical representations of women and men could be inaccurate or should at least be questioned because those representations are based on political discourse from those with power and control. In large part, those with power, according to Scott, were usually men. Scott asserted that historians must critique history as an incomplete record of the past, because those who produced the knowledge were in a political position to exclude or subordinate women.²⁴ She drew upon and challenged earlier historians of women through her juxtaposition of postmodernist theory with earlier historical methodologies:

Gender and "politics" are thus antithetical neither to one another nor to recovery of the female subject. Broadly defined they dissolve distinctions between public and private and avoid arguments about the separate and distinctive qualities of women's character and experience. They challenge the accuracy of fixed binary distinctions between men and women in the past and present, and expose the very political nature of a history written in those terms... The realization of the radical potential of women's history comes in the writing of histories that focus on women's experiences and analyze the ways in which politics construct gender and gender construct politics. Feminist history then becomes not the recounting of great deeds performed by women but the exposure of the often silent and hidden operations of gender that are nonetheless present and defining forces in the organization of most societies.²⁵

She claimed that historians of women only reinforced hierarchy and separatism, but by introducing postmodern theory, she encouraged historians to consciously reexamine the

²³Ibid., xv.

²⁴Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, revised edition (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), 26.

²⁵ Scott, 26-27.

construction of women's identities. She also created space for historians to analyze the political and social factors involved in how women ideologically saw themselves in historical context.²⁶

To Scott and the other poststructuralists like Joanne Meyerowitz, gender construction is never truly static; it vacillates because politics and culture transform society and society defines gender roles and meanings.²⁷ Scott and Meyerowitz provide a pathway towards understanding how the independent and radical women of Home and Equality saw themselves in the midst of their utopian experiments.

Historians who study communal societies want to understand how participating in such a group allows individuals to construct their own identities. For some women, certain communal societies offered them a way to avoid social stigma or social norms. Modern Times, a utopian colony found in the mid-nineteenth century on Long Island, New York, allowed women complete sexual and marital freedom. Mary Chilton, a woman in Modern Times, came to the colony after she and her husband separated, and the court system in the state where she previously resided awarded custody of her children to her ex-husband, giving her no legal right to her offspring. Chilton claimed that such a system was the result of the "chief evil of society": marriage.²⁸ Coming to Modern Times allowed a woman like Chilton the opportunity to construct a new identity and escape rigid gender roles. Forty years later and on the other side of the continent, women found great tolerance and acceptance at both Home and Equality.

²⁶ Joan Wallach Scott, "Introduction" in *Feminism and History*, ed. Joan Wallach Scott (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 11.

²⁷ Joanne Meyerowitz, "A History of 'Gender,'" *American Historical Review* 113 (December 2008): 1346-1347. For further examination of the debate on gender and linguistic analysis, see Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay on Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," in *Performing Feminisms: Feminist Critical Theory and Theater*, ed. Sue-Ellen Case (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 276-277. For another perspective on gender analysis, see Laura Lee Downs, "If 'Woman' is Just an Empty Category, Then Why Am I Afraid to Walk Alone at Night? Identity Politics Meets the Postmodern Subject," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 35 (April 1993): 429-431.

²⁸ Roger Wunderlich, *Low Living and High Thinking at Modern Times, New York* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1992), 83.

Within the colonies, women worked together and relied upon one another to construct their utopian societies. Rosabeth Moss Kanter suggests that this characteristic of autonomy allows for longevity and success.²⁹ Due to the nature of colony building at both Home and Equality, there was a high level of mutual dependence among women.³⁰ Working and relying upon one another required that utopian women orient themselves to the needs of the colony—allowing women to recognize their importance in keeping the community afloat. In the case of Home, Equality, and later Freeland, working together and committing to the success of the colony provided space for late nineteenth-century utopian women to become community builders. The women living inside Home and Equality felt accomplished and significant. For many, utopian living offered a far more liberating environment than that offered by the outside world.

Despite the contributions of Bestor, Pitzer, Fogarty and Kanter, few scholars of utopias focused on how women and men may have differently experienced and constructed utopian societies. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch's, *Women in Search of Utopia* collected recent scholarship on women in utopian communities. In her introduction, Baruch suggested that women and men understood the purpose of utopia differently. For men, utopias offered a place to escape from freedom; for women, utopias offered a way to create freedom. Baruch suggested:

Men seem to want to recover an imaginary perfection through rules and regulations. Women want to eliminate those restrictions, having been in the prison of gender for so long. For men, utopia is the ideal state; for most women, utopia is statelessness and the

²⁹ Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1972).

³⁰ In both cases of Home and Equality, the colonies were settled in primitive and isolated areas with little to no development present. Constructing the colonies was literally from the ground up. As a result, members had to depend on one another in order to physically and intellectually construct the colony. Equality was co-operative therefore all members were required to depend on one another for all labor. Work was divided up into departments, which each department being responsible for a certain task. Home colony was not co-operative yet members rose in a spirit of volunteerism to work together to build communal structures like the school and to assist members in building in their own homes.

overcoming of hierarchy and the traditional splits between human beings and nature, subject and other, man and woman, parent and child.³¹

Baruch contrasted hetero- and homo-social societies with one another attempting to distinguish how women fared in women only communities from those that allowed both sexes.³² What is revealing about gender construction, the development of identity and its link to communal establishment was that historians hypothesized that women in homo social utopias were more egalitarian and less hierarchical. But from evidence available, it does not appear that the women and men of Home and Equality had different understandings of purpose.

In her study of the Woman's Commonwealth, A. Harriette Andreadis, emphasized how the women in the mid to late nineteenth century created a homo-social community that emphasized networking and interdependence so that the women in the utopian colony could achieve economic independence and survive without having male support.³³ However in Diane Lebow's article "Rethinking Matriliney Among the Hopi," women in a hetero-social community gained equality and had economic and social independence outside of marriage.³⁴ Rohrlich and Baruch's selection of these essays provide models for historians to shift approaches and paradigms on how utopian women and men construct their own identities while building a community.

³¹ Elaine Hoffman Baruch, "Introduction I," in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), xii.

³² Ruby Rohrlich, "Introduction II," in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), xvi. Rohrlich uses the term "social" instead of "sexual" because she wants to suggest the significance of the social relationship between women in homosocial communities and does not want to insinuate that sexual preference was the overarching factor for the establishment of the utopian community.

³³ A. Harriette Andreadis, "The Woman's Commonwealth: Utopia in Nineteenth-Century Texas," in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 92.

³⁴ Diane Lebow, "Rethinking Matriliney Among the Hopi," in *Women in Search of Utopia: Mavericks and Mythmakers*, ed. Ruby Rohrlich and Elaine Hoffman Baruch (New York: Schocken Books, 1984), 8-20.

Published six years later, Carol Kolmerten's *Women in Utopia* examined communal societies through the eyes of women, but in contrast to Rohrllich and Baruch, Kolmerten's text sought to examine how women participated in patriarchal utopian societies.³⁵ Arguing that "utopia has always been conceived as a male construct," she suggested that the same work men expected of women outside of the utopia oftentimes burdened them within utopian communities, their (women's) utopian dreams rarely coming to fruition.³⁶ Equality in particular had a large fluctuating population, partially due to disappointments for more open gender roles. Women expecting cooperative labor found that while they shared certain tasks such as cooking, other tasks, such as raising the children and cleaning the home, still fell under a woman's responsibilities. Kolmerten challenged historians to consider the history of early American utopian communities from the perspective of women. During the antebellum era, the Cult of True Womanhood defined the women's sphere and in many cases regulated the expectations for middle and upper class women. The author posited that despite Robert Owen's attempts to create an egalitarian society where men no longer "enslaved" women, Owenite communities could not break free from the confluence of cultural and gender ideology.³⁷ Kolmerten's analysis of a *New Harmony Gazette*'s editorial demonstrated the tension within the community regarding women's roles:

Men...needed to direct women's inventive powers; otherwise, women would occupy their time with "childish feats" such as quilting—the very domestic tasks that young women were taught in the New Harmony schools to perform, and the very tasks that New Harmony women had to perform for the community to survive. Women at New Harmony were thus ideologically trapped: their "proper" domestic tasks were not, in Robert Dale Owen's eyes at least, a credit to the community, yet they still had to get done. Whether the male editors were advising women to be traditional True Women or

³⁵ This is not necessarily analogous to Rohrllich and Baruch's term 'heterosocial'. Kolmerten's intention is to reveal women's agency in those utopian communities where men traditionally held power.

³⁶ Carol A. Kolmerten, *Women in Utopia: The Ideology of Gender in the American Owenite Communities* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), 2.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 12.

advising them to give up their quilting as a “silly vanity,” women as a sex were bound to displease some group in the community.³⁸

Kolmerton explored other attempts at creating gender equality in colonies outside of New Harmony but in each case, entrenched gender ideologies failed to allow true equality.

Despite contributions of the past two decades to evaluate women’s roles in utopian colonies, none have examined women’s roles in colonies of the Pacific Northwest, a region presumed to offer women more opportunities. In this study, I analyze gender roles to determine how the women of Home and Equality actively created and participated in their utopian colonies. This research offers a new angle on western settlement and communal studies. Like other western settlements, these utopian communities celebrated progressive and even radical ideas. However, Home and Equality drew populations from across the country. Women, in particular, sought a liberal environment that would allow them to experience alternative lifestyles that would relieve them of the social and economic pressures found in other places of the country. This mixture of relaxed social norms, isolation, and radical ideas made these colonies appealing for women. My work reveals women’s stories and experiences living in Home and Equality. I explain why they settled, social treatment, and how they interacted within the community in order to assert their independence and establish their own agency and power discourse within the colony. This study finds that women, living in isolated western settlements, built communities supportive of their social, political and economic needs.

In the second chapter, I provide the general history of Equality and Home, the role of women in their founding, and struggles within the colony. The chapter analyzes political, social and economic clashes, looking at both internal and external causes. Women took on leadership roles in the early stages of colony development. Although Home and Equality developed

³⁸ Quoted in Kolmerten, 87.

differently, women in both colonies worked to create norms, laws and structures that extended democratic principles and supported progressive and at times radical ideas.

Chapter Three analyzes the way each colony constructed gender and how ideals for equality were met. The chapter focuses on the degree of sex equality within each colony and how each sought to attract and keep members of both sexes. The chapter also examines how the colonies practiced their visions of enlightened liberty and equality. I illustrate how women participated in the political and social environment at Home and Equality and how through their actions, they not only built their colonies but influenced the ideals and practices.

As the Puget Sound colonists constructed their utopias in remote and unsettled lands, labor took on a fundamental role in the development, health and success of each colony. Chapter Four explores the nature of work and the type of labor women did in these two colonies. Women's work largely contributed to the overall success of the colony. Women in both colonies also benefitted from their labor. Although each colony had a different perspective on managing and directing work, women still worked in traditional sex-segregated labor. Only in rare occasions did these utopian women take on the type of labor atypical to women living in larger society.

I conclude by arguing that the women of Home and Equality were not auxiliary to the colony's success—they worked equally hard to construct and compel the colony towards progress and in the process, these women gained self-worth and a sense of accomplishment. Chapter Five examines the ways that Home and Equality offered members a refuge from the rigid norms associated with the late nineteenth century Victorian era and industrial capitalism. I analyze several factors to demonstrate the ways that men and women struggled in Home and

Equality and explore how the women of Home and Equality found their own success by creating conditions that supported themselves and their communities.

In researching this thesis, I tried to understand what drew men and women to Home and Equality. Although the Puget Sound environment and climate are quite appealing, I kept returning to the moment in history. The confluence of gilded age politics, industrial capitalism and lack of meaningful electoral reforms led many people to look at alternative living arrangements. If larger society could not be changed by the individual perhaps a smaller community could create an alternative environment. Utopians broke away from society because society disappointed them repeatedly. The utopian community provided an escape from the harsh realities of the era. The women of Home and Equality wanted a better life. Some members found their personal utopia in Home or Equality, while others struggled, left and searched for their utopia elsewhere. Their search for utopia was ongoing and never quite complete.

Researching these utopians was no easy task. Charles LeWarne's work provided the base for my own research. His history of Home and Equality is the first and only monograph that provides a thorough survey of all Puget Sound colonies. As for primary sources, archivists preserved some member interviews conducted in the 1960s and 1970s, by LeWarne and Frederick Smith. Smith interviewed members in the late 1960s and early 1970s, but due to the age of the tapes, several are difficult to decipher. On the audible tapes, Smith's questions have an informal quality to them, requiring the historian to sift through the interviews for rare gems. Over the years, a few former colony members left remembrances and memoirs of their lives at Home and Equality. Of course, like so many primary sources, the stories they tell can offer distorted perspectives. However, when compared to other records such as newspapers and

interviews, these memoirs become rather useful. Like Sherry Katz suggested, I found myself continually researching around my subjects to better understand everyday events and those crises, struggles, and issues that created turmoil for each colony. Sherry Katz's work on "Excavating Radical Women" offers one of the most practical approaches to researching utopian women. Katz suggests mining manuscripts and oral histories working out in concentric circles to find related primary sources through newspapers and other periodicals.³⁹ Much of Katz's work revolved around the use of newspapers and fortunately, many of the colony newspapers have survived. These can be easily accessed thanks to available technology and the work of local, state, and national archivists. Like other historians, I deeply wish for more primary sources available about this topic. I wanted to stumble across letters kept in boxes in someone's attic or the photo album that a relative had been secretly hiding for generations, but alas, this did not happen. Finding those sources is a taste of utopia for the historian and while I did not find mine, I still hold on to the dream that I will locate something that helps illuminate the story of women in Pacific Northwest utopian communities.

How did these colonists see themselves? How did they understand their lives, their identities, and their role in creating a colony? It would be incorrect to assume that regardless of colony, they experienced life or constructed their own identities in a similar manner. Although in some cases, men and women fell into traditional labor roles, these colonies were, after all, rather unconventional. Women and men held political power and influential positions. Equality colony allowed both men and women the opportunity to purchase stock thus allowing both sexes that ability to hold their own lot in the formation of the colony and participate in the democratic process. Home offered sex equality as well. Men and women were among the first founders,

³⁹ Sherry J. Katz, "Researching Around Our Subjects:"Excavating Radical Women," *Journal of Women's History*, 20 no. 1 (Spring 2008), 168.

receiving certificates of membership. The colony leaders did not direct women at Home to participate in any assigned economic task; instead women utilized choice in what work they wanted to complete. As a result, radical women such as Lois Waisbrooker found it an appealing utopia because the colony created a system that promoted and valued individual liberty. For both men and women, living in a colony provided them with an opportunity to experience life differently than they had outside of the colony. Perhaps domestic duties did not differ, but certainly participating in the utopian colony shaped their identities and helped these men and women recognize how their communities needed their support to ensure longevity and financial success.

Utopian colonies offered their members ways to create alternative societies that demonstrated compassion and tolerance. In 1896, Henry Demarest Lloyd, largely a supporter of communitarian movements, and later the President of the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth (BCC), the national union that created Equality Colony, stated:

Only within these [utopian] communities has there been seen in the wide borders of the United States a social life where hunger and cold, prostitution, intemperance, poverty, slavery, crime, premature old age, and unnecessary mortality, panic and industrial terror have been abolished. If they had done this for a year, they would have deserved to be called the only successful 'society' on this continent, and some of them are generations old. They are little oases of people in our desert of persons. All this has not been done by saints in heaven, but on earth by average men and women.⁴⁰

The people of Home, Equality and later Freeland created an oasis not in a desert but rather in the forests of the Pacific Northwest. In each case, they sought to establish a society that offered a solution to the problems plaguing larger society and yet in many cases the larger surrounding society created the most hostility and trouble for these utopian settlers, leading to legal challenges and the break-up of both Home and Equality. But, the women at Home, Equality, and

⁴⁰ Cited in Fogarty, "American Communes," 161. It is important to note that Lloyd has given credit to women as well as men for their work in building utopias that offered alternative solutions to the problems plaguing the country at the time.

later Freeland optimistically moved forward. They believed that they could make a difference. They did not wait for providential involvement or the political bureaucracy in Washington D.C. to create societal change; instead, they took up a call for a different type of enterprise. Unlike Emma Goldman and other religious leaders and radicals skeptical of their mission, these utopians believed that only by withdrawing from the larger population could an alternative society develop. In order to create utopias, they had to find remote locations. Although this mission created several hardships and challenges, that adventure and desire to fulfill their own needs led these visionaries to the towering evergreens nestled alongside Puget Sound.

The founders of Home and Equality articulated a vision based on shared goals and experiences because they knew that this was the key to sustainability. When those goals became muddled or membership so diverse and unwilling to abide by earlier agreed upon rules and expectations, divisions emerged that threatened the life and success of each colony. Established at the end of the nineteenth century, the founders of Home and Equality experienced earlier reform movements. These founders anticipated challenges and created a set of expectations flexible enough to meet the members' various needs. These colonies created rules which challenged economic, political and gender norms and allowed for men and women to imagine and form a community that not only eschewed capitalism but granted them more space to realize alternatives to rigid roles. While both colonies were unable to throw off all of the characteristics and markers of traditional gender roles in an industrial capitalist society, women at Home and Equality create a life radically divergent from that of the outside world.

CHAPTER TWO

HOME AND EQUALITY: COMMITMENT TO THE UTOPIAN VISION

“But let us be emphatic. The germ of success is here. We believe that with all our might. Little hindrances there are, but that is so with everything that is important. Comrades, the future is ours; never doubt that.”¹ Such optimistic words reminded the readers of *Industrial Freedom* that a utopian vision could be realized in the Pacific Northwest. Randolph identified the “germ of success” which could grow as long as the people took on the necessary hard work. Near the end of the nineteenth century, several utopian colonies called the Pacific Northwest home. What drew women to certain colonies and away from others? Like utopian communities in other parts of the country, people living in the Pacific Northwest colony hoped to find an alternative to the larger social, political and economic problems facing the country. The utopian women of Home and Equality were idealistic but they also held practical concerns. Although they sought out alternative living experiences, they still had basic needs. They needed a place to live, food, access to a social network, and a certain level of personal satisfaction or happiness. Although they may not have attained the future initially desired, for some women, Home and Equality provided the ideological underpinnings and fundamental needs that allowed them the opportunity to experience, even for a short time, an alternative utopian lifestyle.

For both colonies the initial radical and alternative utopian ideals are found in the founding documents and bylaws. Neither Home’s nor Equality’s founding documents address sex typing, sex discrimination and assigned gender roles. Both documents refer to individuals simply as ‘members’. Both colonies opened up membership to both men and women equally. Home’s Articles of Incorporation always reference “she” and “he” instead of using the standard

¹ W.C.B. Randolph “Equality Colony Notes,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), December 24, 1898, 4.

gendered language of “he” to refer to both sexes. Because the BCC created Equality Colony in the co-operative framework there is specific reference in the bylaws to pay equalization, “Each adult member shall be allowed equal pay for a day’s work.”² The Laws Governing the Colonies also specify that any member may choose any occupation, although as I examine in Chapter 4, Equality placed constraints on labor assignments within the colony.

Home Colony

The United States emerged from the Panic of 1893, up until that point, the worst economic depression in American history. Alternative political parties, such as the Populist Party, found themselves squeezed out by the larger, dominant political parties. Union efforts to build support for workers’ rights were met with government and business retaliatory tactics such as injunctions and police and military violence towards striking workers. Responding to this contentious and often violent climate, utopians believed that they could create an alternative community, one that embraced individualism, equality and radical notions of gender. Such a community would find a home in the Pacific Northwest.

Amidst the towering firs and the serene waters of Von Geldern Cove, also known as Joe’s Bay, lies a town called Home. Founded in 1896 at a beautiful inlet on Puget Sound on the Key Peninsula, Home was the creation of three disheartened utopians and their families, George and Sylvia Allen, Oliver and Delana Verity and B.F. and Annie O’Dell. These families, former residents of the short lived Glennis Cooperative, an intentional socialist colony south of Tacoma, created a colony that challenged the economic and social norms of the late nineteenth century. The land was mostly uninhabited and available for purchase and settlement. Unlike so many utopian colonies in Oregon and California, the land at Joe’s Bay did not suit large scale farming. Geography limited economic enterprises to the timber industry, clamming, fishing, and locally

² “Laws Governing Colonies of the BCC,” 4.

produced goods for sale or trade. The site offered challenges since the land needed to be cleared, but neighboring communities, including Tacoma, offered a nearby market for the sale of wood. Members used money earned from timber sales to help pay locally incurred debts from land and transportation costs associated with colony development.

The Allen, Verity and O'Dell families wanted to create a colony that promoted cooperative living but also allowed for individual liberty. Frustrated by the rigid direction that the Glennis Cooperative Colony had taken and the lack of dedication on the part of the members, these three families hoped to pursue their desire to live communally while correcting the flaws that emerged from their earlier experience. Despite the fact that Glennis, a small colony, developed a school, a few shops and a post office, it failed to provide for the type of liberty that the three families so desperately desired. Oliver Verity indicated, "The desire of the many at Glennis to make by-laws restricting others from doing things that in reality were private matters, causing so many meetings which were noise and bred inharmony from the diversified views of what should be done, not only made us lose interest in the meetings, but finally disgusted us at the wrangles and disputes over petty matters."³ When only seven members remained, the colony dissolved and the Verity, Allen and O'Dell families utilized what little money was left in the treasury to make the first down payment for the land at Home.

As they physically built their colony so too did these founders manifest their fundamental beliefs in both land distribution and what the community should champion and value. The Articles of Incorporation, written and signed by men and women less than two years after the demise of Glennis, provided the name and the membership requirements for this new association. The Mutual Home Association (MHA), as it would be known, articulated both the goals and the framework for land management within the new utopian colony. The Articles laid

³ Quoted in LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 168-169.

out the association's purpose to "assist its members in obtaining and building homes for themselves and to aid in establishing better social and moral conditions."⁴ This is the only place in the Articles where the vision of the colony is expressed. The lack of specificity addressed the founders' complaints about the rigidity of Glennis and opened the door to interpretation and the expression of individual liberty. The Articles also provided for future expansion as long as two or more members wanted to locate elsewhere. This is symbolic of the founders' optimism that their attempt at utopian colonization would succeed and catch on elsewhere. But, it is clear that the founders did not see expansion as a priority, since further discussion and advancement of this goal failed to materialize.

Although the founders laid out a vision, the Articles also addressed land management. Initially the founders purchased twenty-six acres of land to settle. To gain membership in the association, the prospective member paid for a parcel of land, annual tax assessments and a \$1.00 membership fee for a certificate. Money gained through membership fees and land purchases allowed the MHA to purchase additional land for further expansion. However, individuals did not privately hold the land. Instead, the MHA actually owned the land, but any buildings or improvements on the property belonged to the MHA member who lived on the land.⁵ Coupled with a loosely structured government, Home's elected officials only managed membership inquiries and the distribution of land parcels. This established a symbiosis between settlers and the MHA—but the MHA refused to meddle in the affairs of individuals unless they conflicted with the land policies outlined in the Articles. The Articles of Incorporation also articulated lot size. Size of the plot was limited to no smaller than one acre and no larger than two acres. Land size prevented corporate farming but allowed for subsistence farming and gardening. Women,

⁴Articles of Incorporation and Agreement, Mutual Home Association, 17 January 1898, folder 7 box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

⁵ Ibid.

like men, could purchase land and could deed land (in the case of death) to whomever the member chose (although the articles outlined a procedure in case the wishes of the deceased were unclear)⁶. On January 17, 1898, seventeen individuals, ten men and seven women, including Sylvia Allen, Delana Verity, Annie O'Dell, Mattie Penhallow, Ella Wren, Hattie Thomson and Eliza King signed the MHA Articles of Incorporation. While women founded the colony and were among its first members, men such as Oliver Verity, George Allen, H.B. Wren and Hugh Thomson, held the first leadership positions. No women served on the first board of trustees.⁷

Believing that individual liberty should be valued above all meant that the founders not only tolerated, but encouraged, diversity of thought and expression. Verity explained that Home Colony members "...could follow their own line of action, no matter how much it may differ from the custom of the past or present, without censure or ostracism from their neighbor."⁸ By supporting individual liberty, members would no longer feel burdened by societal constraints. Without these constraints, new societal norms could develop—norms that would promote social and economic equality, and discourage competition, thus fulfilling the founder's primary goals. In an early edition of the colony newspaper, *Discontent: Mother of Progress*, Verity asserted the colony's embrace of anarchism:

⁶ American coverture law saw a transition during the late nineteenth/early twentieth century. Western women in particular were able to gain land and deed land during this time period. Oregon Territory's coverture laws not only allowed women to separate their personal assets (including inheritance) from their husbands but also allowed them to joint rights to marital property. See Richard H. Chused, "Late Nineteenth Century Married Women's Property Law: Reception of the Early Married Women's Property Acts by Courts and Legislatures," *American Journal of Legal History*, 29 No. 1 (January 1985): 3-35. Carole Shammas asserts that coverture laws increased the amount of women's wealth from the period of 1860-1890, demonstrating that women gained the opportunity to make economic decisions about their family's own financial well being. Carole Shammas, "Re-Assessing the Married Women's Property Acts," *Journal of Women's History*, 6 No. 1 (Spring 1994), 9-30.

⁷ Articles of Incorporation and Agreement, Mutual Home Association; LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 172.

⁸ Oliver Verity quoted in Brigitte Koenig, "Law and Disorder at Home: Free Love, Free Speech, and the Search for an Anarchist Utopia," *Labor History*, 45 No. 2 (2004): 201.

...For whenever the individuality of one is suppressed by the dictation of the many just that much of the progress and development of that one is lost to the world. Hence, when the ideas, or plan of action, is not agreeable to all, the minority is left free to unite around another plan of action, and will, of course, do so...Hence, our ideas give all freedom as far as we are concerned, and people may live communistically or separate as they may choose.⁹

Home's acceptance of nonconformity and tolerance of all political leanings encouraged many to join the community. However, embracing all leanings created conflict from time to time, resulting in legal troubles for the colony near its end.¹⁰

Home offered an alternative to the political, social and economic conditions of the late nineteenth century. This colony provided women an opportunity to escape oppression and explore alternative living experiences. As a result, Home's ideals of liberty and complete freedom opened the doors for a variety of individuals to settle and visit.

The colony drew a diverse array of individuals—single, married, widowed, parents, young, elderly, celebrities, people of different races and those from myriad life experiences and occupations and even the occasional cross dresser.¹¹ With Victorian morality on the rise in many parts of the country, Home offered tolerance for sexual difference. Some people settled permanently while others came temporarily to listen to a lecture or give one. And in one case, a group of individuals came to the colony to participate in America's favorite pastime—baseball. But in many cases, it was women who found solace in the non-judgmental colony.

In late 19th century America it was rare to find an entire community willing to embrace and protect individuals regardless of marital status, class or political leanings. Certainly Home's uniqueness emerged from the unconventional norms created. The community accepted

⁹ Oliver Verity, "Untitled," *Discontent: Mother of Progress*, (Home, WA), June 1, 1898, 2.

¹⁰ Lewis Haiman, interview by Charles LeWarne, 1971, Lewis Haiman Papers, University of Washington Library Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

¹¹ Referenced in LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 195. LeWarne identifies a mysterious person who used to walk along the sea wall. The individual is unnamed but his or her presence was accepted by the community. In LeWarne's interview with member Lewis Haiman, Haiman remarked that a cross dressing male lecturer spoke to the colony on the subject of cross dressing. Haiman, interview.

individuals from a wide variety of social, political and economic backgrounds. It forbade intolerance and instead created an egalitarian society. Although its founders never explicitly outlined any rules or regulations on treatment of men and women in the Articles of Incorporation, the people at Home treated one another equitably, regardless of sex, class or education. Verity, Allen and O'Dell's ideological commitments encouraged this egalitarian spirit. With individual liberty held as sacred, discrimination would not be tolerated. Prospective members and visitors accepted these parameters. As a result, Home broke social norms and transformed the gender identities of the people who settled there. Community members gained experiences, knowledge, and interactions that were atypical of the larger society. Women and men could embrace new roles and expectations outside of dominant experiences. Men could wear skirts; women could take on leadership roles. These interactions and experiences allowed men and women to recognize their own agency and create and express their own identity without societal constraints.

Neighboring colonies in the region knew of Home's support for personal freedom. In 1904, Ranford Worthing of San Diego, California, wrote to nearby Burley Colony, inquiring about moving to the colony. Kingsmill Commander, a BCC colony officer living in Burley, encouraged Worthing to consider looking at Home. "The people there are many of them anarchists; at least they all believe in freedom of every kind. Sex freedom is the rule of the place. I have many good friends there and nicer people you will never meet than the Comrades at Home."¹² If Commander's definition of sex freedom is consistent with that of other BCC members at the time, then he equated sex freedom with sex equality, similar to that of Equality

¹² Letter from Ranford Worthing to Burley Colony and Response by Kingsmill Commander, folder 1 of 5, Freeland Colony Files, 2078 T-0587e. University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

Colony.¹³ Although Worthing never inquired about gender equality at Burley, Commander felt the point important enough to volunteer it in the response. Commander clearly admired and celebrated Home's openness and acceptance.

Because few rules existed and the colony encouraged tolerance of all political beliefs, the community became known as an anarchist colony. Although the colonists never explicitly denied or considered themselves anarchists, the label stuck and further deepened the split between Home and nearby larger communities like Tacoma. After the federal government fined Charles Govan, the printer of the colony's newspaper *Discontent*, for distributing obscene material, Home's reputation as troublesome and radical spread. Later that year, local media further exploited an incident that occurred on nearby Anderson Island. According to the article, the colonists sailed to Anderson Island on ships with red flags and held an anarchist lecture in a local apple orchard. Home colonists wrote to the Tacoma *Evening News* defending themselves from what they viewed as malicious statements.¹⁴ Being labeled as an anarchist safe haven formed a radical stigma at the turn of the century, especially after the September 1901 assassination of President William McKinley by Leon Czolgosz, a known anarchist.

Although McKinley's assassination occurred on the other side of the continent and Czolgosz had no direct ties to the Pacific Northwest much less Home Colony, the fear of anarchists next door created significant tension between the colony and its neighboring communities. No previous colony in the region embodied and manifested individual liberty as Home managed to sustain. The assassination of McKinley triggered backlash from the local branch of the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR). Local newspapers questioned the loyalty of Home's members, and such consternation regarding Home's anarchist leanings led to the

¹³ Instability plagued Equality colony in 1904 and could be a reason why Commander suggested Home over Equality Colony.

¹⁴ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 176-177.

creation of the GAR's Loyal League in Tacoma. Believing that the members of Home sympathized with Czolgosz and his cause, the League, which appeared to coincide with the development of the Tacoma Vigilance Committee (TVC), sought to eradicate not just the community but also its members. The citizens of Tacoma seized upon the death of McKinley as an opportunity to expel their radical neighbors. While no evidence surfaced that Home colony members empathized with Czolgosz or his cause, the TVC and the Loyal League exploited the political environment to clear the Key Peninsula of the radicals next door. According to reports, the committee intended to break up the colony and if they failed, "vigorous steps will be taken and a nocturnal visit to the settlement may follow."¹⁵

Despite attempts made by the members of Home to demonstrate their peaceful nature, the TVC and GAR Loyal League sought retribution for Home's radicalism. According to Sylvia Retherford, the granddaughter of George and Sylvia Allen, when the Loyal League arrived to Captain Ed. Lorenz's ship, they requested that he take them in his boat to Home Colony. Legend has it that Captain Ed's ship had "motor trouble" resulting in what was normally a short trip lasting hours. By the time Captain Ed, sympathetic to the members of Home, realized that the feisty Loyal League members had calmed down, the ship motored back to Tacoma, never to dock at Von Geldern Cove.¹⁶ Despite the enthusiasm that the League and TVC had to eradicate Home, the captain helped stifle their passion to burn the town down.

Local concern over anarchist philosophy could not quell Home's radical leanings. The people of Home did not label themselves "anarchists" or "radicals;" this label came from outside

¹⁵ "Untitled," *The Spokesman-Review* (Spokane, WA), September 17, 1901, 3.

¹⁶ Ed Lorenz was continually memorialized for his quick thinking and dedication to the people of Home. It is also worth noting that Capt. Lorenz was the captain of the steamer, *Typhoon*, a ship that assisted Allen, Verity and O'Dell in transporting freight to the colony site when the community was in its earliest stages. Lorenz and Home had strong economic ties to one another. Sylvia Retherford, *Key Peninsula Newsletter* (Vaughn, WA), December 1979, folder 7 box 1. Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

media. Instead, men and women living in Home thought of themselves as “not meddling,” which to them meant that they weren’t radical. Because Home colony supported the right for individuals to “live and let live,” the colony sustained the right for its members to enjoy life outside of legal and religious constraints, including allowing its members to engage in “free love.”¹⁷

With Victorian morality still very much present, any encouragement of open sexual practice was deemed controversial, immoral and deviant. Howard Brier’s *Sawdust Empire*, published in 1957, suggested that support for open sexual practices triggered the larger population to view the Home colony as a place that encouraged “sex orgies”.¹⁸ Brier’s analysis offered that outsiders had a crude misunderstanding of “free love.” Even by modern standards, the phrase has superficial connotations. In an effort to clarify the “free love” concept, Home’s newspaper *Discontent* reprinted an article from the British journal *Lucifer the Lightbearer*, elaborating on the concept for a larger audience. The article explained, “Free love stands for sexual freedom and responsibility of men and women and this implies, as the indispensable condition, the economic independence of women. The self sustaining and self respecting woman does not sell her body and hence, she is compelled to.”¹⁹ The author asserts that when a woman enters into marriage she is forced to give up control of her own body.

Adding to the definition, Pam McAllister, Lois Waisbrooker’s biographer, noted that Victorian understanding of “free love” centered on the “belief that love and sexual relations should be free of coercion from church, state or hedonistic urgings. Sexual relations should be

¹⁷ Haiman, interview. In the interview, Haiman’s wife interjects that this philosophy is more in line with what it meant to be a “liberal” in the early 1970s (when the interview was conducted).

¹⁸ Howard Brier, *Sawdust Empire* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1958), 199.

¹⁹ E.C. Walker, *Lucifer*, reprinted in *Discontent: Mother of Progress* (Home, WA), May 11, 1898, 2.

the result of spiritual affinity and love.”²⁰ Home community members supported couples living together who did not undergo a legal and/or religious ceremony. Since the support of cohabitation outside of marriage is based on freedom from coercion from church or state, it was appropriate for Home to not only tolerate such practice but support it. Yet the media pounced upon this practice as unsavory and deviant. However, unlike the earlier attempt to physically attack the colony, this barrage came in the form of mudslinging. Newspapers carried stories on Home, poking fun at its members, indicating that they were generally irreverent to the law. Later in 1919, when the court system officially dissolved the MHA, questions arose regarding the legitimacy of the marriages in Home. When Attorney HA Peterson inquired about whether a marriage conducted in Home was solemnized the member responded with, “It was solemn enough for me.”²¹

The officers and members of Home did not immediately concern themselves about how the media depicted them. Instead, colony newspapers continued to herald their own take on individual liberty. The outside media attention may not have had the intended results—membership living at the colony increased from eighty-one colonists (twenty-three men, twenty-two women and thirty-six children) in May of 1901 (when early stories about free love broke) to ninety-four colonists (twenty-eight men, twenty-five women and forty-one children) in March of 1902. By 1903, the colony grew to 108 and by 1906, the community numbered 150.²² The colony’s acceptance of people, regardless of religious background, marital status, political leanings, and conformity to social norms drew people to the unique cultural and social

²⁰ Pam McAllister, “Women in the Lead: Waisbrooker’s Way to Peace,” Introduction to *A Sex Revolution* by Lois Waisbrooker (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1985), 3.

²¹ *News Tribune* (Tacoma, WA), January 17, 1919, folder 23, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

²² “Untitled,” *Discontent: Mother of Progress*, (Home, WA), May 23, 1902; “Untitled,” *Discontent: Mother of Progress* (Home, WA), March 23, 1902; Radium LeVene, “Home Colony,” folder 8, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma.

environment that was Home. Gertie Vose came to Home after splitting from her free love partner because she knew that the colony embraced unwed mothers and would not look down upon her son, Donald.

Colony newspaper articles reminded readers that there existed alternative perspectives about gender roles in analyzing daily and weekly events. For those members who sought to vicariously participate in the colony without moving to it, Home's newspapers, at first *The New Era*, then *Discontent*, then *The Demonstrator* and finally *The Agitator*, offered its readers international, national and local news. Article topics offered the reader more than just a glimpse at labor strikes in urban cities, revolutions in Mexico, the Spanish American War, and local divorce cases. In one of the earliest editions of *Discontent: Mother of Progress*, there appeared a story about the Fawcetts, a couple who filed for divorce in nearby Tacoma. The judge denied their divorce, despite the fact that it was mutually sought after.²³ While the editor of the paper, Oliver Verity, one of Home's founders, did not explicitly indicate why he included the story, readers could assume that Verity wanted to draw attention to government intervention in private relationships. An earlier article found on page two of that same issue, "Fashion Among Free Lovers," reprinted from *Lucifer*, a radical newspaper, explained that women free lovers chose not to conform to societal norms when it came to fashion. Free loving, independent women rarely wore corsets and cosmetics.²⁴ Free loving women did not conform to popular notions of beauty and style and the article's language suggests that the non conformity is welcome and encouraged.

The same issue included an article about a female lawyer denied practice in the Massachusetts Bar because she was not of "good moral character." The article made sarcastic

²³ "Untitled," *Discontent: Mother of Progress* (Home, WA), May 11, 1898, 3.

²⁴ "Fashion Among Freelovers," *Discontent: Mother of Progress* (Home, WA), May 11, 1898, 2.

reference to the men of the Massachusetts Bar Association and their morality.²⁵ The newspaper included several articles on these topics. Home's newspaper reinforced its acceptance of women and their choices by including stories about denied liberty. The colony embraced equality and used the newspaper as a way to question the oppressive behaviors and attitudes held by outside society.

However, like the mainstream media of the day, Home's press also asserted its political opinions. Historian Brigitte Koenig's work on free speech in Home claims that for the colonists at Home, the press became the vehicle by which anarchists could link a larger readership to the community and the movement.²⁶ Koenig argues that Home utilized the press to articulate cultural politics from within the colony to those living outside. It is also important to note that the articles written or reprinted in the four colony newspapers: *The New Era* (1897-1898), *Discontent* (1898-1902), *The Demonstrator* (1903-1908) and *The Agitator* (1910-1912) reflected the individual editor's ideas and beliefs. True to its anarchist roots, the colony did not oversee the local press, even those that purported to be the voice of the community. While these editors, such as Oliver Verity, Charles Govan, James Morton and Jay Fox, all male, firmly engrossed themselves into the libertarian philosophy of the colony, they too held their own opinions which differed from that of others living at Home.

Outsiders may have viewed the colony's press as an extension of the colony, but there were times when insiders living within the community did not see the papers as representative of their voice. After local police arrested four nude bathers for indecent exposure in the summer of 1911, Jay Fox, founder and editor of the *Agitator*, published an editorial in his July 11, 1911

²⁵ "Untitled," *Discontent: Mother of Progress* (Home, WA), May 11, 1898, 1.

²⁶ Koenig, 205. Koenig points to statistics published in *Discontent* that the paper circulated 1000 copies indicating broad appeal.

issue. He called for a general boycott of the members of Home community who did not support nude bathing. In his editorial he asserted that

There is no possible grounds on which a libertarian can escape taking part in this effort to protect the freedom of Home. There is no half way. Those who refuse to aid the defense is [sic] aiding the other side. For those who want liberty and will not fight for it are parasites and do not deserve freedom. Those who are indifferent to the invasion, who can see an innocent woman torn from the side of her children and packed off to jail and are not moved to action, can not be counted among the rebels of authority. Their place is with the enemy.²⁷

Fox played into traditional stereotypes about gender, manipulating readers' emotions to create sympathy. Home's founders never emphasized traditional women's roles as mothers and protectors of children and yet Fox, who largely embraced the anarchist beliefs of the colony, painted a picture heralding women's traditional role as mother and protector. He also wanted readers to blame Home community members for failing to protect individual liberties. Fox's editorial also speaks to a division within the colony and certainly his inflammatory words did not improve that divide.

Yet, a discrepancy exists about the prevalence of nude bathing at Home. In an interview, longtime member Lewis Haiman explained that an immigrant group who settled near the edge of town primarily engaged in nude bathing in seclusion. Haiman suggested that the bathing was part of their culture—a carryover from the old country.²⁸ But in an interview with Jonathon Haley in 1966, Mrs. Leila Edmonds, longtime resident, member and daughter of founder George Allen, indicated that nude bathing did not occur at Home; instead the nude bathing was, in fact, children running around unclothed.²⁹ Radium LeVene, another member at Home reported that

²⁷ Jay Fox, "The Nudes and the Prudes," *The Agitator* (Home, WA), July 1, 1911. Found at *Labor Press Project: Pacific Northwest Labor and Radical Newspapers*, University of Washington, <http://depts.washington.edu/labhist/laborpress/Agitator.htm#nude> (accessed June 20, 2012).

²⁸ Haiman, interview.

²⁹ Jonathon Haley, *Home Colony*, May 16, 1966. *Key Peninsula Newsletter* (Vaughn, WA), History of Home, Washington, Volume II, Key Peninsula Historical Society, Vaughn, WA.

the local media jumped on the nude bathing story, much like the anarchist story of 1901. LeVene reported that a photojournalist came to Home to take photos of the nude bathers in action, but when the reporter failed to find nude bathers, he created news. Since the photojournalist could not return to his paper without evidence of nude bathing, he offered candy to five year old Lindel Minor to remove his clothing. The photograph became evidence of the scandal and thus the members of Home came to be known as nude bathers.³⁰ Although testimonials differ on whether nude bathing actually occurred at Home, what all three sources share in common is a lack of concern over the issue. Nude bathing appeared to be a non issue for Haiman, Edmonds and LeVene. Fox had his own agenda, to defend certain principles and in the process, he utilized an image of a traditional, powerless woman to emphasize his argument. Fox drew negative attention to the colony. This event, partnered with complaints about lack of private land ownership, led to the demise of the Mutual Home Association.

Equality

The growing frustration that the nation's wealthy controlled the economic fate of the entire population affected national politics in the late nineteenth century. Coupled with an economic crisis building for farmers and westerners since the 1880s, political parties in the 1890s embraced policies and created platforms to meet the divergent needs of those feeling disenfranchised and those vested with commercial and industrial power. The short lived but somewhat successful Populist Party rose and fell within a span of ten years and the Republican and Democratic Party adjusted their platforms to address the perceived needs of the population. With the defeat of William Jennings Bryan in the 1896 election, reform minded Bryan supporters made up of farmers, Grangers, and industrial workers endured another administration that overlooked their interests and ignored their needs. Many of these disillusioned and frustrated

³⁰ Ibid.

Bryan supporters turned their attention to other political, social, and economic organizations that could create change outside of the larger political system.

The National Union of the Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth (BCC), created in 1896, focused its attention on educating the population about socialism, uniting socialists under one organization and creating socialist colonies with the intent to create an entire state governed by socialists. Built upon a small, regional chapter led by Norman Lermond, a former Populist from Maine, and organized by a Board of Directors including Ed Pelton, an employee in one of Lermond's businesses, a handful of writers, instructors, ministers, teachers and reformers, and Helen Mason, a teacher, the national organization turned its attention to colonization. In order to colonize successfully Lermond and Pelton sought support and membership from progressive intellectuals and writers. They believed that notable supporters could provide financing for and lend credibility to the organization and encourage others to join. Having successfully courted Eugene V. Debs and Henry Demarest Lloyd, along with other visible figures, the eight-member Board of Trustees oversaw all of the departments and reported back to the first president, Henry Demarest Lloyd. The secretary, Norman Lermond, supervised the colonization department.³¹

BCC organizers struggled with finding a location for their first colony. Unlike Home Colony which emerged from founders familiar with the state of Washington, the trustees of the BCC wanted to find a site in a state that might be receptive to its ideas. Just as important, they had to justify their choice to the growing number of supporters and financiers who stepped up to assist in the colonization efforts. Keeping in mind that the BCC wanted to convert an entire state to practicing socialist ideas, the organization weighed several options, including California, but ultimately determined that Washington offered the ideal location for this endeavor.

³¹LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 58.

BCC supporters chose Washington for several reasons but its progressive political environment was most attractive. Washington underwent multiple bank failures during the Panic of 1893 (fourteen banks failed in Tacoma, alone) and supported William Jennings Bryan in the 1896 election.³² In addition to strong support for populism, this western state also supported labor unions. The Social Democracy of America (SDA), a group associated with Debs, had a chapter in the state and the BCC had smaller, local unions nearby, too. Much of the logging, fishing and agricultural work was seasonal and a great deal of migratory labor came to the state due to the flood of pamphlets and advertisements selling the Pacific Northwest as the new frontier for economic opportunity.³³ Although the area offered many jobs masculine in nature, the political environment of Washington provided some encouragement for women.

The state of Washington encountered several serious attempts at women's suffrage like other western states at the turn of the century. The BCC supported women's equality and Washington's political climate offered an ideal location for the communal endeavor. Although Washington did not pass a constitutional amendment allowing women the right to vote until 1910, attempts at the suffrage amendment encountered a great deal of support across the state. Washington offered an ideal location for the establishment of the BCC's first utopian colony.

Other groups attempted communal experiments in the state and the societies still remaining in 1897 practiced socialism, like the Burley Colony and Puget Sound Co-operative Colony, or like Home, tolerated all ideologies. Cyrus Willard, a Bostonian and labor reporter remarked that the BCC chose Washington because it provided an opportunity for the election of politicians who would advocate for the cause. Willard also stated, "I believed in the feasibility of the plan because by having a place somewhere where social agitators could be fed, they would

³² Carlos A. Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989), 270-278.

³³ Schwantes, *The Pacific Northwest: An Interpretive History*, 6-19.

not be starved into silence as so many had been.”³⁴ Like Home, the BCC provided its members the promise of realizing their utopian vision.

Ed Pelton led the expedition to the Pacific Northwest, checking out sites in the southwest region of the state near Castle Rock and La Center and further north at Lummi Island and Sedro. Facilitating the process, Carey Lewis, a Skagit county Washington farmer and landowner, showed Pelton land near the area of Blanchard, an isolated town adjacent to the northern mainland region of the Puget Sound. The land offered tide flats and hillsides and was remote enough for the colony to develop quietly. Pelton could not convince the land owner, Mathias Decker, to trade his land for membership. In order to purchase the land, Pelton had to convince the BCC trustees to wire him the money to make a deposit for an initial 280 acre plot. Eventually the holdings of the colony totaled 600 acres. The BCC paid for the land over a period of two years and placed the title and deed in Ed Pelton’s name to prevent suspicion and outside attention by those not wanting to see a socialist communal society in their backyard.³⁵

With a location and a purpose, the colony launched its experiment. Named Equality for a recent book by Edward Bellamy, who heralded sex equality for women, the first BCC colony formed November 1, 1897, with fifteen members, both men and women.³⁶ These members prepared the site for future growth—constructing buildings, preparing gardens and fields and building up livestock. But not all of the work required hard, manual labor. The colony needed to create interest so early pioneers also spent time writing about the surrounding environment

³⁴ Quoted in Fogarty, “American Communes,” 159-160.

³⁵ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 62-63.

³⁶ Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward: 2000 to 1887* (Boston: Ticknor and Company, 1888).

and landscape, communal living and political structure.³⁷ Advertisements appeared in *Coming Nation* and other socialist journals and newspapers to encourage support and draw members.

Recognizing the colony needed organization and structure, the BCC established a framework of government that illuminated their purpose: “The object of establishing these colonies is to provide homes for the homeless, employment for the unemployed, and above all, to put into practice the principles of Socialism, and thus lay the foundations of a new civilization, based on equality and brotherly love.”³⁸ Like Home, the BCC envisioned their colony as a place that recognized women as equal to men. The BCC saw Equality as a community that allowed individuals to freely practice their political and economic beliefs. Held by the BCC Board of Trustees, the land could not be sold as long as members living at the colony wished to cooperate. Women and men wanting to become members applied to the BCC and when two-thirds of members voted to accept the applicant, the board granted membership. All members endured a six month probationary period. Upon member expulsion or removal, the colony refunded the member fees. Applicants selected their own occupation but the BCC established that new members must be willing to work where needed. Such a requirement placed a responsibility and acknowledgement on the shoulders of the applicant that he/she could be called into any job if needed by the colony. Although women, in particular, could be placed in domestic positions even if they were better qualified for another job. The Laws Governing the Colonies of the BCC addressed governance, trade and commerce, and membership requirements.

With its defined framework for a socialist government, in its early years Equality membership expanded dramatically in contrast to its “anarchist” southern neighbor, Home. By the first summer, nearly 300 people joined Equality, compared to the fifty-four people living at

³⁷Charles P. LeWarne, “Equality Colony: The Plan to Socialize Washington,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* Vol. 59 No. 3, (September 1968), 140.

³⁸“Laws Governing Colonies of the BCC,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 25, 1896, 4.

Home in its first year. Incidentally, Home would not reach a population of 300 until the onset of World War I. Counting on continued success and under pressure from the colonists at Equality, the National BCC moved its operations to the colony.

The colony optimized democracy in action and opened itself up to paying members. The new colony created a political structure that mirrored the national organization--a president with a board of directors. Colony members selected each department head. Each department selected their own leader, sometimes referred to as a foreman and other times labeled a superintendent. After departments nominated leaders, colony members, male and female, eighteen years old or older, voted on the department leader. This was, after all, an organization that pushed for national democratic reforms such as initiative, referendum, recall and women's suffrage; naturally democratic principles reigned within the confines of the colony.

However, unlike Home, membership requirements came with a cost. To join the colony as an active member, the member applied and paid a \$160 fee for an individual or a family. The member paid the fee in paper money, goods or services but was also responsible for monthly dues of ten cents. Membership was open to anyone over the age of eighteen, regardless of sex. Interested members applied and the current membership (eighteen years or older), also known as the General Assembly, voted at town meetings on whether to admit the applicant.³⁹ The colony also accepted honorary members which they defined as people sympathetic to the movement and willing to share the ideas behind colonization and the BCC. These honorary members, both men and women, paid a one-time fee of ten cents without gaining voting privileges.⁴⁰ The BCC granted reformer Frances E. Willard, a known temperance advocate and President of the

³⁹ LeWarne, "Equality Colony: The Plan to Socialize Washington, 142; *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 25, 1898, 3.

⁴⁰ *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 2, 1898, 3.

Women's Christian Temperance Union, honorary membership.⁴¹ Willard, who called herself a Christian Socialist, embraced utopian ideas and supported a variety of progressive reforms.⁴² Consistent with its active membership policy, the BCC did not discriminate by gender when offering honorary membership. Other interested individuals who did not want to commit to active or honorary membership subscribed to the colony newspaper, *Industrial Freedom*. This allowed them to keep up with the larger political issues and the experiences and daily events of those co-operating with one another at Equality.

Membership applications reveal a great deal about what the BCC valued in a member and the diversity of people interested in the utopian experiment. The application inquired about where the applicant was from, age, what works he/she had read, how he/she could contribute and what experience the applicant had with cooperative colonies. Their responses indicated the diversity present at Equality which in many ways could have contributed to its lack of cohesion as the colony evolved. Several of the members claimed nativity in Europe—with many from Germany, French Switzerland, England, and Hungary. Most of the communitarians lived in the United States at the time of application, but spread out from locations as diverse as New York City and Knoxville, Tennessee. Members ranged in age from eighteen (the minimum age to apply for individual membership) to sixty-eight. For example, Emma Marquardt applied for membership at the age of eighteen; whereas Louis Huguernin applied at fifty-five. Single and married people applied for membership as did couples with children. Inza Joslyn, from Illinois, was single when she applied in 1900.

⁴¹ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 74.

⁴² "Radical Women in a Classic Town: Frances Willard of Evanston." Online Exhibit. Northwestern University, Evanston, IL., <http://exhibits.library.northwestern.edu/archives/exhibits/willard/willard.html> (accessed November 23, 2012).

The BCC and later the directors of the Freeland Colony believed that prospective members should identify what literature and journals they read. Although the applications reveal that most people did not have prior experience living in a colony, nearly all applicants were well versed in socialist and utopian literature.⁴³ Several applicants knew Edward Bellamy's works and subscribed to a variety of labor and socialist newspapers, including *Coming Nation* and the *Seattle Socialist*. For example, Margaret Bender read "reform journals" and Emma Marquardt read *Looking Backward*.⁴⁴ This certainly reflected the desire to form a colony of intellectuals who subscribed to socialist beliefs. Knowing and understanding socialist philosophy and literature promoted stronger allegiance to the ideology and the practice of co-operative socialism. Despite the fact that these men and women were educated and willing to move across the country to settle somewhere in the midst of the evergreen forests of the Pacific Northwest, the level of commitment and contrasting vision for the colony created tensions that lead to the ultimate collapse of the experiment.

The BCC utilized *Industrial Freedom* to spread the colony's message and propaganda. The newspaper also listed available speakers, both men and women, willing to go on the lecture circuit to share the vision of both the BCC and Equality. Advertising for the colony assisted in the effort to spread the BCC and eventually meet the overall goal of turning Washington into a socialist utopian state. The BCC hoped that once the movement spread in Washington, it could potentially lead to more cooperative colonies in other regions of the United States.

⁴³ When Equality transformed into Freeland Colony, applications indicate that several applicants had communal/colony experiences prior to filing for membership.

⁴⁴ Membership Applications, folder 1 of 5, Freeland Colony Files, 2078 T-0587e, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA. The file contains several membership applications for both Equality Colony and later Freeland Colony. The applications are nearly identical in format and structure. Several of the applications list the amount of votes for and against the individual members' formal admittance into the colony.

Newspaper reports indicate that membership reached 3000 as early as May 1898. But this figure is misleading since “membership” did not indicate those active members living in the colony but those who were both honorary members of Equality and BCC members. Honorary members did not actually live at the colony but instead contributed to its financial success. Fewer people chose to move to the Pacific Northwest to live in the cooperative community. Actual numbers of those living at Equality reflect that there were anywhere from 115 to 260 people living at Equality between March and July of 1898. The height of colony membership stood at 300 by November of 1898. That number declined sharply by March 1901 and by December of 1903, it was reported that there were only thirty-eight people remaining at the site.⁴⁵

Equality and later Freeland colony also drew individuals from other nearby utopian communities. Jacob and Margaret Bender, former residents from Burley Colony, a BCC and Social Democracy of America colony on Henderson Bay, Washington, applied for membership in 1905. In their fifties, the Benders had two children and lived in Burley for five years. Kingsmill Commander, of Canadian descent, also lived at the Burley Colony for two years prior to his application for membership in 1905. Commander indicated on his application that he read American transcendentalists like Emerson and Whitman and radicals like Hertzka and Kropotkin as well as Bellamy and Tolstoi. He was admitted by a vote of 17-3. William Ferguson, seeking membership in Freeland, lived at Burley for four years prior to his application. Equality saw a great deal of migration from fellow BCC colony, Burley. But Burley was not the only colony to lose members to Equality. C.L. Penhallow, age 54 and his wife, Mattie Penhallow, age 45, applied for membership from Lakebay, Washington. While the membership application does not

⁴⁵ “Present Membership” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 7, 1898, 3; LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 74.

specifically list his wife's name, his wife was somewhat of a local celebrity in the Puget Sound region. Mattie Penhallow was the former postmistress of Home Colony's post office and co-editor of Lois Waisbrooker's *Clothed with the Sun*. On C.L.'s application he indicated that he had "some" previous experience with co-operative colonies and he was in the process of reading Hertzka.⁴⁶

Membership records reveal the development of an interesting dynamic by 1905. The number of applicants with previous colony experience increased suggesting the continued search for a more "perfect" utopia. Individuals migrating between colonies brought with them the observations and experiences of the colonies they left. The community did not discriminate on beliefs and as long as the members paid the fees, people could work in the colony. At one point, leaders considered limiting membership, but ultimately this never came to fruition.

Equality's bylaws never limited women from membership in the colony. Yet, *Industrial Freedom*, the same publication that heralded suffrage and women's active participation in the endeavor, also included articles explicitly encouraging men to move to the colony. Aside from want ads the newspaper included statements that said, "Single men and small families are preferred here this winter," stressing the importance of male breadwinners, a persistent ideology.⁴⁷ Randolph further explained that in the winter months, food stores and housing would be sparse.

Food shortages, rainy winters and the pioneer lifestyle did not discourage women from moving to Equality. Equality offered women an opportunity to work together with other women in a co-operative setting. The colony gave women political power and elevated them into

⁴⁶ Membership Applications, Freeland Colony Files, folder 1 of 5.

⁴⁷ W.C.B. Randolph, "Equality Colony Notes," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), December 24, 1898, 4.

political leadership roles. The women of Equality shared in duties such as cooking, gardening and cleaning, removing some of the burden of daily domestic work that typically fell on women.

The earliest divisions among colony members evolved when the BCC national organization relocated its headquarters to the area. Instead of settling at the colony, the BCC moved to the nearby town of Edison, Washington. Although Edison was only two miles away from Equality, the two miles might as well have been two thousand miles since this decision led colony officials and members to distrust the intentions of the BCC officials. The BCC officials saw Equality as just one of the many colonies that they planned to establish to spread socialist politics, but the members of Equality desired BCC assistance in directing the colony. The BCC's goals differed from that of the colonists. When founder Lermond announced the BCC's intention to develop a second colony, the officials of Equality felt confirmed in their distrust of the organization. The colony began to sever itself from the BCC, calling for greater deal autonomy. The colonists offered the BCC control of the land as long as the colony controlled its own membership and finances. Nonetheless, the colony continued to contribute monthly dues to the national union. The shift created tension for both active and honorary members. The division between the BCC and the colony caused BCC supporters to question their loyalty to the organization. Lermond resigned his position and other BCC officials soon followed, creating hostility within the organization. Talk emerged that the BCC should move its headquarters to other locations within the state—Anacortes or even Seattle, but ultimately the BCC determined that the two mile gap between Edison and Equality should be closed. The BCC headquarters moved to Equality and with that move, the colony officials hoped that their utopian community could finally stabilize.⁴⁸

⁴⁸ Charles LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 68-71.

With the move of the BCC to the Equality, the colony hoped to expand membership and momentum. But by 1903, colony membership fell to just 38 people living onsite.⁴⁹ Membership dwindled due to economic and social factors. Perhaps as William Smith and Rosabeth Kanter suggested of other utopian collapses, the BCC failed to create cohesion, and what emerged instead was an unwillingness of individuals to sacrifice their own personal needs and wants for the betterment of the communal arrangement. By 1903, Equality shut down *Industrial Freedom*. With the loss of the colony's voice, outsiders found it difficult to access information about Equality. The *Whidbey Islander* carried minimal updates about the colony and what had been a colony of national interest fell out of the utopian spotlight. Residents of the colony fled for a variety of reasons—some financial, social and philosophical. Some members felt outside social pressures and left to distance themselves from the colony and from socialism. Others maintained their socialist ideals, but had financial needs that the colony could not meet and found wages that were higher outside of the colony.⁵⁰ But the dedicated colonists that remained found their resolution tested by lack of leadership.

As Kanter and Smith suggest, for a utopian community to succeed, it must have a high level of commitment from both its members and from the organizers of the communal society. Kanter argues that for stability to exist within the colony, what each person is willing to bring to the table must be reinforced by what the society expects of him/her and is willing to reciprocate

⁴⁹ "Present Membership," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 7, 1898, 3; LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 3.

⁵⁰ Mrs. Mickey Cunningham, interview with Frederick E. Smith, June 20, 1970, Papers of Frederick E. Smith, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA.

back to the member.⁵¹ If that commitment is present from both parties then the member is willing to give up personal wants and needs for the betterment of the common cause.

In the case of Home Colony, members and founders committed to the beliefs from the very beginning. Much of that was due in part to the early guiding principles established by founders Verity, Allen and O'Dell. Membership in the MHA required that one was willing to let go of differences for the betterment and stability of the community. The MHA did not have ties to any larger more idealistic organization. It was local and organic. In that, the MHA could respond to the needs of its members immediately. The organization never created chapters or regional/national unions but instead remained where its population and heart lie, at Home.

The members of Home committed to creating a community focused on education, progressive morals and values and above all preservation of individual liberty. Women like Lois Waisbrooker and Gertie Vose found Home to be a colony that embraced many of their needs. For Waisbrooker, Home provided a ripe environment for intellectual debates, encouraging her to further her feminist writings. For Vose, Home offered her a shelter from the stigma associated with being an unwed mother. But members like Jay Fox conveniently invoked women's traditional roles while defending other radical beliefs. Home was inconsistent in its radicalism on women's equality. Women did not serve in political leadership roles, but they founded the colony, lead lectures, taught school and wrote articles in the paper.

To the BCC, Equality emerged as the first step in a larger, grandiose plan to socialize the country, starting first with the hillside of an evergreen forest. The challenge for those members of Equality was simply one of loyalty. Did they adhere to the principles of the colony of Equality or with the BCC? From the very beginning, BCC members struggled to gain the necessary level of commitment. Members committed to one another but struggled with

⁵¹ Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, 63-67.

commitment to the larger institution/organization managing the colony. But to the women of Equality, stability and commitment correlated to democratic participation. The women of Equality were well educated on socialism and radical writings from the time period. These women sought out a utopia that took socialist ideology and put it into practice. Women migrated to Equality because it offered them an opportunity to participate in their local government. The colony's organization lifted some responsibilities from women such as cooking and child care. Instead, women shared these responsibilities within the colony, making life a bit easier and certainly more co-operative. Equality provided women with an opportunity to gain leadership experience, serving as leaders for their departments, elected by the entire membership. But, like the larger society outside of the colony, women in Equality still fell into rather traditional spheres, mostly working in domestic fields.

CHAPTER THREE

EQUALITY WITHIN THE COLONIES: WOMEN, SOCIAL LIFE AND COMMUNITY BUILDING

The December 1898 issue of *Industrial Freedom* included a new section—“Equality Colony Woman’s Column.” The “Woman’s Column” offered women in the colony a place to share their perspective on colony life. Column writers reached out to women living outside the colony, appealing to their mutual desires for independence and equality. Anna Burgess, Equality Colony member and editor of the section wrote, “What has impressed me much is the independence of our women. We have equal rights here, we vote as we please (not as our husbands tell us) and this is because we are economically free; what we earn is our very own, consequently we have peace in the family.”¹ Such remarks appealed to women feeling disenfranchised in larger society. This colony offered more than just cooperative socialism, it offered gender equality, which to many socialists was a critical component of their utopian vision.

But gender equality was certainly not automatic, given the gender standards of the time. It had to be fostered by the members of the colony. Some members, both men and women, found it difficult to change their thinking. Like so many colonies before them, members expected so much and as a result, members struggled to attain the colony’s vision. In the first “Woman’s Column,” Hellen Topman wrote, “Our sisters outside must remember we bring all our faults with us and can’t change our nature as we do our dress.”² Topman’s statement reminds us that women in utopian colonies came with more than just physical baggage. They brought life experience, social norms, and an identity often rooted in gender expectations of the

¹Anna Burgess, “Woman’s Column,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), December 24, 1898, 4.

²Hellen Topman, “Some Truths,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), December 24, 1898, 4.

time. It was difficult for members to break these deeply rooted social norms. Topman's wisdom highlights a key issue that most utopian experiments face—How does a colony balance the vision for a perfect society with the reality of imperfect people?

The members of both Home and Equality carved out utopias that challenged traditional gender norms. The colonies were both geographically removed from densely populated areas and philosophically removed from the greater society. Living inside the utopia required both men and women to transform their thinking and construct a new reality. Members transformed both their physical and intellectual environment. Although this provided quite a challenge for those living inside each of the colonies, colonists made the transformation generally successful. Although the colonists at Home and Equality varied in their struggle to break deeply rooted gender norms, women in the colonies became more than just members: they became community builders. They took on leadership roles, labored in colony enterprises, engaged in intellectual pursuits, and organized events to build a stronger colony for themselves, their families and their fellow colonists. Women took on these roles because they removed themselves from a conventional society that limited their rights and freedoms. For women especially, the colonies offered to fulfill utopian dreams.

Home and Equality drew women because these colonies offered them a real chance at breaking away from traditional social norms. The political and social conditions created by women made the colonies even more attractive to women. Although attracting membership was important for the health of the colony, the colony created a climate that sustained members through relationship building and intellectualism. It was through these relationships and interactions that women began to recognize their own agency and create new opportunities for creative expression and work.

Home Colony

The small community on the shores of Joe's Bay offered its members a safe haven for radical beliefs at a time when such ideas were unwelcome on the national political agenda.

Oliver Verity, founder of Home and editor of its first newspaper *New Era*, stated the foundational beliefs to prospective members:

The establishing of the Mutual Home Association opens up a way to many of obtaining a home. Looking to this end we invite the co-operation of all those who believe in throwing off the oppressive yoke of God, Government and Grundy to unite their efforts with ours to establish a condition or community where we can assert true manhood and womanhood; a community where the every impulse that stirs the soul of man and woman may find the recognition due, no matter what the slanderous tongue of ignorance, hypocrisy and Grundy may have to say.³

Verity's statement suggests why the colony was so attractive. It pledged to create a cooperative colony that depended on members' commitments regardless of gender.

Usually denied liberty in other American communities, Home opened its doors to a diverse population of women. Unmarried mothers found solace in the colony. Gregory David Hall articulated that colony life secured for women both physical safety and personal dignity.⁴ For unwed or working mothers, Home offered sanctuary from that social stigma and judgment so commonly associated with Victorian social norms. Lucy Robins Lang, a resident at Home, remarked:

Often a Home Colony family consisted only of a woman and her children. Since Anarchists did not believe in marriage, a man and woman would live together as "friends," and if there ceased to be any common ground between them, they separated. Usually the women took the children and did her best to bring them up as good Anarchists. Home Colony naturally attracted women in such circumstances, and the colony was proud of its "free families."⁵

³ Quoted in Koenig, 203. The term "Grundy" is a reference to narrow minded, conventional thinkers.

⁴ Gregory David Hall, "The Theory and Practice of Anarchism at Home Colony, 1896-1912" (master's thesis, Washington State University, 1994), 86-89.

⁵ Lucy Robins Lang, *Tomorrow is Beautiful* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1948), 48-49.

Despite freedoms and accommodations for women, the statement reveals traditional representations of women as caregivers for children. Despite the radicalism of the colony, women still took on traditional roles as parent and caregiver for the child. But, Home's level of acceptance freed these anarchist families and single mothers from social stigma and economic burdens. Although the colony was not economically cooperative like Equality, women engaged in labor that allowed them to support their families. Self reliance was not required at Home. Neighbors assisted one another in a cooperative spirit.

After splitting from her free love partner, Gertie Vose and her son, Donald, moved to Home. As a single parent, Vose was responsible for raising her son. Although she embraced several radical causes, she still took on traditional women's roles such as primary care giver for her child. But Home provided an environment that would allow her the opportunity to raise her child in a rich intellectual environment, consistent with her beliefs in anarchism, individual liberty and freedom. Her daughter and her family already lived at Home so Vose relocated and enrolled Donald in the colony school. Vose was well connected to radical thinkers both inside and outside of the colony. Emma Goldman thought of Gertie Vose as a friend and called her "a fighter, a defiant, strong personality, a tender hostess and a devoted mother."⁶ But despite community assistance, Vose struggled to find employment at Home and left occasionally to find work in the nearby city of Tacoma noting her frustration over being physically inspected when she applied for a housekeeping job.⁷ Despite her absences, Vose's voice remained a part of Home since she authored articles in *The Demonstrator*, speaking of her experience in the outside world. Vose wrote about her frustrations over class conflict in neighboring Tacoma indicating

⁶ Emma Goldman, "Donald Vose: The Accursed," *Mother Earth* 2 (January 1916): 353. The Anarchist Library, <http://theanarchistlibrary.org/library/emma-goldman-donald-voxe-the-accursed> (accessed October 6, 2012).

⁷ Hall, 87.

that the wealthy created the corrupt political and economic systems.⁸ She reminded Home colonists and other subscribers of the stark difference between life inside and outside of the colony.

Home's newspapers served several needs for women. They offered women like Gertie Vose a secure place to voice opinions and thoughts on social and economic issues without jeopardizing employment opportunities. The newspapers provided individuals a secure outlet for radical opinions and showcased the benefits of membership for women. In their columns, writers made clear that the colony welcomed both unmarried women and widows and referred to community assistance in home construction.⁹ Not only did the community assist in building the home, but it also assisted in child rearing.¹⁰ Unmarried, working mothers relied on neighbors to ensure that their children attended school each day. Mothers like Gertie Vose needed help to raise young children. With Gertie at work in Tacoma, and Donald, her young son, still at Home, colony members assisted in raising Donald. The newspaper communicated these benefits to the rest of the country, demonstrating the attractiveness of Home Colony to women with children.

Home not only provided women with a community dedicated to helping them survive, it also offered women a social network. Essentially, Home Colony created a new communal family to support its members. The colony leaders did not coerce members to support one another. Instead members supported one another because they supported the colony's philosophy. In her "Brief History of Home," Stella Retherford, member of the colony and granddaughter of founder George and Sylvia Allen, recalled the colony's substantial social

⁸ Ibid., 87.

⁹ *Co-Operative Colonies Manuscript*, 4-5, folder 9, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA.

¹⁰ Radium LeVene, "Home Colony," 27-28, folder 8, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA.

network. Members pitched in to raise houses, trade food and assist the sick.¹¹ The members did not discriminate in their social network. Member Radium LeVene recounted how a few single women surprised bachelor H. Winter with a housewarming event for his brand new home. The women found themselves surprised when a group of single men came and ate all of the food that the ladies had prepared for Mr. Winter.¹² Although these single women hoped to assist Mr. Winter, they ended up feeding several other single men. Both Retherford and LeVene note women taking on traditional roles such as caring for the sick and preparing food. Despite the radicalism of Home, women did not deny their deeply entrenched ideas on traditional gender roles and their training and skills. But, Home Colony's social network provided both figurative and literal sustenance to all of its members and reveals the critical role women played in providing sustenance and building a community.

That social network extended outside of the colony's physical perimeter. For those struggling outside of Home, the newspapers called its readers to action by carrying stories about female sympathizers and readers in financial need.¹³ Such stories served as a reminder to readers that it was not necessary to live within a communal colony to assist a sister or brother in need.

Advocating for equality inside the colony spilled outward. Social equality mattered to colony members and they aspired to create a community as well as a state that equally valued men and women and their choices and living arrangements. Nearly ten years after Home was founded, the colony newspaper, *The Demonstrator*, included a story regarding marital status and women's rights:

Marriage—legalized prostitution—is spoiling the best of human feeling and making the family an inferno, and in the so-called free unions we meet with the same corruption and disagreement as in legal marriage....What we should try to do, instead of wasting so

¹¹ Stella Retherford, *Key Peninsula Newsletter* (Vaughn, WA).

¹² Radium LeVene, "Home Colony," 7.

¹³ "Untitled," *The Demonstrator* (Home, WA), August 21, 1907, 6.

much time on the sex question is to teach ourselves to respect each sex alike and not try to make woman believe that she is entitled to greater respect than man. Woman's rights in a free society shall just be equal to those of man, and there will be no question of inferiority or superiority.¹⁴

Although critical of the institution of marriage and its damage to women, the article suggested that colonists and newspaper subscribers need not worry about whether marriage or free love is more liberating for women, but instead focus on the larger issue of practicing a genuine equality.

The women of Home believed that equality required women's suffrage. Home sent three women, Olivia Shepherd, and Anna and Julia Morris, to attend a state suffrage convention in Seattle in 1909. They attended the convention, which hosted national leaders, to speak about radical women in the state.¹⁵ And although Washington was a state with growing support for suffrage, not all men and women at Home believed that enfranchisement was the only solution to righting societal wrongs. This did not necessarily mean that these members supported anti suffrage but rather that they did not see suffrage as the unparalleled solution to economic, political and social inequality. *The Agitator*, the colony newspaper edited by Jay Fox in 1912, condoned the use of direct action to draw attention to women's lack of economic power. Supporting the use of bricks and hatchets as tools for direct action, he contended that, "If women get the useless ballot it will be more by reason of their actions than their words."¹⁶ For Fox, political inequality was tied to economic disparities between men and women, and these disparities caused gender inequality during the era. Activist Lois Waisbrooker also shared this belief.

Waisbrooker, a well known writer and feminist, became one of Home's most vocal members. Moving to Home in her seventies, she led a busy life as a writer and editor of her own

¹⁴ "The Sex Question," *The Demonstrator* (Home, WA), July 17, 1907, 5.

¹⁵ Radium LeVene, "Home Colony," 18.

¹⁶ "Direct Action Suffragettes," *The Agitator* (Home, WA), March 15, 1912, 1.

feminist journal *Clothed with the Sun*. Waisbrooker was a contemporary of Victoria Woodhull, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Charlotte Perkins Gilman and shared their feminist views. Fellow radical Ezra Heywood nicknamed her “the female Abraham Lincoln” because of her physical presence and oratory.¹⁷ Her novels illustrated her desire to create a utopia that lacked economic and gender constraints. Waisbrooker supported the suffrage movement but did not believe that suffrage was the ultimate means to economic equality. In an article that later created significant controversy and legal troubles, Waisbrooker asserted that the capitalist economy created disproportionate inequality for women because it was “a system that breeds injustice and crime as naturally as stagnant pools breed tadpoles and malaria.”¹⁸ She desired “unqualified freedom for woman as woman, and that all the institutions of society be adjusted to such freedom.”¹⁹ In her last article before her death in 1909 she once again highlighted her rationale, “Woman has a natural, an inherent right to herself, a right which church and state refuse to allow her to exercise; but the time is coming when she will take that right and refuse to be crushed.”²⁰ Due to Home’s fervent advocacy of “free love” and her own belief in what her biographer deemed “sexual-religious mysticism” or “sex radicalism”, Waisbrooker moved to the colony in 1901.²¹ Home offered the ideal place for her since she could find a receptive and enthusiastic community willing to allow her to routinely lecture at colony events and distribute her journal. Community members and their children routinely attended Waisbrooker’s lectures.²² During the three years

¹⁷ Pam McAllister, “Women in the Lead: Waisbrooker’s Way to Peace,” Introduction to *A Sex Revolution* by Lois Waisbrooker, 4 (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1985).

¹⁸ Lois Waisbrooker, “The Awful Fate of Fallen Women,” *Clothed with the Sun* (Home, WA), 2, No. 11 (1901): 3. The article responded to the argument that women who were not in legally sanctioned relationships were considered “fallen.” Such women were often called vicious, derogatory names.

¹⁹ McAllister, 46.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 46.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 5.

²² LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 196.

that she enjoyed active membership, she and Postmistress Mattie Penhallow found themselves in legal trouble for distributing such controversial beliefs.

In 1901, the United States government indicted Waisbrooker and Penhallow, also the co-editor of *Clothed with the Sun*, for violating the Comstock Law. They certainly were not the first colony members to find themselves charged with this crime, nor would they be the last. The December 1901 volume of the journal included an article by Waisbrooker titled, “The Awful Fate of Fallen Women.” In the article, Waisbrooker wrote, “There is no sin, no crime for either man or woman in a mutual, loving sex relation because not legally sanctioned, and those who claim that it is, blaspheme the name of love while claiming that it is God.”²³ The Western Division of the United States Circuit Court for the District of Washington indicted Waisbrooker and Penhallow for writing and distributing the statement. The Grand Jury indicated that that article was “obscene, lewd, lascivious, and indecent, and is so obscene and indecent that the same would be offensive to the Court here and improper to be placed upon the records therefore.”²⁴ Both defendants pled not guilty. The court acquitted Mattie Penhallow and found Lois Waisbrooker guilty and fined her for the violation. Although the court found Waisbrooker in violation of the law, she did not waiver in her personal convictions. Home Colony was once again drawn into the fray of the media’s attacks, but the colony did not allow the outside world to define them. Instead, Home continued to invite outsiders in to truly experience the unique environment and community that had been created.

In order to ensure that the radical ideals were accepted, reinforced and perpetuated, Home turned to education and schools as a means to socialize both the young and the old. The colony created a school, operated and organized by community members but in accordance with state

²³ Waisbrooker, “The Awful Fate of Fallen Women,” 3.

²⁴ Grand Jury document, US Circuit Court, February Term 1902; *United States vs. Waisbrooker and United States vs. Penhallow*.

law. Colony leaders and teachers socialized children to see one another as equals. The school advocated gender equality, individual liberty and freedom. The first school year, 1898-1899 ended with nineteen students but within the next year, the population of the colony increased and there was a need to add another teacher. Because of state legislation regarding education, administering the school had to be consistent with state mandates. However, no evidence suggests that this created any problems for the colony. Lewis Haiman, a student at Home School recalled that every student passed the state examinations at an advanced level.²⁵ A fire destroyed the first school in 1902 and for a short period of time, the school moved to a colonist's home and then moved yet again to Liberty Hall. The facility became crowded and in 1910, the colony constructed a new building for students.

Building the school may have been an easier task than determining the school's philosophy of teaching and learning. It appears that there was a bit of contention regarding student discipline. Some, like founder George Allen, felt that the colony's ideology should extend into the classroom while James Morton, a member (until 1905) and routine lecturer at Home, argued that the children needed discipline and structure.²⁶ Teacher Alice Kelly did not believe in such a behaviorist classroom but instead was far more reflective—analyzing her teaching methods to determine why faults were emerging with her students.²⁷ But despite these differences in opinions, the school was quite successful. Evelyn Evans, the granddaughter of one of the earliest settlers, fondly remembered that children from nearby towns came to Home for schooling.²⁸ The school produced college bound students, including thirteen year old Ernest

²⁵ Haiman, interview.

²⁶ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 199-203.

²⁷ Diary of Roland E. Muirhead, Compilation of Writing and Photos Concerned with the History of Home, Washington, Volume III, University of Washington Library Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

²⁸ Evelyn Margaret Evans, interview by Sharon Hills Conditt, March 31, 2012.

Falkoff, rumored to be the youngest student to attend the University of Washington (he later graduated and practiced law).²⁹

In the late nineteenth century, primary and secondary school students routinely attended mixed gender schools. Home students, like others from across the country, attended classes with other males and females. Teachers instructed the children at Home to believe that men and women were equal in all facets. Teachers educated students to read and write and learn state mandated requirements, but the community also favored music and the arts. The school taught students piano as well as dance.³⁰ Scottish visitor Roland Muirhead, later a key figure in the Scottish Nationalist Movement, kept a diary of his visit to Home and in it he drew attention to the prevalence of music at the Home School.³¹ Outside of the formal school structure, the colony offered students art classes, music lessons and opportunities to perform plays. The community supported multiple musical groups including bands. The founders and adult members educated the young men and women to see one another as equal and to value their individual talents.

Home did not limit education to the young. Early in its primacy, the colony founded a library and a library association. It also offered physical education, such as hatha yoga. Community members also studied languages such as German and Esperanto.³² Members engaged in a wide variety of musical studies as well as art and dance. But crowds of people young and old frequently gathered for outside speakers, lectures, and discussions. Although members came from a variety of educational backgrounds, Home encouraged intellectual life. Male and female colonists turned out in large numbers to attend these events and Evadna Cooke,

²⁹ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 202-203.

³⁰ Stella (Sylvia) Retherford, *Key Peninsula Newsletter* (Vaughn, WA), 7, April 1980.

³¹ Diary of Roland Muirhead, folder 1, History of Home, Washington, Key Peninsula Historical Society, Vaughn, WA.

³² LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 200.

a child who grew up at Home, recalled that children were expected to attend the lectures with their parents.³³

The colony hosted an array of male and female speakers and lecturers over the years that represented the leading radical thinkers and movement leaders of the time. Emma Goldman, a friend of the colony, stayed multiple times. Even in its different manifestations, the colony newspaper routinely advertised Goldman's pamphlets and books, indicating that her ideas were consistent with the ideological underpinnings of Home. Despite George Allen's granddaughter's recollection that Goldman did not find Home's colonists all that willing to buy into her movement, indicating that Home colonists were more interested in settling than in radicalism, Goldman's frequent visits suggest she must have felt that the members welcomed her and her beliefs.³⁴ On one of her trips to Home, Goldman brought with her Alexander Berkman, her long time companion and later would-be assassin (the attempt failed) of industrialist Henry Clay Frick. Social reformer and labor leader Joseph Labadie took up residence at Home and became a regular contributor to *Discontent*. Labor leader and one time Chairman of the American Communist Party, William Z. Foster visited the colony and married the ex-wife of Jay Fox, the editor of *The Agitator*. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and "Big Bill" Haywood visited the colony. Literary figure and poet Harry Kemp once stayed at Home as well. Known for prescribing starvation as a treatment for poor health, Dr. Linda Hazzard visited the colony. Member Lewis

³³ Evadna Cooke, "The Best Time Ever," folder 9, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA.

³⁴ Retherford, *Key Peninsula Newsletter* (Vaughn, WA), 7, April 1980. Sylvia Allen Retherford's account could also be indicative of her own concern for how the colony was depicted. Retherford's "Brief History" was written late in her life (the late 1970s and early 1980s) and during the Cold War. Because of these factors and her family ties to the founding of the colony it is completely plausible that she wanted the colony to be remembered more as a harmonious, tight knit community that supported individual beliefs and freedoms and less of a haven for political and economic radicalism. LeWarne's chapter on Home references Goldman as one of the most popular colony visitors. LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 199.

Haiman later recounted that she had a following at Home with many people not only attending her lecture series but also practicing her theories on fasting.³⁵

Anticipating resistance to the parade of leading radical thinkers at Home, colonists invited locals to visit and speak. Religious figures were encouraged to lecture, although few local preachers accepted the invitation. After the threat of violence by the Loyal League and Tacoma Vigilance Committee in 1901, members of Home invited Tacoma neighbors to visit and experience the colony for themselves. A Lutheran minister from Tacoma accepted the invitation and gave a talk to the members, never indicating contention or condemnation.³⁶ Lectures were routinely held at the colony in Liberty Hall, a large gathering space that allowed for interaction and room for visitors. Members had the freedom and flexibility to pose discussion questions to the greater membership. The colony lacked published rules of order or procedures regarding format. No topic was off limits. This rural, isolated community provided a stimulating intellectual environment that allowed both men and women to speak openly and discuss ideas in mixed gender groups.

The women of Home shaped the intellectual environment and organized events and publications to further the intellectual needs of the colony. They openly participated in book studies, debates, and discussions. They organized, hosted and attended literature reading sessions. Gertie Vose, Mattie Penhallow and Lois Waisbrooker routinely lectured at the colony.³⁷ After getting married, Lucy Robins Lang and her husband, Bob, sought a place to settle down and have children. Lang quickly acclimated to the utopian colony and started work on a new publication—*The Agitator*. She and her husband met two old friends, Jay and Esther Fox, two former Chicagoans involved in the Haymarket Strike, and William Z. Foster and Harry

³⁵ Haiman, interview.

³⁶ Radium LeVene, "Home Colony," 9.

³⁷ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 196-197.

Kemp. The group decided that they needed to fundraise in order to get the new publication up and running. Lang took a pivotal role in this fundraising. She organized a Fourth of July picnic at Home, bringing in sympathetic outsiders to the colony to see and help fund the newspaper. Lang sold tickets in Seattle and Tacoma for the chartered boat to bring the others to Home.³⁸ Her involvement in the pursuit helped launch *The Agitator*.

The Fourth of July was not the only time when outsiders traveled to Home. Despite the earlier confrontation with neighboring Tacoma, Home was known for its willingness to interact with other communities. It hosted members from both Equality/Freeland and nearby Burley Colony, located in the bottoms near Henderson Bay on the Puget Sound. Hosting visitors entailed a large scale picnic and oftentimes a dance. Like other communities at the time, the colony fielded its own baseball team. By spring of 1903, the team organized into two groups “men” versus “boys” and had a ball field set up for practice.³⁹ Locals supported the team and games were largely community events and well attended. The colony team played neighboring communities, commercial teams from Tacoma, and on one occasion, played a “Negro” League team.⁴⁰ Member Evadna Cooke reminisced that she did not really consider race an issue. “We were raised with no consciousness of race prejudice.”⁴¹ But for Evelyn Evans, just a child when the team came to play at Home, recalled that knowledge of “difference” affected her experience. Evans remembered that when the African American players came off the boat at Joe’s Bay, she feared them so much that she hid underneath a nearby bridge. After the game, for which her father was an umpire, Home colony held a dance. Evans danced with one of the players and felt

³⁸ Lang, 49-50.

³⁹ Radium LeVene, “Home Colony,” 12.

⁴⁰ Haiman, interview.

⁴¹ Cooke, 9.

very much at ease.⁴² What young women like Evans and Cooke experienced was atypical to other rural communities, much less utopian communities in the era. At a time when states legally segregated individuals based on race, Home's enlightened racial attitudes including social encounters revealed its consistent radical and utopian practices.

These utopian attitudes, affirmed by education, philosophy, and intellectual life, transferred to ideas on gender equality. The founders and members of Home created a colony that expressly valued and supported women. The colony's unconventional norms allowed women the space to break away from traditional roles. The women and men of the colony created opportunities for personal growth and an environment that offered autonomy, liberty and gender equality with no social barriers or stigma.

Equality Colony

In the "Woman's Column" in *Industrial Freedom*, Grace Lewis wrote, "We don't want our friends on the outside to think the women of Equality are not active members of this colony. If they would make us a visit of even a day or two they would find us as busy as bees...." Lewis emphasized the critical role of women in the colony, but she did not want to paint a picture that women spent all their time working. She added, "With all of our work we manage to have plenty of time for social life, such as lyceum, singing school, literary entertainments and a social hop occasionally."⁴³ Lewis's article in the column reveals a great deal about gender in Equality. Lewis wanted readers to understand that women's activism benefitted the individual and the larger community. She wanted readers to know that Equality offered a thriving intellectual and social environment for women who could escape the drudgery of work. Her colony offered an appealing option to women economically, socially and politically frustrated in an era largely

⁴² Evans, interview.

⁴³ Grace L. Lewis, "Likes Colony Life," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), December 24, 1898, 4.

dominated by industrial capitalism and restricted gender roles. Equality, like Home, provided women an alternative to those experiences.

Unlike Home, Equality's bylaws were far more structured and addressed issues such as membership requirements (and removal), division of labor, system of payment/scrip system, grievance procedures and democratic processes. As a result, the BCC did not see individual liberty, the key to Home Colony, as significant as the desire to create a sustainable cooperative economic colony. Whereas Home sought complete personal freedom, Equality desired to create a community based on the collective principles that community members worked together to benefit one another—thus this colony focused more on creating economic equality than a space for encouraging individual expression and liberty.

The BCC's vision of what Equality could be and do partnered with economic strain and the stigma associated with those wanting to challenge social norms led many women to consider making the move to the backwoods utopia of northwestern Washington. Some believed that the colony could simply offer relief from an economy that the "Cleveland administration had left ... flat."⁴⁴ Others sought adventure or wanted to step outside what Hellen Topman referred to as the "world of competition."⁴⁵ References in multiple newspaper articles suggested that Equality offered women equal footing to men, including the right to vote. The November 1, 1901 edition of *Industrial Freedom* carried an untitled article affirming, "The government of Equality is democratic, and, although we have an executive council of "seven wise men," all questions of moment are decided by the general assembly (which meets every first and third Friday of each

⁴⁴ *Industrial Freedom (Equality, WA)*, May 14, 1898, Catherine Pulsipher "Do You Remember Equality Colony" poem appearing in the column, "Skagit—Sonnets and Satire," in a Mount Vernon newspaper, late 1963 or 1964, clipping in possession of Emma Herz Peterson quoted in LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 75.

⁴⁵ Frederick E. Smith, *Equality Colony Manuscript*, 101. Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA.

month), or, failing that, by referendum.”⁴⁶ Ironically, the author acknowledges the practice of democracy yet also recognizes the role of the executive council, which at this time, according to the author, must have consisted of men. But the overall messages offered encouragement at a time when few states supported female suffrage and the national political agenda resisted the idea.

Equality Colony needed workers in order to put co-operation into action. To draw membership, the colony advertised available jobs in *Industrial Freedom*. Although most jobs did not advertise sex preference, unusual for the day when job ads were typically sex segregated, job advertisements certainly fell under occupations traditionally held by men—tanners, tinnerns, woodsmen; even in those occasions where a position could be open to either sex, the position often read: “Want Ad: Cook—man preferred.”⁴⁷ Despite their organizing beliefs that people could be placed in any open position it certainly appears that sex typing was more typical than not. *Industrial Freedom*’s articles supporting gender equality and suffrage and their own want ads specifically targeted to men certainly suggest a contradictory and confusing message. Did the colony actually practice gender equality?

Despite these mixed messages, when women arrived at Equality, they had a variety of experiences. *Industrial Freedom* and lecturers on the circuit had done their job—they had piqued interest in the colony and encouraged both men and women to travel to the remote location for settlement. Yet, many of these women newcomers held unrealistic expectations—believing that Equality was somehow more developed or utopian. As Hellen Topman wrote, “So many ladies on coming here are disappointed at first about the bill of fare that the pioneer stage forces upon us. They have read Bellamy’s *Looking Backward* and expect to step right out of the

⁴⁶ *Industrial Freedom*, November 1, 1901, 2.

⁴⁷ Want Ads, *Industrial Freedom*, May 14, 1898, 3.

world of competition into an ideal city, mingle with people who are perfect in all respects.”⁴⁸

Topman’s statement alluded to the difficulties of building community in the isolated and rainy Puget Sound. She also indicated that hard work and human frailties might lead to a potential clash between those who initially settled Equality and those incoming members who held a vision sold by the paper and lecture circuit.⁴⁹

The issues of *Industrial Freedom* provide a means to gauge how men and women perceived the colony and the gender differences in their reports. Men who wrote in the newspaper (either as a section editor or in a letter) indicated an awareness of the physical hardships associated with colony life. In the August 6, 1898 issue, after writing about people who expect work to be easy, the newspaper editor added

a moral and practical utility to all...who come here expecting quail on toast, pies, puddings, steaks, etc....with little manual labor, for such are sure to be disappointed. We are in the pioneer stage, laying the foundation for the superstructure of Co-operative Commonwealth, and even under these times of McKinley prosperity we would advise working men not to expend very much money “good in Yurru,” looking for a “soft snap”: in a pioneer colony for they are sure to be disappointed.⁵⁰

Men wrote factually about the hardships associated with the pioneer life. They did not want to mislead others in thinking that the colony life was easy or was for all people. Instead, the author warns others that even working men should carefully consider whether they can endure the hardships associated with the earlier stages of colony building. Women wrote about hardship, but their writing made the hardship sound like it was more of a psychological barrier to overcome:

⁴⁸ Hellen Topman, *Industrial Freedom*, December 24, 1898, 4.

⁴⁹ LeWarne asserted that many individuals, both men and women, felt that *Industrial Freedom* had oversold the colony. This appears to be a common complaint. *Industrial Freedom* responded by asserting that this was not the problem of the colony or the paper but rather the colonists moving into Equality because they had created unrealistic expectations and manifestations of colony life. LeWarne, *Utopias in Puget Sound*, 77.

⁵⁰ “Equality Colony Notes,” *Industrial Freedom*, August 6, 1898, 4.

I have said that women are not as good cooperators as men and still think it is a fact for their work has not been such and they have not been so situated that they have felt the necessity of cooperation. But, sisters we must begin. It is our only hope, and if two or three or any numbers of you are so situated that you can try it I hope you will do so. If one can keep the little ones of several families, another bake for several, another iron, another sew, etc. having a stated number of hours, and not make it too complicated at first, I think you will have more time to improve your minds. Yes, in the colony some of us at times get discouraged, dissatisfied and even homesick; but how many, who have reached the age of maturity, have not on going to a new country with entirely different surroundings, done likewise?⁵¹

Odell explained that the co-operative labor system in place at Equality offered women opportunities to share domestic responsibilities and burdens and gain personal time to engage in intellectual matters. She affirms that colony women do get discouraged, but minimizes those feelings by indicating that women everywhere get discouraged and dissatisfied, regardless of where they are. Odell downplays the physical hardships and instead transforms the issues as being psychological in nature. Women entering the colony held incorrect assumptions about colony life. Writings like Odell's could help explain why women left and Topman's frustration. By the late spring of 1899, articles by women in *Industrial Freedom* provided a more realistic approach to the struggles associated with colony building. Anna Burgess, editor of the "Woman's Column," notes, "Many persons are coming to Equality now. Some stay and some do not. Those who come here only for their own personal benefit are very seldom satisfied with present conditions....This is due to the realizations of the fact that the real is not the ideal."⁵² The hardships faced at Equality could not be overlooked or minimized any longer. Burgess seemed to accept that she had a responsibility to be brutally honest with her audience—informing them that colony life was not for everyone. But how did the women of Equality experience life at the colony?

⁵¹ Amy Odell, "Equality Colony Woman's Column," *Industrial Freedom*, February 18, 1899, 4.

⁵² Anna Burgess, "Equality Colony Woman's Column," *Industrial Freedom*, April 8, 1899, 4.

Unlike Home, Equality's central focus was economic in nature, therefore women who came to Equality participated in a cooperative labor environment. Women's work benefitted others so that others' work could benefit them. Odell's earlier reflection attempts to persuade other women to see the benefits gained by cooperating. As Chapter Four details, women at Equality worked in sex-typed positions—often working in domestic fields like cooking, baking, sewing, cleaning and garden tending.

Women also played central roles in creating the colony's identity, participating in publishing its message and providing leadership in governance. They participated in the editorial and publishing work associated with *Industrial Freedom*. Starting in the winter of 1898, *Industrial Freedom* carried a column written by women, concerned with women's issues. The column included inspiration stories about life in the colony, comments on the benefits of cooperative socialism and this allowed their voice to be an integral part of the colony's outward message.

Women at Equality and later Freeland took on leadership roles. Women called special meetings, signed formal petitions for national conventions and sat on the colony's Board of Directors. Department members selected women to serve as foremen and superintendents, and colony members, including women, affirmed the selection through their vote. The women at Equality took on roles as decision makers and community leaders among their peers.

Women gathered at the colony to organize, plan and actively participate as community builders. Although Equality did not attract as many lecturers as Home, the colony women routinely volunteered to promote the community on the lecture circuit. Women, then, played a critical role in developing the colony and found opportunities for speaking, writing and in general building up the colony. Recognizing interests specific to their sex, colony women

organized a regularly scheduled women's meeting to plan and discuss colony concerns and study relevant economic issues.⁵³ These meetings allowed women to interact with one another on a regular basis.

Colony women especially utilized these meetings as a place to address concerns associated with their labor and living conditions, such as how to manage meal planning and service. When the colony's membership grew too large for the small kitchen and dining room, women in the subsistence department sat down together to strategize on how to manage meal preparation and service for an expanded population.⁵⁴ Women worked together to find solutions to problems that effected the entirety of the colony. These meetings also allowed women who did not necessarily work together daily to meet with one another to deal with the daily problems associated with cooperation.

But despite demands for work, providing leadership and solving problems, as Grace Lewis stated in the "Woman's Column," the women at Equality did have time and desire to pursue intellectual and extracurricular interests. These pursuits became an outlet for women and men to interact with one another and collectively advance the utopian vision. Since most of the occupations were divided by gender, discussion groups and lyceums provided an opportunity for cross-gender socializing and intellectual discussions. Colonists enjoyed community dances and singing events. Members sang tunes such as "We Are All Merry Socialists" and the popular colony tune, "We All Have a Very Bad Cold."⁵⁵ Unlike Home, colonists could not afford to purchase instruments to develop a band. Colonists also filled their time with dramatic performances. Ida Jolly founded a company at the colony and organized community plays.⁵⁶

⁵³ *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 28, 1898, 4.

⁵⁴ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 92.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 97.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 96-98.

Colony members even wrote some of the scripts. Few lecturers came to the community but that did not prevent members from holding debates and discussions on subjects ranging from astronomy to literature. Nearby Whatcom and Mount Vernon offered bigger communities for well known speakers so Equality members traveled to hear the lectures instead of asking speakers to travel to Equality. Feminist Charlotte Perkins Gilman spoke to an audience that included Equality members.⁵⁷

Equality valued sex equality but gender relations within the colony did not always reflect that spirit of equality. Traditional ideas about women's social behavior infiltrated the radical utopian environment. Despite women earning equal pay for their labor, they were expected to act and behave within the confines of the traditional gender roles. For women (and men for that matter) Victorian manners and morals still prevailed, even in the backwoods of the Pacific Northwest. Examples persist of times when colony elders restricted and stigmatized young, unmarried colony women for engaging in deviant behaviors. At one point, some of the older leaders heavily scrutinized young female colonists' behavior, angry at their flirtatious relationships with non-colony men at nearby logging camps. Perhaps emerging from close living arrangements and conflicting expectations that some held that all colony members should spend their time engaged in work, family or intellectual pursuits, the call for constrained behavior soon subsided.⁵⁸

Both Home and Equality offered women a more liberating space than the rest of American society. Lucy Robins Lang and her husband sought a place to settle down and raise

⁵⁷ Ibid., 98.

⁵⁸ Smith, *Equality Colony Manuscript*, 164, 212.

children. For Lang, Home offered the ideal environment. Other women, like single mother Gertie Vose, recognized that Home could offer her a support system. Women appreciated being in a community with dependable neighbors to assist in child rearing because it provided them greater freedom and security. For Lois Waisbrooker, Home's environment offered her intellectual stimulation, allowing her to write and publish. Even non-members such as Dr. Linda Hazzard realized that Home's radical thinkers and tolerant audience would entertain and tolerate her discussions and lectures. The women at Equality felt liberated to pursue leadership and community building opportunities. They did not face the same type of social liberation as the women of Home, but Equality's women had new political and economic choices. They sat on committees, participated in the writing and editing of the colony newspaper and organized community events. They took on political roles and participated in intellectual activities for personal growth. The women of Home and Equality built communities in the woods of the Pacific Northwest that sustained a new vision of gender equality. They wrote articles, fed their neighbors, hosted literary studies and lead discussions, all the while creating a stable and successful community. Women stepped into these roles because each utopian colony supported gender equality.

Although both colonies differed in philosophy, what they shared was a desire to create a place where individuals could aspire to find self worth and a community willing to support those efforts. Whether that self worth was gained through free expression or through labor and work, while they existed, Home and Equality offered an alternative to the norms of greater society.

CHAPTER FOUR

HOME WORK: LABOR AND GENDER IN UTOPIA

Industrial Freedom's "Woman's Column" included stories about women's work in Equality. Editor Anna Burgess wrote about women's jobs, the results of their labor and often their work environment. "I have often noticed in passing from one department of work to another, that nimble fingers are generally accompanied with jest and laughter. Thus many of our burdens are lightened and our wants which are 'legion and muster many a score' if not supplied are better endured."¹ Her words indicate that despite the many wants of colony members, Equality colony offered a positive and jovial work environment. Burgess's words offer insight into how workers felt while at work in the co-operative colony. The positive work environment that Burgess spoke of derived from an intentionally structured, highly departmentalized system created by the BCC and administered by the colony's superintendents.

Home and Equality created labor structures that connected to their philosophical beliefs. Home colony valued liberty and individualism. As a result, the colony did not impose labor arrangements or specific jobs on its members. Labor was voluntary and never forced. Equality, however, was founded as a cooperative colony dependent on group labor. The BCC established the colony as a model socialist system with the workers owning and operating the means of production. Although the structure and arrangement of work at Home and Equality differed, both colonies undoubtedly valued the dignity of work. However, their direction and management of work varied greatly.

Since Home and Equality differed in their organization of the work environment, women in these communities also had varied experiences in the labor market. The women at Home

¹ Anna Burgess, "Woman's Column," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), January 14, 1899, 4.

worked in traditional occupations, working as teachers and homemakers, but because of the nature of the colony and its emphasis on personal freedom, flexibility existed to express one's individuality and personal beliefs. Although many women stayed and worked within the home, other women worked in occupations outside of the home such as publishing, teaching and assisting in business management. The women at Equality found themselves in an environment that valued occupational choice as long as it met the needs of the colony. As a result, the women of Equality, like Home, worked in traditional sex-segregated occupations, but all worked outside of the home to contribute to the economic health of the community. Although the women of Home and Equality lived about 130 miles away from one another in utopian communities that clearly held different beliefs, both groups of women typically worked in conventional gender bound occupations.

Home Colony

Home is not a cooperative colony, but an individualistic settlement, with a simple system of land tenure, outlined in the articles of incorporation and agreement of the association. All industries are conducted by the members or in voluntary groups. We are still in a pioneer state. A few streets have been opened, and all land not already occupied will require hard labor to clear before it can be cultivated... We live in individual or family homes, although any persons wishing to live on the communistic plan among themselves are free to do so.²

The founders of Home settled the colony as a haven for individuals to pursue liberty and personal freedom. It was never their intention that the colony's trustees establish or compel residents and members to work cooperatively. Because the colony founders valued individualism, colony leaders did not regulate nor dictate work at Home. Yet, current members volunteered their labor to create colony infrastructure, a meeting hall, the school and members' homes.

²"Home News," *Discontent: Mother of Progress* (Home, WA), December 18, 1901, 4.

Women benefitted from that spirit of volunteerism and also contributed to it. Neighbors and fellow Home colony members built Lois Waisbrooker, the septuagenarian feminist writer, a home at the colony. Waisbrooker volunteered her time to lecture and lead discussions at the colony. None of the labor was compelled but instead purely voluntary, consistent with the values and beliefs of the colony. Community members built the schoolhouse and created roads for the benefit of others. When people of the colony needed work to be done, it happened organically because of a shared sense of responsibility to one another for the overall success of the colony.

In many ways, like women in countless American communities, most Home colony women did not participate in paid labor outside of the home. This was far from intentional on the part of the colony and can be attributed to geography. Location played a role in limiting the amount of jobs available in the community. As a rural, isolated colony, Home depended on local industries outside of the community, particularly logging and fishing, traditionally masculine occupations. However, women's domestic work did not indicate a lack of power or authority within the family. One female colonist wrote, "In a majority of families of avowed anarchists and free lovers, the women ruled the roost and developed their lots."³ Women developed their plots, homes, and community and clearly had a sense of power and authority.

Few industries existed in the community, with little opportunity for employment outside of the home. Evelyn Evans, granddaughter of one of the earliest settlers, Martin Dadisman, recalled that few women worked at enterprises in the colony. Her mother, Martin's

³ "Pioneer Women or Co-operative Colonies," 4, folder 9, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State History Research Center, Tacoma, WA.

daughter-in-law, occasionally helped out in the store that her husband, Martin's son, managed.⁴ Most of the colonists, both men and women, provided for their own needs through subsistence agriculture and raising small livestock, particularly chickens, on their limited acreage.⁵ Because women provided much of this labor, they largely contributed to their own and their family's economic survival. Like so many other women living in the West at this time, the eggs, berries, and chickens, raised by the women of Home, kept some families afloat. This structure demonstrated that women, who did participate in gardening and raising poultry, participated in the local economy.⁶ Lucy Robins Lang, who moved to Home because of the radicalism and the lack of restrictions, attempted to farm her land at Home. The land was good for growing fruit, berries, and vegetables. She knew that goods farmed at Home could be sold to nearby markets in Tacoma. But Lang also realized that if she struggled financially at Home, she could pursue other economic opportunities in neighboring communities.⁷ Tacoma, the nearest industrial area, offered an alternative work environment for those Home colonists who could not provide for their own needs.

For many colony men and women, Home failed to provide them with the resources and employment needed to survive. Some members temporarily moved outside of the colony to find work, but most returned seasonally or even on weekends. Lang's friends worked in Tacoma and lived at Home during the weekend. Records indicate that colonists traveled as close as Tacoma during the week and as far as Alaska to find work that would allow them to live at Home during

⁴Evans, interview.

⁵ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 193; Memories of Toots Snyder, 1978, folder 1, History of Home, Washington, Key Peninsula Historical Society, Vaughn, WA. Lang, 48-49.

⁶ For more on western women and the role in agriculture see Laurie Mercier, "Women's Role in Montana Agriculture: 'You Had to Make Every Minute Count,'" *Montana: the Magazine of Western History*, 38, no. 4 (Autumn 1988), 50-61.

⁷ Lang, 48-49.

some part of the year.⁸ Colony members willingly worked in the outside world of the free market with the goal of returning as quickly as possible to the community.

Although industry in Home was fairly limited, some women did find work within the colony store. During the life of the colony, the store operated both competitively and cooperatively. Evelyn Evans' mother assisted in the management of the store, and Louise Ault worked as the store secretary.⁹ Despite routine reorganization (the store changed management and business structure from time to time) the store consistently retained its low prices and its willingness to meet the needs of colonists with barter and other forms of payment.¹⁰ Women like Ault and Dadisman assisted with keeping account books.¹¹ At Home, where families struggled to survive, the store offered goods in exchange for eggs, produce and even labor.¹²

Home Colony School also offered women opportunities for work. Home School implemented radical educational philosophies and encouraged academic rigor. Colony founder Sylvia Allen, wife of George Allen, offered her skills as one of the first teachers on site. Sylvia and George's daughter, Grace, also taught at the school. Kate Cheyse and Lucille Mint instructed the arts at Home. Cheyse encouraged students to explore musical interests while Mint, the founder of the National Liberal Art and Science League, spent some time at Home teaching art courses. The school emphasized the arts and exhibited their students' talents and skills to out of town visitors. Other teachers included Gertrude Mellinger and Mrs. Kelly, sister of founder B.F. O'Dell.

⁸ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 193.

⁹ Evans, interview.

¹⁰ E.M. Clyde, "Letter to the Editor: Home Colony," 1917?, folder 1, History of Home, Washington, Key Peninsula Historical Society, Vaughn, WA.

¹¹ Evans, interview.

¹² Diary of Roland Eugene Muirhead, folder 1, History of Home, Washington, Key Peninsula Historical Society, Vaughn, WA.

Although teachers may have differed on educational philosophies, teachers provided students with a strong educational background.¹³ George Allen firmly believed that the colony's beliefs in liberty and individualism should extend into the classroom. James Morton, teacher and one time newspaper editor, was far more of a disciplinarian. His behavioral approach to classroom instruction, although typical of the era, differed from the educational philosophy of Kelly. Radical for the era, Kelly believed in tapping into the students' affective domain. According to one visitor, "She believes in teaching through love and never using corporal punishment."¹⁴ Although their approaches differed, these educators created an environment that positively impacted students. Students could see women and men working on equal footing with one another. Students worked together in a co-educational setting organized and facilitated by both male and female teachers. Furthermore, all students engaged in co-curricular subjects such as dance and singing, and consistent with their philosophy on gender equality, teachers organized students in a co-educational manner. The educators at Home Colony created an intellectual work environment that reinforced for students the founding principles of liberty and social equality.

Because Home fostered both individualism and intellectual growth, women freely pursued writing or publishing careers. Lois Waisbrooker, one of Home's most notorious members, published the monthly journal *Clothed with the Sun*, from the colony. She mailed the journal out of the local post office, operated by Postmistress Mattie Penhallow. Waisbrooker, in her mid-seventies when she arrived at Home, spent her time writing, lecturing and recreating (including nude swimming in Joe's Bay). After paying for her land through the MHA and the general membership fee, Waisbrooker held no financial obligations to the colony. Consequently

¹³ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 203; Information on Gertrude Mellinger from *Discontent*, December 20, 1899, 4; Radium LeVene, "Home Colony," folder 8, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State History Research Center, Tacoma, WA.

¹⁴ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 201-202.

she could live the life she desired.¹⁵ Waisbrooker's writing was anything but conventional. Her articles on marriage and sex certainly upset more traditional elements outside of the community, leading to a trial and conviction on an obscenity charge. Yet, there is no apparent evidence that suggests that she created a stir within the Home community, indicating widespread tolerance and support for gender equity and radical positions. Colony members recalled that they defended Waisbrooker's beliefs, her right to free speech and in the process often times shamed outsiders for bringing her to court.¹⁶ After her conviction and fine of \$100, she remained in her home for the next two years and furthered her writing career by publishing *Women's Source of Power* and *My Century Plant* within a year of the trial.¹⁷ Both pamphlets emphasized her ideas on free love and non state sanctioned marriage. The ideological backdrop of Home created an ideal environment for a writer like Waisbrooker to share her talents, political and social mores with a much greater community. Although Waisbrooker is Home's most famous female writer, other women wrote short articles and poems that appeared in the colony newspaper. The colony's political and social climate allowed women to find and use their voice as they saw fit, not to please a more restrictive society but to please oneself. The women of Home worked within this framework to satisfy their own inward artistic desires while advancing the colony's practice of tolerance.

Equality Colony

The greatest need of our colony today is more good cooperative workers and money to get necessary machinery, but with the willing workers—men and women that can see the future and are willing to endure a little privation and even personal discomfort for the

¹⁵ Once joining the MHA and paying for the land, the Articles of Incorporation did not compel members to financially contribute anything more to the colony. Articles of Incorporation and Agreement, Mutual Home Association, 17 January 1898, folder 7, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma, WA

¹⁶ Koenig, 209.

¹⁷ McAllister, 45.

good of the cause—we will soon be the richest workers on earth. Hard work will do it every time. --A.D. a new member to Equality.¹⁸

To expand its cooperative experiment, Equality needed workers. Founders centered the colony on cooperative work; labor the central and driving force behind the colony's inception. Founders and members held lectures or forums secondary to the colony that believed that cooperative labor offered a pathway to utopia. If this cooperative utopia could succeed then surely more people would want to either join Equality or start another similar colony elsewhere. Vital organizational principles to the colony included dividing work, creating work environments, and democratizing labor. Cooperative work also required all members to participate; therefore an founders and members created an infrastructure for both ideological and utilitarian purposes.

From its inception, Equality billed itself as a colony that supported choice. The governing laws created by the BCC allowed members to choose their own occupation, provided that they “hold themselves ready to do any work assigned by proper officers.”¹⁹ However members, including women, criticized this arrangement.²⁰ Officers overlooked or undervalued individual strengths or skills because of needs in other departments. Inza Joslyn, later Inza Barry, came to the colony having already experienced life in a cooperative community. Later, residents recalled that she was a master of the saw and hammer.²¹ But even those master carpentry skills could not prevent her from being assigned elsewhere in the colony. Instead Joslyn's assignment in the kitchen reinforced gender stereotypes instead of challenging them.

¹⁸ *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 7.

¹⁹ *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 25, 1898, 4.

²⁰ George Howard Gibson, “Christian Commonwealth Economics,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 25, 1898, 4.

²¹ Prudence Hattie, interview by Barbara Heacock, February 16, 1978, interview #RIII 154, transcript, Skagit County Oral History Preservation Project, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA.

Assignments varied from time to time and records, such as Equality grocery books, demonstrate that in some cases, members held several different positions when needed, moving from horticulture to the bakery or from transportation to the dairy.²² Colonists expected change, although it is important to note that once assigned to a department, the member worked there for the entirety of their eight or five hour shift

Some labor, like mill work and horticulture, was seasonal and dictated by weather. When the rainy season of the late fall, winter and spring subsided, laborers set aside mill work so that workers could assist in the harvest.²³ Certainly a flexible work force encouraged more community development and interaction, since members worked with a variety of people. Both social and work related exchanges solidified the communal goals of the colony and united members rather than divided them. Naturally, a work environment with inconsistent and fluctuating workers offered some disadvantages. Mobility prevented workers from honing and furthering sharing master skills with new members. But with personal accomplishment not lauded but rather disregarded in this utopian community, the colony did not always recognize a member's skills as superior to any of her other work. Consistent with Bellamy's beliefs on workers sharing in the labor, Equality needed all work to support the common goal of co-operation.

The BCC organized work as a way to create structure and foster efficiency. The colony board of directors arranged labor into departments, based on diverse occupational interests, all necessary for the colony's success. These departments consisted of manufacturing, cuisine, public works, agriculture, education, recreation, transportation, exchange, and public health. Over time, the number and names of the departments changed. The number of departments

²² Grocery Books for Freeland, folder 2 of 3, Freeland Colony Files, 2078 T-0587e. University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

²³"Department Reports," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 6.

increased over time as the colony expanded or shrunk or as development in one venture grew faster than anticipated.²⁴ For example, the colony expanded its baking business, trading bread with neighboring railroad camps. Trade and monetary gain required that the colony keep track of the transactions. For accounting purposes, the colony board of directors decided to create a new baking department separate from the cuisine department. A similar situation emerged in the sewing department. Previously, sewing fell under the manufacturing department. However, the department and board decided to offer mail order clothing. Because of industry expansion, the board needed a new department to keep track of orders and manage business dealings. Regardless of name changes, the colony consistently used this overarching structure for dividing labor.²⁵

The department head managed the labor within the departments. Both a governing institution and a system for managing labor, the department heads, known as superintendants and sometimes foremen, ensured that their respective departments met the needs of the colony. Superintendants worked with colony officers as representatives of the people. Members of the departments selected them but the entire membership participated in voting, reinforcing Equality's democratic foundation.²⁶ Women routinely served as department superintendants. As part of their responsibilities, superintendants submitted reports to *Industrial Freedom*. These reports offered a glimpse of what laborers actually accomplished while at work, although reports were sometimes limited due to the nature of the department during a particular season or due to a

²⁴ Several of Equality's departments interacted with individuals or companies living outside of the communal lifestyle. For accounting purposes it became necessary to separate and create departments to track expenditures and income.

²⁵ Discussion over department expansion can be found in "Department Reports," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 6.

²⁶ *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 21, 1898, 4.

leadership change within the department, leaving the new superintendent with few facts to report.

The BCC found standardizing and equalizing the work day for its members more complicated than anticipated. In its May 7, 1898 issue, *Industrial Freedom* ran an article regarding the length of the work day. The BCC needed workers to work an eight hour work day at first, as the colony developed. However, as the colony expanded, the length of the work day would drop to six hours and then optimally four hours.²⁷ However, in the following week's issue, another article appeared about length of the work day. According to the piece, the colony standardized the eight-hour work day, but several people worked a 10, 12 or 14-hour day without extra compensation. Although workers did not receive additional pay for their labor, the article indicated that workers received "extra respect" for their efforts.²⁸ How would such a reward of "extra respect" resonate with colony members? Because the BCC controlled *Industrial Freedom*, the newspaper did not overly criticize the extended work day. But the lengthy work day could have scared off potential members. The next week's issue of *Industrial Freedom* continued the discussion with a question and answer section on wages and allowances. The colony utilized scrip for wages and the colony expected all adults to work fifty hours a week.²⁹ By 1901, workers in the transportation department worked ten-hour shifts during the summer months and eight-hour shifts during the winter months.³⁰ The optimal four hour work day never managed to come to fruition for men or women.

From its earliest days, the women of Equality were concerned about their part of the work load. As the colony grew and membership increased, the influx of people meant more collective

²⁷ *Industrial Freedom*, (Equality, WA), May 7, 1898, 1.

²⁸ *Industrial Freedom*, (Equality, WA), May 14, 1898, 3.

²⁹ *Industrial Freedom*, (Equality, WA), May 21, 1898, 3.

³⁰ "Department Reports," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 6.

work to be done. Much of the increased work load fell on women. Women fed and clothed all members, and took charge of taking care of single men moving into the colony. Concerned about the increased work load, the women of the colony met and appointed Mrs. Odell and Mrs. Sandstrom to create a plan that would “systematize part of the work.”³¹ In an early edition of *Industrial Freedom*, section editor Annie Billingsley explained the responsibility of colony women,

Part of the women help in the kitchen and dining room, also part of the girls; some sew, some attend to the poultry, some make up the bachelors’ beds, sweep their rooms and keep the halls in order. Others see to the milk, help iron, darn and patch. The berry season will soon begin and probably they will pick or help pick them and also do some up. There is plenty to do for all, as we are quite a little town by ourselves. Then each has the care of their room and family.³²

For many women, the pioneering lifestyle offered several challenges. A colony woman took care of her family and other colonists. It is no surprise that women called for some type of change in the early work system.

Based on women’s insistence, the colony formally shortened the work day. The colony paid men and women five cents an hour to work eight hours a day. Oftentimes, men worked above and beyond the eight hours, but did not receive additional compensation. Women, on the other hand technically worked a five-hour shift. The other three hours, for which they received compensation, was spent taking care of the home and the family.³³ However there is no mention of women being paid above the eight-hour work day even though women often worked longer than eight hours a day. Like outside the colony, women performed most of the domestic labor for the family. But Equality did recognize the need to compensate women for their work by making adjustments to the colony’s labor system.

³¹ Annie Billingsley, “Colony Notes,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 28, 1898, 4.

³² Annie Billingsley, “Colony Notes,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 11, 1898, 4.

³³ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 80.

The colony provided a common kitchen, dining room, laundry, and sewing facilities for its members. As a result, women did not prepare meals for their own families but instead worked in departments responsible for those communal needs. Women laundered the clothing and gardened. Women cooked and baked in the communal kitchen and bakery. Women in the sewing department manufactured clothing onsite, relieving some of the work that individual women might take on for each of their families. Although men and women could be assigned to any department, more often than not, the colony assigned women to traditional gender-typed labor—cooking, sewing, housekeeping, serving, laundry.³⁴ Although a few men assisted in these departments, overwhelmingly the colony sex typed women into particular jobs. This practice utilized women’s previously acquired skills, such as sewing, cooking and baking to their collective endeavors. Their skills benefitted the entire colony and provided women an opportunity to participate in the colony. Although the board limited what departments women served in, women contributed to the colony’s economic expansion and overall success.

Women made up the majority of the laundry department, responsible for washing, drying and ironing the clothes. Department members not only laundered colony clothing and goods but also took in laundry, for extra colony income, from timber crews working outside of the colony. Laundry took three days to wash and dry and another three days for ironing. Although two men served in the laundry department, three women washed and upwards of twenty women ironed—pressing everything from petticoats and ruffled dresses to everyday working wear. Women, like Anna Oss, also took a leadership role in this department and in the colony, serving as Superintendent.³⁵ Oss’s selection by her department and vote by the general membership indicated the faith that her fellow members had in her ability to lead, even if those she directed

³⁴ Frederick Smith, *Equality Colony Manuscript*, 212.

³⁵ Frederick Smith, *Equality Colony Manuscript*, 110; *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 6.

were primarily women. Equality colonists valued women's leadership skills and recognized those skills and abilities.

The cuisine department, formerly known as the subsistence department, offered colony outreach to incoming visitors arriving at Equality. This department interacted with all colony members and any visitors who came to tour the grounds. The department consisted of almost all women, although two men assisted by moving large pans and carrying pots of water.³⁶ The department cleaned the rooms at Fort Bellamy (the hotel onsite where visitors and those awaiting more permanent housing stayed), cleaned common areas, planned, prepared, and served meals.

The cuisine department fed all of the members and visitors at Equality. The colony provided a cooperative kitchen and dining area for all members. As the colony expanded, the size of the dining room and kitchen seemed to be a continual complaint at the colony. The kitchen and dining room were rather small for the large amount of food preparation, including the number of laborers working within the confines, but eventually the kitchen and the dining room expanded.³⁷ Workers planned meals around the goods grown and purchased by the colony. Even young girls like Minnie Lang and Frankie Clevenger served food in the dining hall, while older women prepared the food used in the meals³⁸ Women at Equality found food preparation rather difficult. Henrietta Foy, writing in the "Woman's Column" in *Industrial Freedom* explained the hardship associated with working in food preparation:

Generally there are from five to eight or more women in this department by the way our tired husbands and brothers eat these vegetables one would think we would need twice as many helpers, the other hour of my time of colony work I put in in [sic] caring for the

³⁶Frederick Smith, *Equality Colony Manuscript*, 110; *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 3.

³⁷ Equality Colony Kitchen, Peter L. Hegg Equality Colony Photographs: 1898-1900, <http://digital.lib.washington.edu/findingaids/view?docId=HeggPeterLEqualityColonyPHColl728.xml> (accessed September 1, 2012); Annie Billingsley, "Colony Notes," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 11, 1898, 4; H.W. Halladay, "Colony Notes," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 27, 1900, 4.

³⁸Minnie Missoura Lang (Pomeroy?), interview by Frederick E. Smith, December 5, 1968, interview tape #35, box 8, Papers of Frederick E. Smith, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA.

milk and all the milk utensils [sic]. We get but a small quantity of milk compared to our large family, just barely enough for the babies, the sick and for our cereal coffee three times a day.³⁹

Foy hints that the hungry men of Equality consumed large amounts of vegetables. Prepping the vegetables for meals took a sizable crew. Foy also addresses food shortages. In early 1899, Equality faced a livestock shortage and the amount of milk produced barely met the needs of the colonists. Women in the cuisine department routinely found themselves having to carefully manage and distribute food.

Due to colony expansion, the cuisine department restructured its shift work. The cuisine and baking staff worked one of three shifts to accommodate the five-hour work day and the amount of meals to be served.⁴⁰ As the colony expanded, people ate in shifts due to limited space within the dining hall. At the beginning of each week, the department issued twenty-one tickets and each member had to provide a ticket for each meal. The shift population changed over time. At one point, the department divided the shifts by gender. Men dined first, then women and children. At another time, the department divided shifts by family groups.⁴¹ Aside from cooking, workers baked cakes, cookies and bread with upwards of fifty loaves of bread baked each day. Members baked bread for colony consumption and for sale and trade in neighboring communities and local work camps. In the fall of 1901, baking became its own department separate from cuisine. Eventually a separate bakery was created outside of the kitchen and dining hall. Although the cuisine department was overseen by women, from Anna Pelton to Mrs. Huff (no first name given), the bakery department was overseen by a man—W.C.

³⁹ Henrietta Foy, "Woman's Column," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), January 14, 1899, 4.

⁴⁰ Frederick Smith, *Equality Colony Manuscript*, 110, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA. *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 3.

⁴¹ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 93.

Davis.⁴² However, the women working in the department elevated him to the leadership role that was eventually voted on by the general membership.

The colony solely delegated housekeeping, part of the subsistence and later cuisine department, to women. Women cared for and kept up the common areas, including Fort Bellamy, the hotel where visitors stayed and where individuals waiting for their home to be constructed could stay. Fort Bellamy also hosted single colony members. The housekeeping committee, a segment of the department, tended these places. Gladys Ault recalled the work as difficult and strenuous. Gladys and her mother, who also worked in the kitchen, swept floors, made beds and had the dirty task of bed bug extermination. To do this they placed coal oil in tin cans and placed the cans underneath the legs of the bed. The coal oil would kill the bugs, making the accommodations far more comfortable.⁴³ Women understood that they contributed to the needs of the colony as members of the housekeeping committee. They realized that housekeeping work could be dirty but necessary. Although other women's department offered cleaner work environments, housekeeping was considered an unskilled position so it was easy to assign unskilled workers, including young women, to these positions.

Once part of the manufactures department, the sewing department required skilled workers to tailor and manufacture clothing. Women mostly made up the department, although some men did tailor. The department consisted of a few sewing and manufacturing machines, a button hole machine and two knitting machines.⁴⁴ The colony produced clothing for sale based on mail orders published in *Industrial Freedom*. Women at the colony shared clothing and access to imported clothing and fabric was fairly limited. The colony did offer and create

⁴²Annie Billingsley, "Colony Notes," *Industrial Freedom*, May 21, 1898, 3; "Department reports," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 6.

⁴³Gladys Ault Gray, interview by Frederick E. Smith, tape #7, box 8, Papers of Frederick E. Smith, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA.

⁴⁴"Department reports," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 1, 1901, 6.

inexpensive clothing but with limited options, many young women complained about the lack of style and available fabrics. When Kate Halladay, a well loved teacher at Equality, began the process of planning a wedding, she opted not to go with the colony's limited material available to make her dress, and instead saved money in order to purchase the Henrietta silk and lace from an outside vendor.⁴⁵

Like Home, Equality Colony created a school to meet the needs of the students. However gender shaped the types of positions held, as women worked as teachers and men as school administrators. There was nothing radical about this work arrangement. To prepare for the school's opening in the fall of 1898, the colony created the education department. It consisted of four members: the Superintendent Reverend C.E. Walker and three women. The department officially created School District No. 68. The department designed a school that provided students with a solid education while offering background in several orthodox subjects such as grammar, history, and arithmetic. The department gathered books, including readers and textbooks from patrons and those who subscribed to *Industrial Freedom*. The manufacturing department created the desks and other manufactured equipment necessary for student learning onsite.

Once organized, Equality's school was ready for students in the fall of 1898. The department planned on thirty students attending in the fall. The school opened on Monday, September 19, 1898, with Kate Halladay, a teenager, as the teacher. Member David Burgess, who also wrote for the colony paper, acted as the principal. By November of 1898, seventy students attended the colony school, but within months attendance rates decreased. Although the number of teachers occasionally waivered, the school typically had two teachers, always women, on staff teaching eight grades in two classrooms. The colony also offered the younger children

⁴⁵ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 85, 93.

an opportunity to attend kindergarten. Sara Ward Temple, writer, poet and member, instructed the youngest of children. Not all of the children of the colony attended the local school as some students seeking a high school education attended public school in the nearby town of Edison. However, near the time that Alexander Horr moved into the colony, District No. 68 merged with other nearby districts, creating a unified high school and by 1914, the school district ceased to exist.⁴⁶ Although the district faltered, this was no fault of the teachers. Despite teachers working in an unstable work environment with donated resources and students moving in and out of the colony on an inconsistent basis, the teachers of Equality offered students the best education possible.

Because the colony's population had a high rate of mobility and its resources so limited, the colony constantly needed workers to sustain the experiment. The colony struggled to find the right balance between labor demands and the skills set of incoming member. Yet when *Industrial Freedom* advertised for open positions, nearly all of the jobs desired male labor. Job postings included everything from tanners to dentists.⁴⁷ At times the newspaper posted sex-specific jobs: "Boys, we need carpenters, tanners, shoemakers, tinnerns and so on. When you get tired of wage slavery, here is your refuge."⁴⁸ One want ad stated: "Cook—man preferred."⁴⁹ Yet when Equality promoted itself through its propaganda it routinely highlighted that the colony had much to offer for all people wanting to live in a socialistic cooperative setting. Unlike Home, few single women, without familial relationships already established in the colonies,

⁴⁶LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 94-95; "Colony News," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 21, 1898, 4; "Colony News," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 28, 1898, 4.

⁴⁷*Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 21, 1898, 3; *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 27, 1900, 3.

⁴⁸*Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), July 9, 1898, 4.

⁴⁹*Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), May 14, 1898, 3.

joined Equality and later Freeland.⁵⁰ Single women moved to Equality but most, like Emma Marquardt and Inza Joslyn shared familial ties to older siblings and/or parents seeking membership. Although the colony advertised itself as offering economic, social and political equality, the colony did not draw many single women looking for a new non-biological family. Equality provided economic and political structure and even a social network but it did not create an environment supportive of individual liberty and void of social stigma. There is no evidence of unmarried mothers moving to Equality or individuals engaging in non-traditional cohabitation.

The BCC created Equality as an economic experiment—believing that cooperative socialism offered an alternative to industrial capitalism. Women participated in a new cooperative endeavor, seizing opportunities to become decision makers and community builders. Although the colony embraced sex equality, they limited women to jobs in housekeeping, cooking, serving, sewing, planning meals, teaching and also nursing, tending poultry and harvesting the garden and local berries. But women also organized shift work, made economic decisions and participated in political decision making. In most cases, these women worked alongside one another in the garden, in the kitchen and in the sewing room, creating relationships along the way, sharing ideas, and stories. The colony valued women’s domestic and familial obligations, creating a structure that allowed women to work reduced hours while still earning additional pay. The colony recognized the differences between men and women’s work and demonstrated its value for women’s work within the home. The colony recognized the additional obligations held by women, and women, in turn, invested in their colony. They desired success and wanted to be a part of the process. They offered their labor, sharing the

⁵⁰ Membership Applications, folder 1 of 5, Freeland Colony Files, 2078 T-0587e, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

difficult task of creating and sustaining a utopian colony. Thus the women of Equality truly were, as Annie Billingsley put it, “quite a little town” themselves.⁵¹

The women of Equality certainly appeared to be working like a “little town.” The colony certainly heralded its work ethic and organization, but Martin Dadisman, who later moved to Home, “was annoyed by the laziness of some members and impractical orders of foremen.”⁵² Even the photographs from Equality sent mixed messages about the nature of colony work.

At first glance, a photograph of Equality Colony taken in 1898, showing four men, two women and an adolescent boy standing in a carpentry shop, some holding implements, might send a message that in this colony, men, women, and children worked alongside one another. However, clearer focus reveals something different. In the photograph, the women are dressed fashionably, not necessarily in work clothes or everyday dresses and noticeably without aprons. One man, wearing a three piece suit and a bowler hat, holds a large saw. Although the other figures in the photograph do appear to be more appropriately dressed for the work environment, what are we to make from this photograph?⁵³ Equality routinely sold photographs to the outside world in hopes of promoting the colony to increase membership and encourage support. This photograph communicated quite a bit to the outsider. Equality members look well dressed, happy, well fed, and industrious. Women worked alongside men to create a product, build and sustain a successful colony. Although the image does not divulge anything about who the people are, it does disclose the image that Equality wanted to demonstrate to outsiders. With labor as the background, the photograph acknowledges that women participated in the development of

⁵¹ Annie Billingsley, “Colony Notes,” *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), June 4, 1898, 4.

⁵² Quoted in LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 173.

⁵³ Brotherhood of the Co-operative Commonwealth Carpentry Shop, Edison, WA, c. 1898, Peter L. Hegg Equality Colony Photographs: 1898-1900, <http://content.lib.washington.edu/u/?/social,3> (accessed June 1, 2012).

this colony, regardless of whether these women could break away from traditional gender-typed labor.

At its development, Equality embraced the challenges of instituting a new cooperative system. Colony leaders recognized that it would be difficult for women to break away from the individualist centered/capitalistic model that they experienced prior to walking into the colony. They realized that not all women would be placed in the position or department that they desired but as long as they realized that their labor and toil was necessary for the success of the colony and appreciated, then they would feel as if their contributions mattered. Creating that network of interdependence was one reason why the experiment lasted as long as it did.

Different in philosophy and structure from Equality, Home's network of interdependence and voluntarism drove the colony's success. Although Home lacked its own industry and women struggled to find employment within the colony, the hardship and lack of work created problems that were overcome. Some women, who would have liked to live in the colony year round, full time, struggled to find employment. This created hardship for some, but records indicate that those who sought work outside the colony often returned to Home.⁵⁴ The colony created an environment welcoming to single mothers and widowed women. Although these women may have struggled financially, they received community assistance. The community store accepted trade, credit, labor and money in order to meet the needs of the colonists. Women at Home worked in education, business, farming and publication. These jobs provided women with an opportunity to earn a living while building and sustaining the colony. Despite working in gender-typed jobs, the women in these two colonies utilized their individual talents and skills to better themselves and their communities. Their labor contributed to the overall success of each colony. Their work impacted children, adults, and the radical movement. At time, the

⁵⁴ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 193.

women benefitted from their own labor and quite often, others gained from women's work. Ultimately the women of Home and Equality put into action the words and hopes of Lois Waisbrooker, who said, "What I want most is the power TO DO, TO DO."⁵⁵ These women worked with the social, political and economic systems of their colonies to create communities that provided women with real opportunities "to do."

⁵⁵ Quoted in LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 189.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

The challenge of studying utopian women is that so often the women in these groups are influenced by men who create and enforce the power structure within the colony. But at Home and Equality women participated in the creation of each colony. From the very beginning, women took an active role in the development and success of the colonies. Their role was far from ancillary and much more foundational to the overall success of each community.

Women actively participated in Home and Equality's social, cultural, political and economic life. These women were community builders. At Home, women provided intellectual stimulation through discussion groups, lyceums, and publications. They worked within the home and gardened outside the home to provide food for their families. They taught school and worked in the local store to assist their families and their community. Women did not just live at the colony, many thrived here. At a time when women across the country struggled with rigid Victorian morals and manners, the women of Home were afforded the opportunity to be whoever they wanted to be. They could write, sing, debate, dance, bathe nude (well up until the 1910s), or even live in a tree, if they so desired.¹ This colony created an environment welcoming to any and all as long as they in turn practiced tolerance. Social stigma meant little here. The colony welcomed women from a variety of backgrounds and marital statuses and colony members assisted women in settling the land and building a home. The women of Home lived their lives freely and the MHA supported equality by extending full membership without any considerations or exceptions. Just as property rights expanded for women in the West, women at Home inherited both property and MHA membership. The colony leaders and members rarely

¹ Haiman, interview. Haiman referred to the tree house home of Joe and Annie Kopell.

interfered in their lives, but in the rare cases when this did occur, most notably Lois Waisbrooker's legal case, members rallied behind the women.

Like Home, the women of Equality participated in the economic, social and political success of the colony. Although the BCC conceptualized and started colony development, the organization did not physically build the colony. The BCC left the labor to the men and women who settled there. These women worked incredibly hard to develop and sustain a cooperative community in the woods of the Pacific Northwest. They worked with little technology to provide services and goods to their fellow members. These women educated children, sewed, gardened, exterminated bugs, cleaned and cooked for the entire colony. Women also saw themselves as responsible to one another which unified them in a common purpose. Despite articles indicating that women would feel a great sense of accomplishment through economic cooperation, many women felt discouraged and dissatisfied by the lifestyle. The colony cast them into particular work roles, revealing that even in the most radical of societies, American gender roles shaped many aspects of communitarian life. When editing *Industrial Freedom* and writing "Colony Notes" and "Woman's Column"--these women voiced the concerns, beliefs, and accomplishments of the colony. It was through their writing that the outside world came to know and experience Equality. It was through their work that colony members received public recognition for their labor and efforts, reinforcing a spirit of communalism and cooperation.

But Equality's management system differed from Home's. The BCC and the board of directors guided the colony, and women participated in the political and economic decision making. Elected by their peers, women worked as department superintendents, responsible to the BCC, the board and the entire membership. Not only did the colony emphasize the commitment that it had to the democratic process but demonstrated members' willingness to

elect women into offices of authority. The women who took on these roles understood their responsibility to the entire colony. At the department level, women administered policies, procedures, and in the case of the subsistence committee—they created a structure that would allow them to feed and serve the colony more efficiently and effectively. The women of Equality seized those opportunities and together, with their male counterparts, built a colony that for a short time would practice successfully cooperative socialism.

More's *Utopia*, written nearly four hundred years before the settlement of Home or Equality, serves as a reminder to what many imagined a utopia to be: a good place but also no place. Most utopian colonies fail to sustain their efforts for long periods of time. Rarely do these colonies live up to their ideology and goals. Rosabeth Kanter suggested that groups either founded utopian communities as a refuge or as a hope; groups create colonies to retreat from society or to follow a mission.² As industrial capitalism increasingly dominated the country, individuals found more of a need to retreat. Financial collapse and the government's slow response to reform led many disheartened citizens to seek refuge in utopian communities. But these colonies, like the larger society, had flaws. These utopian colonies provided a good place, like More believed, but they were impossible to sustain.

The founders and members of Home and Equality knew of the failures in other utopian movements. Several founders and members had a personal experience with failing colonies. But these two experiments hoped to ward off failure by offering different structures in a different environment. Place mattered. Home and Equality's founders settled in secluded sites in a state with strong ties to the reform momentum, including labor unions. Populists, socialists, radicals,

² Kanter, *Commitment and Community*.

and moderate legislators found at place at the state capitol and Governor Rogers wrote a utopian novel and encouraged the people to seek alternatives through utopian ideology. Washington was also home to notable suffrage leaders. The Puget Sound offered a temperate, if rainy, climate and fertile land for self-sufficiency and a much sought after timber industry. It also provided access to a booming wage economy in industrialized Tacoma. These factors set Home and Equality apart from the hundreds of other American utopian communities that came before them. That is not to say that the colonies did not meet resistance, but what opposition did exist did not originate at the state level.

Like many utopian societies before them, the founders established definitive, clear and well articulated bylaws. The men and women of each colony created retreats from larger society and hoped to attract a specific kind of member. These founders and early settlers anticipated difficulties and challenges and worked within their colony's frameworks to meet the needs of their members and hopefully like minded individuals. Yet, as Home and Equality expanded their membership, both colonies succumbed to infighting and eventual dissolution. But the fact that disintegration occurred does not affect or deter from the significance of the colonies' existence.

What makes Equality significant is the high level of commitment that members had to one another and to the values of the colony. The BCC wanted to create a model colony that would be a prototype for other socialist colonies. Among its goals, the colony committed itself to sex equality. Although colony leaders gender-typed jobs, women were paid the same as men and granted time for domestic tasks. Women served in leadership positions and voted as members of the general assembly. Even after the BCC fell apart, the board and a core of members held the colony together with their belief in socialism, equality and practice of co-operation. Despite the limited resources, long work days, and an inconsistent work force, many

members remained and dedicated themselves to the experiment. It was only after Alexander Horr moved into the colony wanting to energize and revamp the colony that fractures developed. Once exposed, those fractures led to major divisions that broke apart the commitment that members once had to one another.

In the case of Home, Verity, Allen, and O'Dell committed to the idea that a colony should govern as little as possible to create the most freedom allowable. Fourteen years into the colony, the community paper, *The Agitator*, reprinted a Thoreau quote (responding to a famous Jefferson quote) to remind readers and members of the challenges created by a loosely directed system: "That government is best which governs not at all, and that is the kind of government we will have when men are ready for it."³ Little trustee interference allowed for maximum liberty. The environment at Home offered both space and a place for people to be themselves, without fear of stigma following them.

The colonists at Home created an open environment that acted as glue to keep the members committed to one another. Members demonstrated their commitment in their defense of those attacked by the press and the government. The community exhibited their sense of responsibility to one another in the voluntary community building of homes for the elderly and single mothers. As a community, they rejected social stigma for all, including single, unmarried mothers. Their commitment was present in the large attendance at intellectual activities like debates and lectures and at recreational events such as attendance at baseball games. Although both colonies had members that disagreed with one another and some that simply left, it's fair to acknowledge both Equality and Home provided a high level of commitment to their shared purpose. Both colonies wanted their members to find a safe harbor and retreat from conventional norms and attitudes.

³ *The Agitator* (Home, WA), March 15, 1912, 3.

Home's women embraced the open environment. The community embraced women from all social, political and economic backgrounds. Regardless of marital status or belief in free love, Home tolerated a wide variety of arrangements which drew women to settle. When interviewed, Lewis Haiman, a child who grew up in Home, emphasized that people had this "live and let live" belief.⁴ Women who grew up in Home always recalled the community as being free spirited and fun.⁵ Women created and participated in an intellectually stimulating environment and embraced opportunities to lead lectures and discussion groups.

Home's unconventional spirit did not suit everyone. Disputes emerged between official MHA members and other settlers living nearby or across the bay. At times those disputes turned violent as founder George Allen experienced. On his way home from a dinner event, Allen was attacked and beaten by a disgruntled neighbor, not a member of the MHA.⁶ Allen's injuries resulted from disagreement over the acceptance of nude bathing. This issue drew negative interest to the community of Home, and nude bathing sparked more unwanted attention to the anarchist and freedom loving environment of Home.

As the colony expanded, tensions further materialized between long standing members of the MHA and newer residents. Under the Articles of Incorporation, the MHA owned the land and the colonists owned the property constructed on the land—including homes, fences, and

⁴Haiman, interview. Throughout Haiman's narrative he (and his wife) emphasize that statement. When asked by LeWarne about controversies within the colony, Haiman does not pass judgment nor indicate any real hostility towards any group (nude bathers, men wearing dresses, etc...). His personal satisfaction with the colony is quite high and he and his wife are very proud of what the colony accomplished.

⁵Memories of Toots Snyder, 1978, folder 1, History of Home, Washington, Key Peninsula Historical Society, Vaughn, WA; Evadna Cooke, "The Best Time Ever," folder 9, box 1, Co-Operative Colonies, Manuscript Collection, Washington State Historical Society, Tacoma; Evelyn Margaret Evans, interview by Sharon Hills Condit, March 31, 2012.

⁶Haiman, interview. Neither Haiman nor his father were attacked in any way but Haiman recalled that there were arguments from time to time, mostly from those who were unwilling to accept unrestricted liberty practiced at the colony.

gardens. According to Haiman, it bothered some residents that the MHA owned their property.⁷ Stresses mounted within the colony about land ownership and membership rights. The stresses caused a schism leading to two governments, each selected by members of the colony. One government, led by Thomas J. Mullen, filed suit against the Board of Trustees, led by Jay Fox. The lawsuit asked for an injunction against the board, indicating that Jay Fox, Lewis Haiman and Elizabeth Bowie did not have colony authority to sit on the board and make decisions for the MHA. A court granted the injunction but Fox, Haiman and Bowie defied the injunction and met regardless.⁸ The case ended up back in the courts in 1919, and Judge Ernest Card officially dissolved the MHA, placing a local lawyer in receivership. Although the court terminated the MHA, former members of Home Colony continued to live peacefully in the former utopian community.

The different ways in which the outside world viewed Home and how individual members viewed themselves continues to be the key sticking point for those who feel the need to label the venture as “anarchist” or “communist” or “libertarian.” In answering a questionnaire by the Freeland Colony (earlier Equality Colony), Home founder George Allen wrote on several places on the form that the purpose of the MHA was to be simply a land holding company and nothing more. In answering the question: “Is the organization purely materialist?” he answered, “Yes!” Allen added a handwritten note to the bottom of the question stating, “Friend, We eventually had to give a deed to each member as the laws of this country were not made for such a method of holding. You say co-operative colonies, this was not one” [Allen’s emphasis].⁹ Allen’s note reveals quite a bit about his frustration with the colony and its inability to maintain

⁷ Haiman, interview.

⁸ “Corruption in ‘Utopia’ near Tacoma Charged,” *Tacoma News*, August 23, 1916, 1.

⁹ Questionnaire from Freeland Colony completed by George Allen, folder 1, box 1, Freeland Colony Files, University of Washington Library Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

its austere isolation and utopian qualities that it so desired. His note also reveals how he thought of the MHA in relation to the Freeland Colony. The MHA did not aspire to the level of cooperation found at Freeland, and its earlier predecessor, Equality.

The BCC created Equality as a refuge from the competitive world of industrial capitalism. Although the BCC and colony governing board struggled to sustain the utopia as a viable alternative to the larger competitive world, while it existed many members felt that the colony provided opportunities for personal success. Annie Odell, one of the first members and the Superintendent of the subsistence department, stated:

The great wonder of the visitors is that our people are so happy and contented [sic] under the crowded conditions necessary in the pioneer stage, and so much work in sight, but nevertheless it is true that one can hear more hearty, happy laughter around the kitchen and dining room of Equality Colony than anywhere else in this whole capitalistic cursed nation. The surety of a home, and the absence of the fear of want after years of wage slavery make any man or woman happy.¹⁰

Routine references to the pioneer lifestyle indicate Odell's recognition that western settlement created several challenges. The term "pioneer" is charged with visions of hardship, isolation, and struggle associated with western expansion. The leaders and members of Equality seem proud that cooperative socialism provided the means to overcome the challenges of pioneer life. According to Odell, the people's happiness directly derived from co-operative socialism. Odell indicates that Equality provided the people with all of their needs and wants and members lived in happiness instead of the dread faced by most poor Americans under industrial capitalism. This same section of *Industrial Freedom* also indicated that the girls are "as happy and free as the birds in the woods."¹¹ Like birds, women found a safe and fulfilling utopia in the forests of the Northwest.

¹⁰ "Colony Notes," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), November 5, 1898, 4.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 4.

Yet interviews with Equality members indicate frustration, trouble, and division within the colony. Recorded interviews describe the work at the colony or colony events—such as marriages, meetings, and people leaving the colony. Prompted by the interviewer, particularly those conducted by Frederick Smith, members discussed personal relationships within the colony and daily work. Women repeatedly note the hard work and challenges associated with frontier life. Membership numbers decreased within two years of the colony’s development, from nearly 300 people by November 1898 to 120 by summer of 1900, suggesting individual discontent.¹² Later, the division created by Alexander Horr clearly played a role in frustrating colonists.

Due to mobility in membership, the BCC and the colony struggled to keep effective leaders in place at Equality. Ed Pelton’s leadership provided a great deal of stability while on site. LeWarne cited a letter from a colonist indicating Pelton’s strengths as a leader of such a community:

...in all that pertains to Equality and the BCC he occupies a commanding position...He is considerable of a ‘sky-scraper’ is ‘Ed,’ but his feet are on solid ground and his sleeves rolled to his muscular elbows for any hard, disagreeable job for the benefit of the commonweal...in season and out of season he works with those who are trying to prove the practicability of cooperation and even those who differ from him respect him.¹³

The unnamed colonists recognized Pelton for his masculinity and decision making skills. So, when Pelton left Equality for personal reasons and then came back only to be killed in a timber accident, his loss of leadership left a vacuum in the colony. Decisions continued to be made through democratic processes, involving men and women, which worked as long as the membership worked together peacefully. But when Alexander Horr gained power in 1905, the peace shattered.

¹² Quoted in LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 74.

¹³ Quoted in LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 73.

The addition of Alexander Horr to the colony created strife and eventually an end to the Equality experiment. Horr and his wife, Jenny, applied for membership at Equality in 1904, while living in New York. Their membership applications reveal that neither had prior experience with co-operative colonies, but not in Washington and that he was “fairly well read in the literature of Socialism.”¹⁴ Jenny’s application does not identify what materials she read, only that she had experience working in books and that she felt qualified to tend chickens.¹⁵ Perhaps due to Alexander Horr’s personality or the lack of organization and leadership at Equality once Ed Pelton left, he gained power within the colony as the new colony secretary. Well read in Theodor Hertzka’s book, *Freiland*, a book about a Kenyan utopian colony, Horr worked to re-energize and reorganize Equality to better fit Hertzka’s utopian vision of self governing socialism. For those in Equality who had become accustomed to cooperative socialism since early 1898, what might appear to be slight adjustments were in fact wide divides in goals.

Horr’s adjustments affected the structure of the colony, membership and even the colony’s name. The colony expanded industry, developing a fruit and vegetable cannery. Despite members leaving during the tension between the colony and the BCC, in 1904, membership grew dramatically (as much as 30%). By July 20, the board created new bylaws. These new bylaws infringed upon the democratic principles that so many members valued. Under the new bylaws, the Board of Trustees, mostly made up of men, suspended full democracy and took on the right to veto new applicants. Members had little say in how the colony was run. This allowed for the membership constraints that earlier leaders had called for. Perhaps the most recognized adjustment came in the form of the name. The colony no longer called itself

¹⁴ Membership Applications, folder 1 of 5, Freeland Colony Files, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

¹⁵ Ibid.

Equality. Equality was now Freeland, taking its name from Hertzka's popular novel.¹⁶ With Horr remodeling the colony based on Hertzka and less on Bellamy, he and his followers reorganized the colony from being purely co-operative towards a model with small competitive groups.¹⁷ Matched with the frustrations and the loyalty that some former Equality colony members felt to the old BCC, the climate ripened for revolt.

Unlike Home, Equality received little media backlash from neighboring communities up until Horr's leadership. Horr counted radicals among his many friends, including Emma Goldman.¹⁸ With the creation of Freeland, the colony received more attention from the outside media. Editors tagged the new colony with labels such as "free lovers" and "anarchists" that those living in Home had become all too well familiar.¹⁹ Equality did not practice nor support free love or anarchy and the label did not sit well with members. Tension emerged between outsiders and colonists. Hostility surfaced inside the colony—resulting in internal division and threatening Freeland stability.

Horr's ability to gain support from Equality members indicates that others recognized flaws in the colony's status quo. Controversial member Horr attracted some followers, but alienated many others. Although no official register exists of who left and how long they stayed at Equality, the record suggests that perhaps the Penhallows left after meeting Alexander Horr, but that information is certainly not definitive.²⁰ In the end, Equality colony offered men and

¹⁶ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 103-105.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 103.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 104-105.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 106-107; Grace Kenyon Peterson, interview by Frederick E. Smith, November 30, 1967, Papers of Frederick E. Smith, Center for Pacific Northwest Studies, Bellingham, WA.

²⁰ Membership Applications, folder 1 of 5, Freeland Colony Files, 2078 T-0587e, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA. The collection includes an application completed in 1905 by C.L. Penhallow from Lakebay, Washington. On his application, Penhallow indicated that there were two people in his family. He wrote that he was currently reading Hertzka, the book that Horr utilized as a guide for re-engineering Equality, now Freeland. On Penhallow's application he wrote that he had some limited experiences with co-operative experiments. Horr came to Equality in 1904. Lakebay, where Penhallow was from, was where the post office for Home was

women a retreat from the harsh world of industrial capitalism, but not all who moved to the colony accepted the conditions associated with this venture.

Members tried to oust Horr but those who supported him had a larger and louder voice than those who were ready to remove him. Some members tried to break away from Horr's leadership, formally requesting recognition and proportional representation on the governing board of the colony. Members of the colony, including three women: Mrs. Okerlund, Mrs. Young and Mrs. Potts, appealed to the national BCC with the hopes that they could be allocated a delegation and seated at the next national convention to address their complaints with the new direction of the colony.²¹ Okerlund, Young and Potts worked on behalf of others to draw attention to the impending crisis of Freeland. The members hoped that if they drew attention to the lack of democracy within the colony, then prominent muckrakers and other reformers might intervene on their behalf. But national attention made little difference. Instead the colony's ideological split resulted in physical clashes within the colony. Members assaulted Horr several times and the BCC encouraged members like Kingsmill Commander, then BCC Secretary, to step up and stabilize the community. Some members emerged to break up the colony alleging that local taxes and outside accounts had not been settled. In the end, some of the members sold the property, essentially breaking up the utopian experiment. But did members have the legal right to sell the land? The judge ruled that based on the original bylaws the land could not be sold but his decision did little to resolve the conflicts.²²

located (at the time), and Charles was the name of Mattie Penhallow's husband (Mattie Penhallow, the postmistress, was indicted with Lois Waisbrooker for her involvement in mailing obscene materials).

²¹ Constitution of the BCC at Freeland Colony, July 20, 1905, folder 1, Freeland Colony Records, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA; "Call for Special Meeting", January 19, 1906, folder 4, Freeland Colony Records, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA; Letter from a large group of "undersigned" to the Officers of the BCC Local No. 1, May 30, 1905, folder 4 of 5, Freeland Colony Files, University of Washington Special Collections, Seattle, WA.

²²LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 107-108.

Financially strapped due to slowed production and mounting bills, both factions finally relented and agreed to arbitration. In a desire to mediate an already dysfunctional environment a committee representing the Freelanders and the former Equality members attempted to create stability. Both factions met with the purpose of dividing colony property. Despite regular meetings, committee members could not settle on how to divide the land. What little stability this committee created went up in flames on the night of Tuesday, February 6, 1906, when the colony's barn and root house, containing livestock and winter food supply, erupted in fire. Uninsured, the colony lost much of its stores and supplies and fell into destitution. Each faction blamed the other for the fire and thirteen days after the event, the colony secretary, W.C. Davis, presented a resolution calling for the courts of Skagit County to appoint a receiver to begin the process of disposing of the colony. The assembly agreed upon the resolution.²³ What had once been an eager utopian experiment had devolved into violence.

The colonies provided a physical refuge for new experiments in living and also offered opportunities for personal growth. Undeniably, Home provided extensive intellectual opportunities for women. The colony provided a quality primary school and offered students, both male and female, a diverse and rigorous curriculum. The colony extended those intellectual opportunities to adult women, offering lectures and discussions by a variety of well known activists and speakers. Not only did women attend these events, they organized and led these meetings. Women engaged in musical events, practiced languages such as German and Esperanto and took lessons from Lucille Mint, a highly acclaimed artist. The colony encouraged self expression and offered women a space and a place to learn whatever interested

²³ Ibid.,109-110.

them. It was only after the settlement grew that neighboring residents, not members of the MHA, desired to limit the expression of colony members.

Although it did not rival Home, Equality's intellectual environment provided an opportunity for members' personal growth. Due to the nature of the colony, the founders held work as central to the colony's mission. Hard work left little time for other endeavors. Although formalized lectures and discussions did not happen as often as those found at Home, they did occur and women attended. Applications to Equality reveal that both male and female applicants were educated and several subscribed to reform-minded newspapers and journals. They read Marx, Thoreau, Emerson, John Stuart Mill, Henry George, Adam Smith, and many other authors.²⁴ Personal growth also emerged in the workplace. Because of job assignments, women learned new skills such as gardening, animal husbandry, or cooking for large crowds. Like Home, Equality provided an education for its children, both male and female. The department based on student education on a diverse curriculum and although members did not extol their school in the same regard as Home members, it certainly provided a state endorsed primary education to attending children. Women worked as teachers and school organizers at the colony, sharing knowledge and skills with community children. Despite declining colony members, notes and columns in *Industrial Freedom* suggest that members created and enjoyed a positive social atmosphere.

Although the colony endured unwanted media attention, Home's membership numbers reveal faith and trust in the colony's overall purpose. Membership in the colony increased consistently and by World War I, a report indicated that nearly five hundred people lived at Home.²⁵ The colony never grew into the thousands, nor was that really its goal. It routinely

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵ LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 193.

advertised in its papers, indicating its desire to expand, and certainly drew several visitors, including famous intellectuals of the era. But overall, it remained rather small. After the negative attention garnered from the nude bathing scandal, the MHA never quite rebounded. Confusion over conflicting rules and invalid amendments to the Articles of Incorporation caused the colony to struggle. These internal tensions coupled with progressive reforms, increased work in the nearby cities of Tacoma and Seattle, and World War I caused the utopian colony of Home to unravel. What remains is the small community of Home. There are not many streets or roads, yet several of the residents there are related to early MHA settlers and members, indicating how early utopian colony women and families became rooted and extended connections to the place across generations. Despite the dissolution of the MHA, former members realized that the spirit of volunteerism and general liberal attitude could continue in the community without the Articles of Incorporation.

In contrast, Equality's membership increased and decreased quickly. Unlike Home, Equality offered both active and honorary memberships. Fifteen members, including women, formed the colony in November 1897, and the membership continued to increase until 1903. When Equality reported its membership data in *Industrial Freedom*, it identified three different categories: new active members, new honorary members and total membership. In the October 1, 1898 issue, the national secretary reported six new active members, two new honorary members and a total of 3,455 members. But Equality never managed to have more than 350 onsite members.²⁶ The large number of honorary members suggests that people across the country supported the BCC and/or economic socialism. The numbers reflect a general reluctance

²⁶ "National Secretary's Report," *Industrial Freedom* (Equality, WA), October 1, 1898, 3; LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound*, 74.

to chance the move to a remote, utopian community. Admittedly, few utopian colonies lasted long and were economically viable.

Despite the beautiful ideals, honorary members recognized certain realities. For those that moved to Equality, including women, colony life provided certain hardships. Those hardships coupled with internal tensions caused the collapse of the colony. Today, Equality no longer exists as a town; residents moved to small, rural communities such as Blanchard, Edison, and Bow, Washington. Some relocated to larger towns like nearby Mount Vernon or Bellingham. But while in existence, the colony provided opportunities for women to take on leadership roles and participate in co-operative socialism.

These two utopian colonies sought not to reform larger society but to provide their members with a safe haven for economic, political and social expression. In many ways, Home and Equality were rooted in radical thought and practices. In other ways, colony members clung to conventional roles and norms. The women of Home created a haven for radical women but struggled to break away from conventional gender ideals. The women created a colony free from stigma but at the same time, women like Lucy Robbins Lang settled in Home because the colony provided an ideal communal settlement that supported family life. Without a doubt, the BCC wanted Equality to be a model socialist community. Although the BCC's goal of creating other "Equalities" around Washington motivated the organization to carefully structure and plan for their first colony, their plan to socialize an entire state never came to fruition. The colony turned inward, giving women an opportunity to participate in their own governing and economic decision making. Although Equality supported radical policies such as paying women for their household labor, when it came to colony work, leaders placed women in traditional gender typed jobs. Women's labor supported the work of the BCC and Equality, allowing the organization

and the colony to meet its overarching goal of co-operating. However, the vision fell apart due to the controversy created by the arrival of Alexander Horr, reinforcing how individuals influence outcomes of social movements.

The founders of Home and Equality created successful colonies. Although neither colony gained the notoriety of John Noyes' Oneida, Robert Owen's New Harmony, or George Ripley's Brook Farm, Home and Equality's members committed to one another and their utopian experiment. Both colonies provided women multiple opportunities for personal growth. Both utopian communities did not just allow women to "play a part" in society. Instead, the women of Home and Equality acted as community builders—actively participating in the economic, social, and political success of the colony. They were responsible to each other and the communitarian ideology. This mindset, belief system and culture prevailed, and thus in many ways these utopias offered women a genuine alternative to the outside world of industrial capitalism.

Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's often quoted phrase about "well-behaved women seldom make history" may apply to the women of Home and Equality.²⁷ What she and other women's historians assert is that all women, both conventional and radical, have a narrative to be discovered. Whether engaging in gender-typed jobs or bucking the stereotype, the quality and sphere of women's possibilities has been overwhelmingly determined by her masculine counterpart. But for the women of Home and Equality, they constructed their own identity while engineering a colony. Women were present from the very beginning of the respective utopian

²⁷ Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668-1735," *American Quarterly*, 28, no. 1(Spring 1976): 20.

experiments. Their “role” was not handed down to them but instead created by them. It may be time to revisit More’s interpretation of what a utopia is. Instead of it being impossible to find, perhaps it is less about finding and more about creating. The women of Home and Equality did not play a “role” in their colonies, but instead built their own utopia alongside the Puget Sound. These two utopias offered more than just a physical home; they provided women the promise of gender equality.

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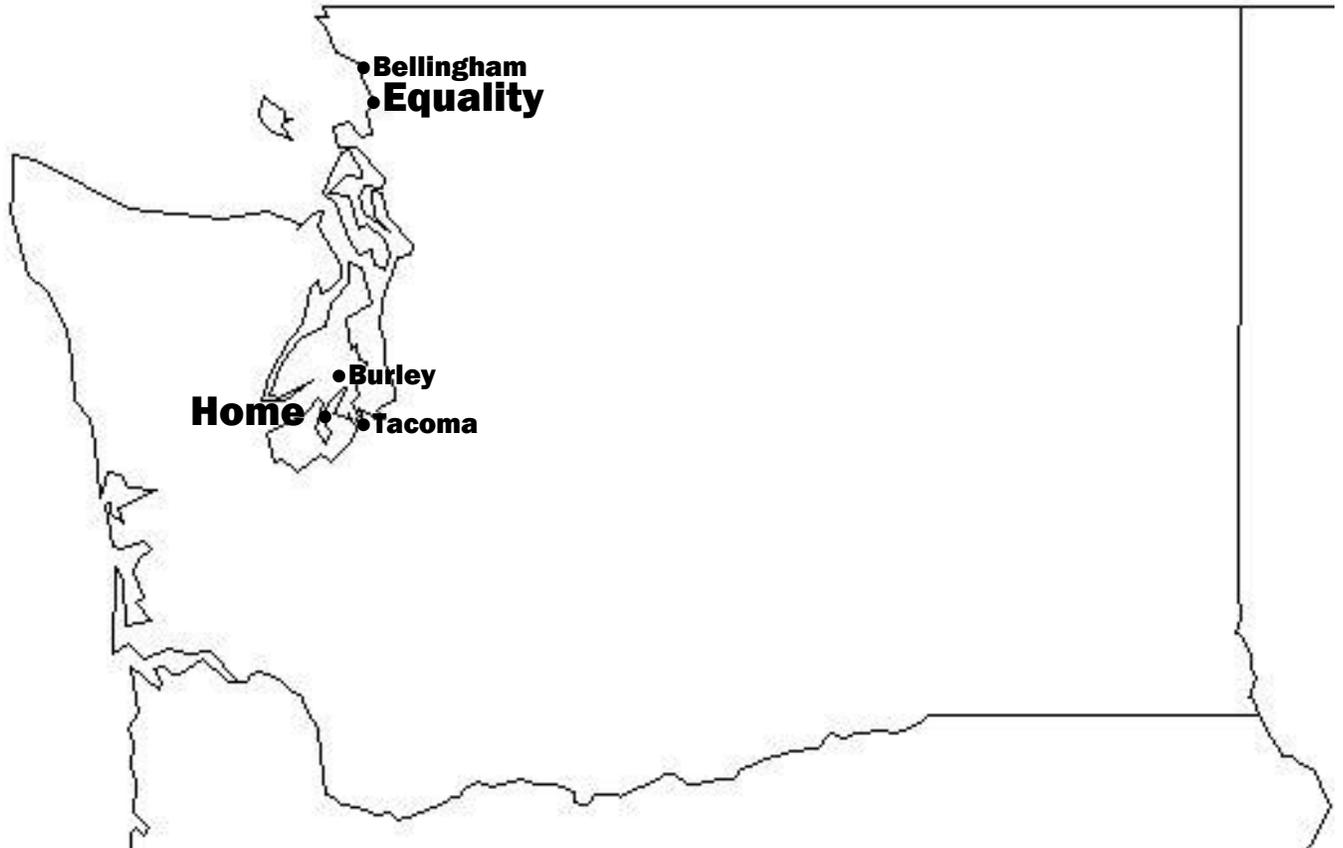
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APPENDIX A

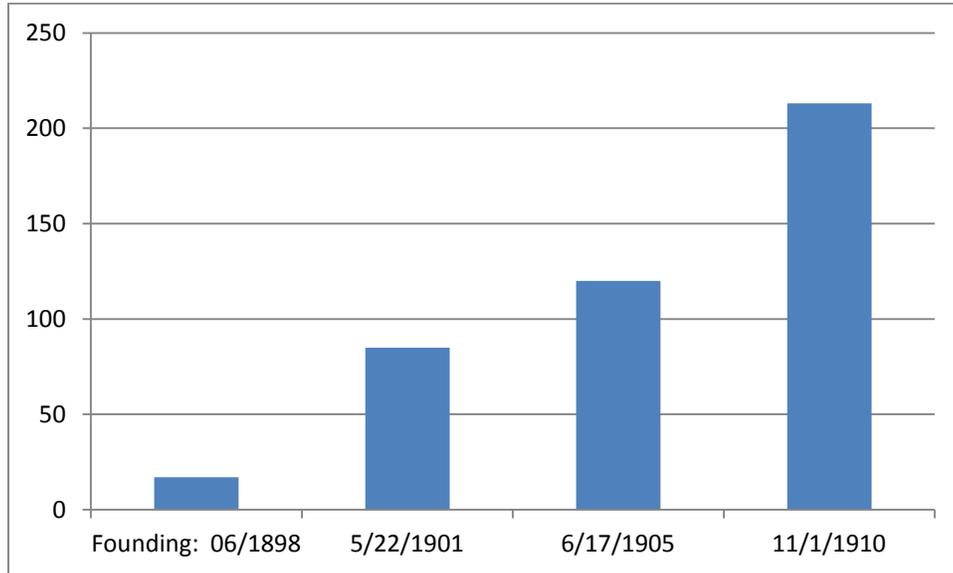
MAP OF HOME AND EQUALITY COLONIES



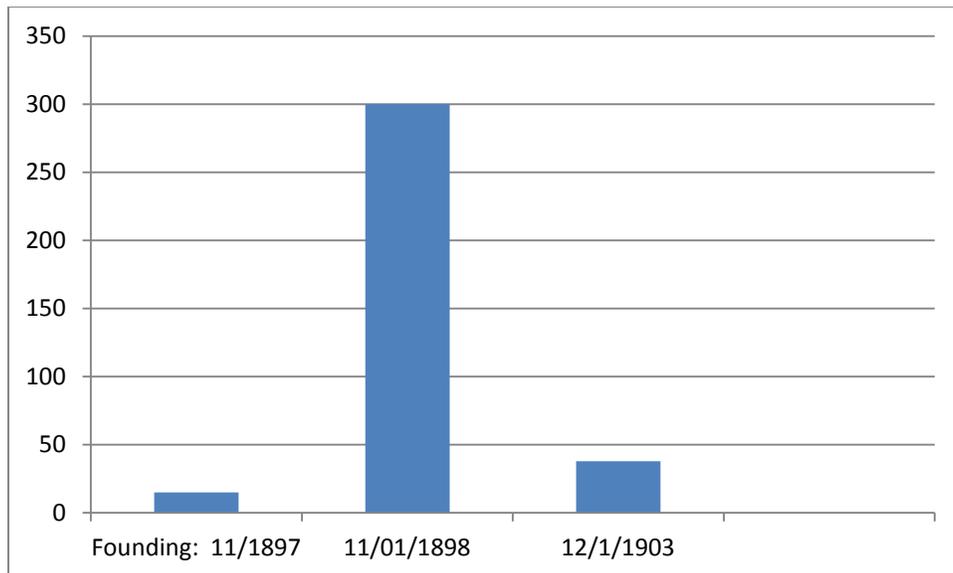
APPENDIX B

POPULATION DATA CHART FOR HOME AND EQUALITY

Number of People Living in Home from 1898-1910¹



Number of People Living in Equality from 1897-1903²



¹ Charles Pierce LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound, 1885-1915* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 193.

² Charles Pierce LeWarne, *Utopias on Puget Sound, 1885-1915* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1975), 74. Charles Pierce LeWarne, "Equality Colony: The Plan to Socialize Washington," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, 59 No. 3 (1968): 140, 144.

APPENDIX C

PHOTOGRAPH OF EQUALITY CARPENTRY SHOP



Source: Brotherhood of the Cooperative Commonwealth Carpentry Shop, Edison, WA, c. 1898, Peter L. Hegg Equality Colony Photographs: 1898-1900, <http://content.lib.washington.edu/u/?social,3> (accessed June 1, 2012).