

A COOPERATIVE LESSON PLAN FOR TEACHING OWENITE EDUCATION IN NEW HARMONY

By Jerry Noland

GRADE LEVEL: Secondary

Prepared in partial fulfillment of requirements for  
"INDIANA AND THE NEW NATION, 1776-1876"  
a project of the Historic Southern Indiana Project  
of the University of Southern Indiana  
8600 University Boulevard

(812) 465-7014

FUNDED BY THE NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

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Activity 1

Students should be in small groups of four to discuss the quotations from Robert Owen and William Maclure. The Twelve Fundamental Laws of Human Nature by Robert Owen are included for more advanced classes.

The question for discussion should be: What type of educational system would Robert Owen and William Maclure probably set up in New Harmony based upon their ideas?

~~Time: one-half period for reading and group discussion and~~

one-half period for class discussion.

Activity 2

Give students the reading taken from my historical research paper--topic Educational Methods and Structure in New Harmony. Footnotes are included for teacher reference. Give everyone a chance to read the material. In groups of four have the students list at least ten features of Owenite Education in New Harmony. After they have listed the characteristics they should list the best and worst features of education in New Harmony. Students should be prepared to defend their choices.

Time: one period to work and one-half period for discussion

Activity 3

Give the students the survey on their views of education. Discuss the results of the survey. Note: the lefthand side of the survey reflects Owenite views of education.

Robert Owen, who purchased New Harmony from George Rapp's Harmony



Thus a traditional classical education was not meeting the needs of an industrial society.<sup>14</sup>

Robert Owen wrote much about education. In a lecture given in Manchester England, he outlined his ideas on an educational system from birth to 30. Owen suggested the

following:

1. Community education at birth.
2. No punishment or rewards as individuals.
3. Active involvement from an early age in practical work.
4. Hands on education and apprenticeship with skilled individuals.
5. Older children to help teach younger children.

6. At twelve years of age a much more broadened practical work.

7. Continued education through school to 15

structure were hinderances to achieving a just society.<sup>18</sup>

#### Educational Methods and Structure in New Harmony

When Robert Owen came to New Harmony in January 1826 he believed he was on the eve of a transformation compared to which "all former revolutions in human affairs scarcely deserved a name." He announced that a "match has been applied to a train that, if I mistake not, will dispel past errors, until old things shall pass away, and all shall become new, beautiful and delightful." Owen's first speech on January 12, 1826 at New Harmony was on education. He proudly reported that the rest of his party was on a keelboat coming toward New Harmony and that they represented

"more learning than ever before was contained in a boat." And by learning he meant not "Latin and Greek & and languages but real substantial knowledge." Among the new arrivals, he announced, would be "some of the ablest instructors of youth that could be found in the U. S. and perhaps in the world." His hearers read into this an ever grander promise: "In Harmony there will be the best Library & the best School in the United States."<sup>19</sup>

Owen saw himself coming to this country to change it from a selfish system to an enlightened social system which would remove all contests among individuals. Owen believed he was bringing the millennium to Indiana.<sup>20</sup> What was the nature of this educational millenneum?

#### Infant School

The infant school was the first of its kind in the

to be taught principally by Marie Fretageot and Mrs. Joseph Neef. Its enrollment was approximately 100. It was a boarding school designed to lift infants from the isolation, the ignorance, and prejudice of family units. It tried to

that William Maclure believed that research and teaching should go together he urged a program where students would learn from scholars as well as print the works of New Harmony scientists. The School of Industry students produced over 1,300 copper plantees and printed serveral scientific books.<sup>24</sup>

#### Adult education

Adult education was emphasized as Robert Owen and others believed that educational was a lifetime pursuit. Scientists of the community lectured at free sessions. For example, Gerald Troost spoke on chemistry, mineralogy, and mathematics; Thomas Say on natural history, and William Phiquepal on experimental farming. There were about 80 persons enrolled in these classes.<sup>25</sup>



Punishment was rejected, and a friendly atmosphere was

established between teachers and students.

taught by advancing from the simple to complex level.<sup>27</sup>

Teaching by concrete experiences rather than by memorization became the rule. Learning proceeded from objects: maps,

or eleven.. Of course, he would have had to be over seventy years old at the time he recorded the account. The quotation used from Mr. Kellogg is rather extensive for this paper. It is given because it provides a rare insight into the structure and methods of education in Owenite New Harmony that have been presented in this paper.

As soon as enough children had arrived to form into classes, schools were established for their reception and care. There was one large boarding school which was conducted on the

Military Mess system with two long tables paralalled in one room. In this the scholars were marched with military precision to

their allotted places, and thus marched out together to the playgrounds where they were dismissed. Indeed the whole

but for one gawky lazy overgrown boy named Ran Boss, who would persistently fall a step behind. Gilmore would

frequently touch time up from behind with a long fishing pole of cane--still he lagged behind--at last Gilmore lost all patience and temper after exhausting kind words--then he brought his long pole suddenly to his aid by swishing sweep across the back of Ran would found his proper place very quickly. But the whole line broke as if by one impulse--the boys scattering in all directions with the cry of "Old School"--"Old School"--with Gilmore in great passion following those he could reach with his pole--uttering his malediction as he ran. "I'll give you old school, I'll give you old school," but he never got us together again that day--any we were never called upon to make any apologies for

such rudeness to our teacher--it was so well understood that

he had himself violated the Golden Rule of the school. This was the only violation of New Harmony discipline that my memory now recalls.<sup>33</sup>

It was interesting to note that while the methods of instruction were agreeable to Mr. Kellogg that is is possible that the increased student freedom put pressures on

Footnotes

1. Evansville Sunday Courier Press, December 16, 1984.

2. Donald E. Pitzer, "Education in Utopia: The New Harmony Experience," Indiana Historical Society Lectures, 1976-1977 (1978): 75-76.

3. Donald E. Pitzer, Patterns of Education in American Communal

Societies. Communal Life An International Perspective, edited by Yosef Gorni, Yaacov Oved, Idit Paz, pp. 286-87.

4. Donald E. Pitzer, The Owenite Tradition in America, (Robert Owen Association of Japan--Tokyo, 1984), p. 11.

5. Lyman Tower Sargent, Owenite Utopias as Models For Communal

18. Madison, p. 177.

19. Arthur Bester, Backwoods Utopia (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 133.

21. Pitzer, The Owenite Tradition in America. p. 13.

22. Gutch, p. 44.

Your Ideas about Education

Directions: Place an X along the line that indicates how you learn.

use of textbook  
alone-----variety of  
methods

classical-----modern

education

lecture-----problem  
solving

little education  
after graduation-----education  
lifetime pursuit

Answer the following:

1. How do you learn?