

= Brook Farm =

Brook Farm , also called the Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education or the Brook Farm Association for Industry and Education , was a utopian experiment in communal living in the United States in the 1840s . It was founded by former Unitarian minister George Ripley and his wife Sophia Ripley at the Ellis Farm in West Roxbury , Massachusetts (9 miles outside of downtown Boston) in 1841 and was inspired in part by the ideals of Transcendentalism , a religious and cultural philosophy based in New England . Founded as a joint stock company , it promised its participants a portion of the profits from the farm in exchange for performing an equal share of the work . Brook Farmers believed that by sharing the workload , ample time would be available for leisure activities and intellectual pursuits .

Life on Brook Farm was based on balancing labor and leisure while working together for the benefit of the greater community . Each member could choose to do whatever work they found most appealing and all were paid equally , including women . Revenue for the community came from farming and from selling handmade products like clothing as well as through fees paid by the many visitors to Brook Farm . The main source of income was the school , which was overseen by Mrs. Ripley . A pre -@-@ school , primary school , and a college preparatory school attracted children internationally and each child was charged for his or her education . Adult education was also offered .

The community was never financially stable and had difficulty profiting from its agricultural pursuits . By 1844 , the Brook Farmers adopted a societal model based on the socialist concepts of Charles Fourier and began publishing *The Harbinger* as an unofficial journal promoting Fourierism . Following his vision , the community members began building an ambitious structure called the Phalanstery . When the uninsured building was destroyed in a fire , the community was financially devastated and never recovered . It was fully closed by 1847 . Despite the experimental commune 's failure , many Brook Farmers looked back on their experience positively . Critics of the commune included Charles Lane , founder of another utopian community called Fruitlands . Nathaniel Hawthorne was a founding member of Brook Farm , though he was not a strong adherent of the community 's ideals . He later fictionalized his experience in his novel *The Blithedale Romance* (1852) .

After the community 's failure , the property was operated for most of the next 130 years by a Lutheran organization as first an orphanage , and then a treatment center and school . The buildings of the Transcendentalists were destroyed by fire over the years . In 1988 the State of Massachusetts acquired 148 acres (60 ha) of the farm , which is now operated by the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation as a historic site .

= = History = =

= = = Planning and background = = =

In October 1840 , George Ripley announced to the Transcendental Club that he was planning to form a Utopian community . Brook Farm , as it would be called , was based on the ideals of Transcendentalism ; its founders believed that by pooling labor they could sustain the community and still have time for literary and scientific pursuits . The experiment was meant to serve as an example for the rest of the world , based on the principles of " industry without drudgery , and true equality without its vulgarity " . At Brook Farm , and as in other communities , physical labor was perceived as a condition of mental well @-@ being and health . Brook Farm was one of at least 80 communal experiments active in the United States throughout the 1840s , though it was the first to be secular . Ripley believed his experiment would be a model for the rest of society . He predicted : " If wisely executed , it will be a light over this country and this age . If not the sunrise , it will be the morning star . " As more interested people began to take part in planning , Ripley relocated meetings from his home to the West Street bookshop operated by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody .

= = = Beginnings = = =

Ripley and his wife Sophia formed a joint stock company in 1841 along with 10 other initial investors . He sold shares of the company \$ 500 apiece with a promise of five percent of the profits to each investor . Shareholders were also allowed a single vote in decision making and several held director positions . The Ripleys chose to begin their experiment at a dairy farm owned by Charles and Maria Mayo Ellis in West Roxbury , Massachusetts , near the home of Theodore Parker . They began raising money , including holding a meeting at Peabody 's bookshop to raise \$ 10 ,000 for the farm 's initial purchase . The site was eventually purchased on October 11 , 1841 , for \$ 10 ,500 though participants had begun moving in as early as April . The 170 acre (0 .69 km²) farm about eight miles (13 km) from Boston was described in a pamphlet as a " place of great natural beauty , combining a convenient nearness to the city with a degree of retirement and freedom from unfavorable influences unusual even in the country " . The purchase also covered a neighboring Keith farm , approximately 22 acres (89 ,000 m²) , " consisting altogether of a farm with dwelling house , barn , and outbuildings thereon situated " .

The first major public notice of the community was published in August 1841 . " The Community at West Roxbury , Mass . " was likely written by Elizabeth Palmer Peabody . Though they began with 10 investors , eventually some 32 people would become Brook Farmers . Writer and editor Margaret Fuller was invited to Brook Farm and , though she never officially joined the community , she was a frequent visitor , often spending New Year 's Eve there . Ripley received many applications to join the community , especially from people who had little money or those in poor health , but full fledged membership was granted only to individuals who could afford the \$ 500 share of the joint stock company .

One of the initial founders of Brook Farm was author Nathaniel Hawthorne . Hawthorne did not particularly agree with the ideals of the experiment , hoping only that it would help him raise enough money to begin his life with his wife to be Sophia Peabody . She considered moving there as well and even visited in May 1841 , though Hawthorne sent her away . Ripley was aware of Hawthorne 's motivations , and tried to convince him to get involved more fully by appointing him as one of four trustees , specifically overseeing " Direction of Finance " . After requesting his initial investment be returned , Hawthorne officially resigned from Brook Farm on October 17 , 1842 . He wrote of his displeasure with the community : " even my Custom House experience was not such a thralldom and weariness ; my mind and heart were freer Thank God , my soul is not utterly buried under a dung heap . "

= = = Fourier inspiration = = =

In the late 1830s Ripley became increasingly engaged in " Associationism " , an early socialist movement based on the work of Charles Fourier . Horace Greeley , a New York newspaper editor , and others began to pressure the Brook Farm experiment to follow more closely the pattern of Charles Fourier at a time when the community was struggling to be self sufficient . Albert Brisbane , whose book *The Social Destiny of Man* (1840) had been an inspiration to Ripley , paid Greeley \$ 500 for permission to publish a front page column in the New York Tribune which ran in several parts from March 1842 to September 1843 . Brisbane argued in the series , titled " Association : or , Principles of a True Organization of Society " , how Fourier 's theories could be applied in the United States . Brisbane published similar articles in 1842 in *The Dial* , the journal of the Transcendentalists . Fourier 's societal vision included elaborate plans for specific structures and highly organized roles of its members . He called this system for an ideal community a " Phalanx " .

To meet this vision , now under the name " Brook Farm Association for Industry and Education " , Brook Farmers committed themselves to constructing an ambitious communal building known as the Phalanstery . Construction began in the summer of 1844 and the structure would provide accommodations for 14 families and single people as well . It was planned to be 175 feet (53 m) by 40 feet (12 m) and include , as Ripley described , " a large and commodious kitchen , a dining

@-@ hall capable of seating from three to four hundred persons , two public saloons , and a spacious hall or lecture room " .

Ripley and two associates created a new constitution for Brook Farm in 1844 , beginning the experiment 's attempts to follow closely Fourier 's Phalanx system . Many Brook Farmers supported the transition ; at a dinner in honor of Fourier 's birthday , one member of the group proposed a toast to " Fourier , the second coming of Christ " . Others , however , did not share in the enthusiasm and some left the commune altogether . One of those who left was Isaac Hecker , who converted to Catholicism and went on to become the founder of the first American @-@ based order of priests , the Paulist Fathers , in 1858 . In particular , many Brook Farmers thought the new model was too rigid and structured and too different from the carefree aspects that they had been attracted to . Both supporters and detractors referred to the early part of Brook Farm 's history as the " Transcendental days " . Ripley himself became a celebrity proponent of Fourierism and organized conventions throughout New England to discuss the community .

In the last few months of 1844 , Brook Farmers were offered the possibility of taking over two Associationism @-@ inspired publications , Brisbane 's The Phalanx and John Allen 's The Social Reformer . Four printers were part of Brook Farm at the time and members of the community believed it would elevate their status as leaders of the movement as well as provide additional income . Ultimately , the Brook Farmers published a new journal combining the two , The Harbinger . The journal 's first issue was published June 14 , 1845 , and was continuously printed , originally weekly , until October 1847 , when it was relocated to New York City , still under the oversight of George Ripley and fellow Brook Farmer Charles Anderson Dana . Naming the publication , however , turned out to be a difficult task . Parke Godwin offered advice when it was suggested to keep the name The Phalanx :

Call it the Pilot , the Harbinger , the Halycon , the Harmonist , The Worker , the Architect , The Zodiac , The Pleiad , the Iris , the Examiner , The Aurora , the Crown , the Imperial , the Independent , the Synthesist , the Light , the Truth , the Hope , the Teacher , the Reconciler , the Wedge , the Pirate , the Seer , the Indicator , the Tailor , the Babe in the Manger , the Universe , the Apocalypse , the Red Dragon , the Plant , Beelzebub ? the Devil or anything rather than the meaningless name Phalanx .

= = = Decline and dissolution = = =

Brook Farm began to decline rapidly after its restructuring . In October 1844 , Orestes Brownson visited the site and sensed that " the atmosphere of the place is horrible " . To save money , " retrenchments " , or sacrifices , were called for , particularly at the dinner table . Meat , coffee , tea , and butter were no longer offered , though it was agreed that a separate table with meat be allowed in December 1844 . That Thanksgiving , a neighbor had donated a turkey . Many Brook Farmers applied for exceptions to these rules and soon it was agreed that " members of the Association who sit at the meat table shall be charged extra for their board " . Life on Brook Farm was further worsened by an outbreak of smallpox in November 1845 ; though no one died , 26 Brook Farmers were infected . Ripley attempted to quell the financial difficulties by negotiating with creditors and stockholders , who agreed to cancel \$ 7 @ , @ 000 of debts .

Construction on the Phalanstery was progressing well until the evening of March 3 , 1846 , when it was discovered that the Phalanstery had caught fire . Within two hours , the structure had completely burned down ; firefighters from Boston arrived too late . The fire was likely caused by a defective chimney . One participant noted , " Ere long the flames were chasing one another in a mad riot over the structure ; running across long corridors and up and down the supporting columns of wood , until the huge edifice was a mass of firework " . The financial blow from the loss of the uninsured building was \$ 7 @ , @ 000 and it marked the beginning of the end of Brook Farm .

George Ripley , who had begun the experiment , made an unofficial break with Brook Farm in May 1846 . Many others began to leave as well , though the dissolution of the farm was slow . As one Brook Farmer said , the slow decline of the community was like apple petals drifting slowly to the ground , making it seem " dreamy and unreal " . On November 5 , 1846 , Ripley 's book collection ,

which had served as Brook Farm 's library , was auctioned to help cover the association 's debts . By the end , Brook Farm had a total debt of \$ 17 @, @ 445 . Ripley told a friend , " I can now understand how a man would feel if he could attend his own funeral " . He took a job with the New York Tribune and it took him 13 years to pay off the Brook Farm debt , which he did in 1862 .

= = After Brook Farm = =

A man named John Plummer purchased the land that was Brook Farm in 1849 before selling it six years later to James Freeman Clarke , who intended to establish another community there . Instead , Clarke offered it to President Abraham Lincoln during the American Civil War and the Second Massachusetts Regiment used it for training as Camp Andrew .

Clarke sold the property in 1868 to two brothers , who used it as a summer boarding house . In 1870 Gottlieb F. Burckhardt purchased the property , after which he formed the Association of the Evangelical Lutheran Church for Works of Mercy to operate an orphanage in The Hive , as the main house on the property was known . The orphanage opened in 1872 and operated until 1943 . In 1948 the Lutherans converted it into a treatment center and school , which closed in 1977 . Parts of the farm were separated in 1873 for use as a cemetery , a use that continues today as an non @-@ denominational cemetery known as the Gardens of Gethsemene (as part of St. Joseph 's Cemetery and the Baker Street Jewish Cemeteries) . During the period of Lutheran ownership the only now extant building , a c . 1890 print shop , was built on the land ; the buildings associated with the Transcendentalists , most recently the Margaret Fuller Cottage , had burned down by the 1980s .

In 1988 the Metropolitan District Commission (since merged with the Massachusetts Department of Conservation and Recreation , or DCR) purchased 148 acres (0 @. @ 60 km2) of the original land . The farm was declared a U.S. National Historic Landmark in 1965 , a Boston Landmark in 1977 , and is listed on the National Register of Historic Places . The DCR now operate the state @-@ owned portion as a historic site ; the West Roxbury Historical Society periodically offers tours .

= = Landscape and facilities = =

Brook Farm was named for the brook that ran near the roadside and that eventually went to the Charles River . It was surrounded by low hills and its meadows and sunny slopes were diversified by orchard , quiet groves and denser pine woods . The land , however , turned out to be difficult to farm .

The land on the Keith lot that was purchased along with the Ellis farm included a functional farmhouse , which Brook Farmers immediately began calling " The Hive " . The Hive became the center for social activities and was where the people of the community went to eat three meals a day . The Hive 's dining room held fifty people and its library was stocked with George Ripley 's personal book collection which was made available for all community members .

As the community grew , it became necessary to add more buildings for lodgings and various activities . The first building constructed was " The Nest " , where school lessons took place and where guests of the farm would stay . Mr. and Mrs. Ripley 's house , later to be called the Eyrie , was built during the second year . The next building to be built was the Margaret Fuller Cottage ; though named after Fuller , she never spent a night there . A participant at Brook Farm named Ichabod Morton built the Pilgrim House , named in honor of his home town of Plymouth , Massachusetts . The 2 1 ? 2 @-@ story building was the third structure built that year and cost nearly \$ 5 @, @ 000 to build . Morton stayed there only two weeks before moving out , after which the building was used for general lodging and also held the laundry facilities . The many constructions , including greenhouses and small craft shops , quickly reduced their treasury .

= = Community life = =

= = Work and finances = =

Participants at Brook Farm were also shareholders and were promised five percent of the annual profits or free tuition for one student . In exchange for 300 days of work per year , they were granted free room and board . Members performed whatever work most appealed to them and all , including women , were paid equal wages . The philosophy of labor , according to Ripley , was " to insure a more natural union between intellectual and manual labor than now exists ; to combine the thinker and the worker , as far as possible , in the same individual . "

The organization of work in Brook Farm changed over time because of both financial troubles and changes in ideologies . Members of Brook Farm initially participated in an ? attractive industry ? system where each individual could pick his or her work assignments based on their won preferences . This method did not have any specific authority making sure that essential tasks were getting done . After initial leniency , some sensed that not all members were doing their fair share of the labor , so in 1841 the community adopted required standards for work : ten hours of work were required per day during the summer , and eight hours during winter . When Brook Farm first started adopting Fourierist notions , they created a more structured work environment with a system that consisted of three series of industry , which were agriculture , mechanical , and domestic , and within each series there were a number of groups that handled more specific tasks . Each group had a chief whose duty it was to keep a record of the work done . While this system did create a new work hierarchy , the members still had the flexibility to move between groups easily . These new measures caused Brook Farm to achieve a profit in 1844 which was a feat that had not been accomplished in its first few years of the community 's existence .

Typical work duties at Brook Farm included chopping wood , bringing in firewood , milking cows , turning a grindstone , and other farming chores . Not all were farmers , however . Some worked in the trades , including making shoes , and others were teachers . Regardless of the job , all were considered equal and because of the job distribution , as Elizabeth Peabody wrote , " no one has any great weight in any one thing " . In exchange for their work , participants were granted several " guarantees " , including " medical attendance , nursing , education in all departments , amusements " . There were some occasional conflicts between different workers , partly because those who were educators believed themselves more aristocratic ; overall , however , as historian Charles Crowe wrote , " indeed all aspects of communal life operated with surprisingly little friction " in general .

Visitors to Brook Farm came frequently , totaling an estimated 1 @,@ 150 each year , though each was charged for their visit . Between November 1844 and October 1845 , surviving records show that \$ 425 was collected from visitor fees . The list of visitors included theologian Henry James , Sr. , sculptor William Wetmore Story , artist John Sartain , and British social reformer Robert Owen .

Despite multiple sources of income , the community was in constant debt almost immediately after it began . The community , including Ripley , had difficulty with the farming aspects of the community , in particular because of poor soil and not enough labor . The major crop was hay , though it was sold at low grade prices ; vegetables , milk , and fruit were not produced in high enough numbers to be profitable . The property was mortgaged four times between 1841 and 1845 . Brook Farm got into the habit of spending money before they had raised it . As one Brook Farmer wrote , " I think here lies the difficulty , ? we have not had business men to conduct our affairs ... those among us who have some business talents , see this error " .

= = = Education = = =

On September 29 , 1841 , the " Brook Farm Institute of Agriculture and Education " was organized . The school was the most immediate (and at times the only) source of income for Brook Farm and attracted students as far away as Cuba and the Philippines . Children under twelve were charged three @-@ and @-@ a @-@ half dollars per week and , at first , boys over twelve were charged four dollars a week and girls were charged five ; by August 1842 , the rates were made identical , regardless of gender . Adult education was also available in the evenings . The schedule for adults included courses on moral philosophy , German language , and modern European history .

Within the school there was an infant school for children under six , a primary school for children

under ten , and there was a preparatory school that prepared children for college in six years . When entering the school , each pupil under high school age was assigned a woman of the community who was in charge of his / her wardrobe , personal habits , and exercise . The teachers included three graduates of Harvard Divinity School (George Ripley , George Bradford , John Sullivan Dwight) as well as several women (Ripley 's wife Sophia , his sister Marianne , and his cousin Hannah , as well as Georgianna Bruce and Abby Morton) . Ripley was in charge of teaching English and was known to be relaxed in his class . Dana taught languages , being able to speak ten himself . Dwight taught music as well as Latin . Students studied European languages and literature and , at no extra cost , pupils could also indulge in the fine arts . The primary school was overseen by Sophia Ripley and Marianne Ripley , using a progressive child @-@ centered pedagogy that has been compared to the later reforms of John Dewey . Sophia Ripley 's dedication to the school was remarked upon by many ; she only missed two classes in six years .

= = = Leisure = = =

The people of Brook Farm spent most of their time either studying or working the farm , but they always set aside time in the day for play . In their free time , the members of Brook Farm enjoyed music , dancing , card games , drama , costume parties , sledding , and skating . Every week everyone in the community would gather at The Hive for a dance of the young ladies of the community . They would wear wreaths of wild daisies on top of their heads , and each week a special wreath , bought from a florist , would be given to the best dressed girl . At the end of every day , many performed a " symbol of Universal Unity " , in which they stood in a circle and joined hands and vowed for " truth to the cause of God and Humanity " .

Spirits remained high throughout the experiment , regardless of the community 's financial standing . Their social structure demanded selflessness and individuals rarely failed to fulfill their duties , a requirement to earn leisure time . Leisure time was important to the Brook Farm philosophy . As Elizabeth Palmer Peabody wrote for The Dial in January 1842 , " none will be engaged merely in bodily labor ... This community aims to be rich , not in the metallic representative of wealth , but in ... leisure to live in all the faculties of the soul " .

= = = Role of women = = =

At Brook Farm , women had the opportunity to expand beyond their typical sphere of tasks and their labor was highly valued . They did have tasks that were typical of other women at the time such as simple food preparation , and shared housekeeping . However , during the harvest time women were allowed to work in the fields and men even helped out with laundry during the cold weather . Because no single religion could impose its beliefs on the community , women were safe from the typical patriarchy associated with religion at the time . Because of the community 's focus on individual freedom , women were autonomous from their husbands and were also allowed to become stockholders . Women also played an important role in providing sources of income to the community . Many devoted time to making , as Brook Farmer Marianne Dwight described , " elegant and tasteful caps , capes , collars , undersleeves , etc . , etc . , " for sale at shops in Boston . Others painted screens and lamp shades for sale . Women were allowed to go to school and , because of the well @-@ known education of women at Brook Farm , many female writers and performers visited the farm . George Ripley 's wife Sophia , who had written an outspoken feminist essay for The Dial on " Woman " before moving to Brook Farm , was very educated and was able to teach history and foreign languages at the farm .

= = Criticism = =

Many people in the community wrote of how much they enjoyed their experience and , in particular , the light @-@ hearted atmosphere . One participant , a man named John Codman , joined the community at the age of 27 in 1843 . He wrote , " It was for the meanest a life above humdrum , and

for the greatest something far , infinitely far beyond . They looked into the gates of life and saw beyond charming visions , and hopes springing up for all " . The idealism of the community sometimes was not met , however . Because the community was officially secular , a variety of religions were represented , though not always amicably . When Isaac Hecker and , later , Sophia Ripley converted to Catholicism , a Protestant Brook Farmer complained , " We are beginning to see wooden crosses around and pictures of saints ... and I suspect that rosaries are rattling under aprons . "

Nathaniel Hawthorne , eventually elected treasurer of the community , did not enjoy his experience . Initially , he praised the work he was doing , boasting of " what a great , broad @-@ shouldered , elephantine personage I shall become by and by ! " Later , he wrote to his wife @-@ to @-@ be Sophia Peabody , " labor is the curse of the world , and nobody can meddle with it without becoming proportionately brutified " . After disassociating with the community Hawthorne demanded the return of his initial investment , though he never held any ill will with Ripley , to whom he wrote he would " heartily rejoice at your success ? of which I can see no reasonable doubt " .

Many outside the community were critical of Brook Farm , especially in the press . The New York Observer , for example , suggested that , " The Associationists , under the pretense of a desire to promote order and morals , design to overthrow the marriage institution , and in the place of the divine law , to substitute the ' passions ' as the proper regulator of the intercourse of the sexes " , concluding that they were " secretly and industriously aiming to destroy the foundation of society " . Critic Edgar Allan Poe expressed his opinions on the community in an article titled " Brook Farm " in the December 13 , 1845 , issue of the Broadway Journal . He wrote that he had " sincere respect " for the group and that its journal , The Harbinger , was " conducted by an assemblage of well @-@ read persons who mean no harm ? and who , perhaps , can do no less " . Despite many critics , none suggested George Ripley be replaced as Brook Farm 's leader .

Ralph Waldo Emerson never joined the Brook Farm community , despite several invitations . He wrote to Ripley on December 15 , 1840 , of his " conviction that the Community is not good for me " . He also questioned the idealism of the community , particularly its optimism that all members would equally share responsibility and workload . As he wrote , " The country members naturally were surprised to observe that one man ploughed all day and one looked out of a window all day ... and both received at night the same wages " . Twenty years later , Emerson publicly denounced the experiment in his collection of essays titled The Conduct of Life . Charles Lane , one of the founders of another community called Fruitlands , thought the Brook Farmers lived a lifestyle that did not sacrifice enough . As he said , they were " playing away their youth and day @-@ time in a miserably joyous frivolous manner " . Like other communities , Brook Farm was criticized for its potential to break up the nuclear family because of its focus on working as a larger community . After its conversion to Fourierism , the Transcendentalists showed less support for the experiment . Henry David Thoreau questioned the community members ' idealism and wrote in his journal , " As for these communities , I think I had rather keep bachelor 's hall in hell than go to board in heaven " . Even Sophia Ripley later questioned their original optimism , referring to it as " childish , empty , & sad " .

= = In fiction = =

Nathaniel Hawthorne , though a founding member , was unhappy during his tenure as a Brook Farmer , partly because he was unable to write while living there . " I have no quiet at all " , he complained , and his hands were covered " with a new crop of blisters ? the effect of raking hay " . He later presented a fictionalized portrait of his experience in his 1852 novel , The Blithedale Romance . He acknowledged the resemblance in his introduction , saying " in the ' Blithedale ' of this volume , many readers will probably suspect a faint and not very faithful shadowing of Brook Farm , in West Roxbury , which (now a little more than ten years ago) was occupied and cultivated by a company of socialists . " The chapter called " The Masqueraders " , for example , was based on a picnic held one September to celebrate the harvest season . George Ripley , who reviewed the book for the New York Tribune , said that former Brook Farmers would only notice the resemblance

in the humorous parts of the story . Some have also seen a resemblance between Margaret Fuller and Hawthorne 's fictional character Zenobia . In the novel , a visitor ? a writer like Hawthorne ? finds that hard farm labor is not conducive to intellectual creativity .