

Ch. 3 –John Humphrey Noyes Divides the Campbell Family and Shocks Putney

When Patty (Campbell) Washburn returned to Putney in 1842 to raise her seven fatherless boys, the village appeared largely unchanged from her youth. For over 50 years the Campbell and Washburn families had been well-established in the small town of settled habits, quiet isolation, and unquestioned values. Yet cultural changes simmering in New England and New York were about to boil over in Putney, in the form of a radical religious sect. The “Bible Communism” of John Humphrey Noyes developed quietly in the late 1830s and early 1840s, but in 1847 erupted and scandalized the village. For Patty it was very personal: her sons’ only grandmother, three of their aunts, and a 15-year-old female relative became Noyes converts, while their Uncles Dr. John Campbell and David Crawford led the opposition.

John Humphrey Noyes cannot be understood outside his historical context, in “a period of religious ferment, chaos and originality unmatched in American history” known as the Second Great Awakening.¹ Socio-economic changes in transportation, commerce and communication drove the turmoil, along with the powerful egalitarian wave started by the American Revolution. The Revolution stripped political power from kings and their royal deputies, and invested it in average people. Similarly, in America the Church of England and its frowning clergymen lost power to control religious ideas and dictate Biblical interpretation. Religious concepts that early 1800s Americans inherited from their parents and grandparents were no longer satisfactory. Although New Englanders remained predominantly God-fearing Protestants committed to the Bible as God’s revealed word, they began to “differ[] wildly . . . on the social implications” and meaning of the Bible.²

Leading up to the Second Great Awakening, America’s religious landscape was dominated by the ideas of European theologian John Calvin. Calvinism decreed that humans were deeply and innately sinful. Sinfulness overwhelmed our will-power, such that we had no free will to abstain from sin. We inherited the “original sin” of the Bible’s first humans, Adam and Eve (who disobeyed God and ate the “forbidden fruit”). This was the Calvinist doctrine of “depravity” – people are permanently depraved by their sinfulness. Under the Calvinist doctrine of “predestination,” God predestined some people to be saved while most would endure eternal damnation. Individuals could not save themselves through faith and good moral conduct because their sinful nature overcame their will power. Christ had died only for the elect, and God alone determined who was elect. The Church of England codified these principles in the 1646 “Westminster Confession of Faith,” which long dominated congregational and presbyterian churches. The Calvinist portrayal of humans as helpless and passive did not fit young America in the 1830s.

¹ Nathan O. Hatch, “The Democratization of American Christianity,” Yale Univ. 1989, p. 64.

² Mark A. Noll, “America’s Book – The Rise and Fall of a Bible Civilization, 1794-1911,” Oxford Univ. 2022, p. 40.

During the Second Great Awakening, many Americans rejected Calvinism and the Westminster Confession, essentially democratizing Christianity. Initially the challenge was advanced by Methodists and Yale Divinity School theologians, who urged that people *did* have free will to control their conduct, such that “sin was in the sinning” (not in our natures). This was a dramatic revision of “original sin.” By the 1830s, leading Protestant revival preachers, such as Charles Grandison Finney, explicitly rejected Calvinist depravity and predestination. Perhaps the most influential and popular preacher of his time, Finney’s sermons and publications reflected “hostility toward traditional Calvinism and all it stood for. He denounced its traditional dogmas,” scornfully calling them “the traditions of the elders.”³ In fiery, emotional sermons Finney and other revivalist preachers taught that ordinary people had free will to choose not to sin, and to save themselves by accepting Christ and living virtuous lives. This brought many Americans back to the church – hence the “great awakening” and reference to “revivals.”

Finney shared the millennial mood of the time, anticipating the imminent Second Coming of Christ and the following one-thousand-year period of peace in which God fulfills his plans for humanity. He advocated for the abolition of slavery, war and alcoholism to prepare for the Millennium. He also preached female emancipation and supported the American Female Reform Society’s efforts to advance women’s rights and eliminate the sexual “double standard” (under which sexual chastity outside marriage was strictly required for women, while male licentiousness was tolerated).⁴

Finney ultimately took his critique of Calvinism a step further. If persons can abstain from sin and live in compliance with Divine rule, could they not attain Christian sanctification, or perfection?⁵ “Perfectionists” concluded that because free will allows us to resist sin, and live in complete obedience to the law of God, a disciplined and devout person can attain a state of “sanctification” or perfection. By 1839 Finney had adopted this reasoning.⁶ It was fundamental to Finney that perfection arises from selflessness: “The law of God requires perfect, disinterested, impartial benevolence It requires that we . . . leave self out of the question as uniformly as He does Nothing short of this is Christian perfection.”⁷

Many rejected the notion that humans can be perfect. In 1841 the influential Presbytery of Troy New York announced that: “the doctrine of ‘Christian Perfection’ in this life is not only

³ Keith J. Hardman, “Charles Grandison Finney, 1792-1875 – Revivalist and Reformer,” Baker Book House 1987, p. 278-279.

⁴ Hardman, “Charles Grandison Finney,” p. 185. Women at the time had circumscribed civil rights. They could not vote, hold most public offices, and sit on juries, and generally were expected to defer to men in public matters, such as remaining silent in assemblies attended by men. They also had restricted career opportunities, such as in law, medicine, education and the ministry.

⁵ Methodists explored perfectionism well before the 1830s, in part through their leader, John Wesley (1703-1791). Presbyterian perfectionism appears to have developed during the 1830s.

⁶ Hardman, “Charles Grandison Finney,” p. 343.

⁷ Hardman, “Charles Grandison Finney,” pp. 332-333.

false, but calculated in its tendencies to engender self-righteousness, disorder, deception, censoriousness and fanaticism. . . .” Multiple church organizations similarly condemned Perfectionism.⁸

The Second Great Awakening is famous for conceiving a multitude of religious sects led by charismatic, utopian leaders claiming Divine knowledge. “An entire gamut of experiments promoting the perfection of humanity and the bringing of millennial bliss, unorthodox religious beliefs, [and] new cults” flooded upstate New York and New England.⁹ Prominent examples from this hotbed of religious enthusiasm include the following:

- William Miller, a Justice of the Peace in Poultney, Vermont, was a Captain in the War of 1812. After the war he returned to his boyhood home in upstate New York. A conversion experience led to his close study of the Bible, and his determination that the Second Coming of Christ would be between March 21, 1843 and March 21, 1844. Enormous national interest in “Millerism” followed, along with widespread dismay when Christ failed to appear. Miller then announced that the correct date was actually October 22, 1844. A fever pitch of interest led to “as many as fifty thousand Americans, after selling or giving away their possessions, assembl[ing] out of doors in many locations on October 22, 1844,” many having “donned ascension robes” for the occasion.¹⁰ The latter date became known as the “Great Disappointment.”
- Joseph Smith Jr., born in Sharon, Vermont in 1805, later moved to a farm in western New York. After Smith had a vision of Jesus Christ proclaiming his Second Coming, an angel directed Smith to “a lost scripture inscribed on golden plates in an unknown language known as Reformed Egyptian” buried not far from his home.¹¹ “Smith claimed to unearth the golden plates in 1827 and read them by looking through two seer stones fashioned into a breastplate and named Urim and Thummin, which miraculously translated the inscriptions into English.”¹² In 1830 Smith published the “lost scripture” as the Book of Mormon. The same year he organized the Church of Christ, calling it a restoration of the early Christian Church. Smith announced a revelation in 1838 that renamed the church as The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. Some followers practiced polygamy, allowing men to have multiple wives.

⁸ Hardman, “Charles Grandison Finney,” p. 348. Finney was President of Oberlin College during the 1850s-60s. The subsequent President of Oberlin opined that the Perfectionism movement at Oberlin was relatively short-lived, and that “persons of less balanced character were more likely to share” its views. *Id.* at 349.

⁹ Hardman, “Charles Grandison Finney,” p. 25.

¹⁰ Mark A. Noll, “America’s Book,” p. 253; Daniel Walker Howe, “What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848,” pp. 289-292.

¹¹ Daniel Walker Howe, “What Hath God Wrought,” pp. 312-313.

¹² *Id.* at 313.

- In the 1840s New York native Albert Brisbane adapted for an American audience the theories of French social theorist Charles Fourier (1772–1837). “Fourierism” rejected the inefficiencies of free market commerce, and favored self-sustaining rural communes (called “phalanxes”) of 1,620 people representing all occupations, living on 6,000 acres. Brisbane injected Christianity into the mix and promoted a religious version of Fourierism that attracted great interest. “Some twenty-eight phalanxes were established in the antebellum United States.”¹³
- The United Society of Believers in Christ’s Second Appearing, more commonly known as the Shakers, originated in England in the 1700s, but reached its high-point of popularity in 1830s-50s America. Shakers believed that the sin of Adam and Eve in the Book of Genesis was sex, an act of impurity. “They practiced celibacy to purge themselves from sin in preparation for the end of the world,” and worshiped a charismatic leader named Ann Lee (or Mother Ann) “as a second incarnation of Christ.”¹⁴

The same agitation and millennial fervor that produced the above initiatives also gave rise to the extraordinary John Humphrey Noyes. His “Bible Communism,” contemporaneously developed in Putney, reflects some of the same ideas and concerns. Common attributes include the paramount importance of the Second Coming of Christ, previously undisclosed religious first principles (discovered by the doctrine’s progenitor), collective living of converted believers, and reordered sexual relations between men and women. Noyes contended that: the Second Coming had occurred in 70 A.D. but had been overlooked by humankind; the Kingdom of God was poised to begin under the right circumstances; he was the prophet who would initiate the Kingdom of God; under that new and Divine regime prior social norms and laws were void, and were to be supplanted by a new regime of collective sharing of property, children and sexual mates. Noyes determined that the Kingdom of God would commence with a group of believers living together under his leadership.

Noyes was the oldest son of successful Brattleboro merchant and U.S. Congressman John Noyes Sr. In 1822 the family moved into the stately home at the top of Putney’s Kimball Hill, facing the village (now 52 Westminster Road).¹⁵ In 1830, Noyes Jr. graduated from Dartmouth College (like his father) and began studying law. In September 1831, he attended a four-day revival meeting in Putney and was “converted.” Abandoning law, he began studying at Andover Theological Seminary before transferring to Yale Divinity School.

¹³ *Id.* at 295-296.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 297.

¹⁵ The U.S. Census places the Noyes family in Brattleboro in 1810 (where J.H. Noyes was born in 1811), and in Dummerston in 1820.

In 1834, in his early 20s at Yale, Noyes became a Perfectionist.¹⁶ Never one for partial measures, he decided that Christian perfection did not require years of discipline and selflessness – he, in fact, had reached that state. Noyes described a second “conversion,” in which:

three times in quick succession a stream of eternal love gushed through my heart and rolled back again to its source. “Joy unspeakable and full of glory” filled my soul. All fear and doubt and condemnation passed away. I knew that my heart was clean, and that the Father and the Son had come and made it their abode.¹⁷

When an inquiring Yale professor approached Noyes to discuss his claimed perfection, the conversation did not go well. Noyes confirmed his own perfection, and denounced the professor as living in sin. Shortly afterward he was thrown out of Yale.¹⁸

In the late 1830s, Noyes developed a novel “doctrine of holiness” alien to any other version of Perfectionism. Studying the Bible closely, he decided that he could discern God’s plan for mankind. Noyes ascertained that the Second Coming of Christ had taken place when the Temple of Jerusalem fell in 70 AD. The Kingdom of God had been delayed until the mid-1840s because people failed to realize that Christ had returned. Noyes was the prophet who would explain the truth such that the Kingdom of God could commence.

Claiming to interpret Biblical scripture, Noyes determined that civic and religious institutions and traditions from “primitive” times preceding the Kingdom of God were pointless and defunct. Monogamy (in marriage or otherwise), the nuclear family, private property, traditional church, and Sunday worship were all vestiges of that primitive time. They should be abandoned.¹⁹ The archaic institutions of marriage, family, and private property did not reduce conflict, they created conflict by promoting jealousy and selfishness. In the Kingdom of God, sexual relations, property and children would be communal. All men and women were wedded to each other and could have sex with each other. Sex was a powerful and direct link to a higher, spiritual plane – the most natural channel of religious love.²⁰ Death did not exist for

¹⁶ Noyes, J.H., “Confessions of John H. Noyes,” Part I, “Religious Experience: Including a History of Modern Perfectionism” (Leonard & Co., Oneida Reserve, 1849).

¹⁷ “Confessions of J.H. Noyes,” *id.* Noyes later stated that “God gave plenty of evidence in 1834 that he had appointed me foreman of his church.” George Wallingford Noyes, “Free Love in Utopia: John Humphrey Noyes and the Origin of the Oneida Community,” University of Illinois Press (2001), p. 59.

¹⁸ Wayland-Smith, Ellen, “Oneida: From Free Love Utopia to the Well-Set Table” Picador, NY 2016, p. 20.

¹⁹ “In heaven God reigns over body, soul, and estate, without interference from human governments; and consequently, the advent of his kingdom on earth will supplant all human governments.” J.H. Noyes, “Report of the Oneida Association: Exhibiting its History, Principles, and Transactions to Jan. 1, 1849,” Leonard & Co. 1849, Bible Argument, Proposition III.

²⁰ Noyes contended that “far from falling outside the divine orbit, the sexual organs were, in fact, ‘the medium of the noblest worship of God.’” Wayland-Smith, p. 51. “Perfect” men practiced continence to avoid unwanted reproduction. In 1869, Noyes and his Oneida Community began

those living in the Kingdom of God. Noyes called his doctrine of communal love, family and property “Bible Communism.”

During the 1830s, Noyes traveled and conferred with other Perfectionists in New Haven, Newark, New York, and elsewhere, and published newsletters, also spending time in his hometown of Putney. In early 1835 in Putney, Noyes preached Perfectionism and found some villagers receptive.²¹ He did not disclose his radical beliefs (Bible Communism). Those ideas he reserved for the few “advanced minds” in his inner circle who understood his divine commission as God’s prophet.²² Noyes was a member of a local family of education, talent and wealth, and had standing and influence in the small village. Not only was his father a former United States Representative and well-to-do merchant, his mother Polly (Hayes) Noyes was an aunt of future U.S. President Rutherford Hayes. Family wealth did not require the young prophet to work.²³ Keeping his radical views screened, Noyes was taken seriously by open-minded peers in the village. While Patty was in Randolph Center with Seth Washburn during the 1830s, several members of her Putney family became Perfectionist converts. “Among those who opened their homes for Perfectionist meetings were Dr. Alexander Campbell [Patty’s father], the leading physician of the town, and Achsah, his wife, who became deeply interested in Noyes’s views.” Lydia Crawford, spouse of Patty’s brother Dr. John Campbell, also became an 1830s Perfectionist convert.²⁴

In Putney in 1837 Noyes asserted his “divine commission” in a letter to an associate:

experimenting with eugenics or stirpiculture, which Noyes governed in tandem with a committee. Community men and women were paired for reproduction based upon what Noyes deemed their superior mental and spiritual qualities.

²¹ “Religious Experience of John Humphrey Noyes, Founder of the Oneida Community,” Compiled and Edited by George Wallingford Noyes, The MacMillan Company, NY, 1923, p. 213.

²² Those who read all of Noyes’s writings may have discerned that he rejected monogamy in his “Battle Axe Letter,” published without his consent in 1837, in which he stating that in the Resurrection there was no exclusive marriage, and “every dish is free to every guest.” Noyes did not act on that proposition, however, until 1846 in Putney.

²³ While preaching and publishing in Putney in the late 1830s Noyes was supported financially by his wife and his father. “John Humphrey Noyes, the Putney Community,” pp. 48-49. After the death of John Noyes Sr in early 1841, Noyes and his three converted siblings received \$19,920 from the estate. Along with \$16,000 from Noyes’s wife and \$2,000 from his brother-in-law John R. Miller, Noyes had access to \$38,000, the rough equivalent of \$1,000,000 today. Wayland-Smith, p. 44.

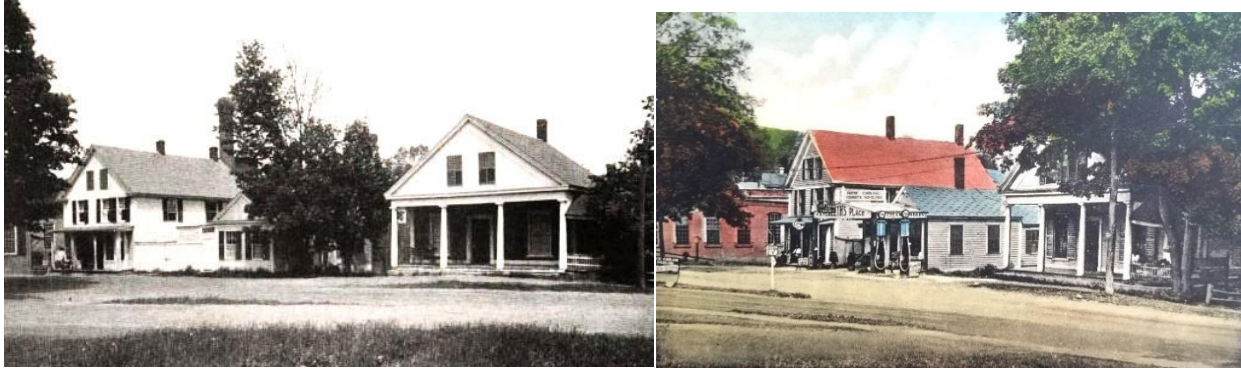
²⁴ *Id.* In July, 1935 Lydia (Crawford) Campbell wrote to Harriet Holton (future wife of Noyes): “Oh, what a glorious, blessed privilege! The spirit of life in Jesus Christ hath made me free from the law of sin and death I am happy. I have no anxiety, no care. I know the Lord is able to keep what I have committed unto him, and will keep it, even my all. The Lord has brought some in this place to confess Christ a whole Savior from sin and death, and I trust he will bring more into the liberty of the gospel. I believe Brother J.H. Noyes is waxing strong, and testifying the truth with great power.” G.W. Noyes, “Religious Experience of John Humphrey Noyes, Founder of the Oneida Community,” Ch. XXVI (“Perfectionism in Putney and Vicinity, July 1835 to November 1836”), p. 258.

Between this present time and the establishment of God's kingdom over the earth lies a chaos of confusion, tribulation and war such as must attend the destruction of the fashion of this world and the introduction of the will of God as it is done in heaven. *God has set me to cast up a highway across this chaos, and I am gathering out the stones and grading the track as fast as possible.* For the present a long race and a hard warfare is before the saints, that is, an opportunity and demand for faith, one of the most precious commodities of heaven. Only let us lay fast hold of the hope of our calling, let us set the Lord and his glory always before our face, and we shall not be moved.²⁵

Also in 1837, J.H. Noyes and his acolyte John R. Miller bought a one-half acre lot on Main Street in Putney village. In 1839 Noyes built a house for himself and his new wife nearby, in the Christian Square area of Putney. In 1841 he had a "chapel" built on the Main Street lot, a one-and-a-half story structure with a brick first story fronted with four Doric columns supporting a projecting pediment. In the two-and-a-half story building north of the chapel Noyes opened a perfectionist store. Connected to the store, and between the two larger buildings, was a one-story wing. Noyes was building the infrastructure for his Kingdom of God in Putney.²⁶

²⁵ G.W. Noyes, "Religious experience of John Humphrey Noyes: Founder of the Oneida Community," Ch. XXX ("Noyes Asserts His Divine Commission") (emphasis added).

²⁶ The author is grateful to Laurel Ellis of the Putney Historical Society for explaining the times and locations of the Noyes buildings, for arranging associated 2022 photographs, and for editorial suggestions on drafts of this paper.



The three Noyes buildings around 1900 on the left, and during the 1930s-40s on the right (with “Everleth’s Place,” a gas station, restaurant and store, between the two larger buildings).



For over 130 years, the Noyes buildings were at the center of Putney village, as shown in the 1970s photo above left (after the chapel lost its columns). In the summer of 1977, the two-and-a-half story building on the left in the first three above pictures was torn down for an extension of the paper mill. Meanwhile, a fire at the chapel led to its replacement by a larger two-story, flat-roofed building. Today only the small, one-story middle building remains, leaving the degraded Main Street depicted in the fourth image above.²⁷

²⁷ The first image above appears in “John Humphrey Noyes, The Putney Community,” Compiled and Edited by George Wallingford Noyes (Oneida, NY 1931), p. 55, captioned “The Perfectionist Store and Chapel at Putney, Vermont.” Photos in subsequent pages of the involved individuals are also from that book. The above 1930s-40s image (on a post-card) is courtesy of Evan Darrow, who also provided the author with a grainy mid-1977 snapshot of the Perfectionist store being torn down. Our father William H. Darrow took the latter photo, and the postcard is from his collection. The last 2022 photo is courtesy of Scott Carr.



The house Noyes built for himself and his new wife in 1839, near Christian Square (current address 9 Cul De Sac). It was here that he planned Putney's Kingdom of God. In his publication, "The Witness" dated February 22 1841, Noyes wrote: "During the past year a small company of believers have met regularly at my house for discussion and exhortation. The interest of the meetings and the number attending have been gradually increasing." He added that it was time "to institute an organization." 2022 photo: Scott Carr.

In 1846, after Patty and her sons were settled in Putney, Noyes began quietly implementing "Bible Communism." After a romantic interlude with the wife of early convert George Cragin in May of that year, Noyes met with his wife and the Cragins. The two couples agreed to merge their marriages into a single union, which Noyes called a "complex marriage."²⁸ That same year the Noyes and Cragin families moved into the Campbell house, purchased by Noyes' father in 1839 (after Dr. Alexander Campbell, his wife Achsah, and their two daughters moved to 79 Westminster Road). G.W. Noyes gives the following history:

On November 4, 1846, the Putney Perfectionists carried through a consolidation of households. Mr. and Mrs. J. H. Noyes moved into the Campbell house with Mr. and Mrs. Cragin and William H. Woolworth. At the same time the Skinners, Millers and Leonards took possession of the Noyes homestead. J.H. Noyes's house was not occupied this winter. "For want of better names," wrote Harriet Skinner, "the Campbell house came to be known as the Lower House, and the Noyes homestead as the Upper House."²⁹

In November 1846, the Noyes group adopted the following two principles: "All individual proprietorship either of persons or things is surrendered, and absolute community of

²⁸ G.W. Noyes, "John Humphrey Noyes, The Putney Community," Ch. 21 ("The Beginnings of Complex Marriage").

²⁹ *Id.*, p. 206.

interests takes the place of the laws and fashions which preside over property and family relations in the world.” Also: “John H. Noyes is the father and overseer whom the Holy Ghost has set over the family thus constituted. To John H. Noyes as such we submit ourselves in all things spiritual and temporal, appealing from his decisions only to the spirit of God, and that without disputing.”³⁰

By early 1847, “Uncle” David Crawford had discovered the extremism of Noyes’s views in discussions with the latter’s sister Harriet. This was before Noyes made those views public. Crawford submitted a February 13, 1847 “complaint” to Putney’s Congregational Church, of which Harriet had been a member, explaining some of those views and pointed out that they contradicted fundamental Church precepts. Crawford alleged that Harriet, who no longer attended church, believed “that the Second Coming of Christ took place at the destruction of Jerusalem,” that the Sabbath was “abolished” at that time, that Judgement Day commenced at that time and has been ongoing ever since, and that “this Church is not a Christian Church.” Crawford stated that he had discussed these beliefs with Harriet, “with a sincere desire of convincing her and reclaiming her but she refuses to harken.”³¹ Crawford undoubtedly knew that J.H. Noyes was the source of these beliefs. At the time Crawford evidently was unaware of that Noyes also had dispensed with monogamy and “primitive” government laws.

That spring, the meaning of “Complex Marriage” leaked out of the Noyes inner circle.³² The Campbell family was the first to discover it:

Suspicious as to Complex Marriage in the group immediately around Noyes now began to be felt by Perfectionists at Putney who had not yet been admitted to the secret. In the spring of 1847 Lydia, wife of [Patty’s older brother] Dr. John Campbell, obtained a knowledge of the facts by cross-questioning [Noyes’s sister] Harriet Skinner. In the tempest that followed the disclosure Mrs. Achsah Campbell entreated Lydia to request an explanation in person from Noyes, saying, “I do not believe that men or even devils can deceive you.” Lydia, accompanied by Mrs. Achsah Campbell’s daughter Helen, called on Noyes, and he gave them the explanation they asked. After conversing with several others of Noyes’s household Lydia became convinced that Noyes was right, and she convinced Mrs. Achsah Campbell without pressure from Noyes. Mrs. Achsah Campbell

³⁰ *Id.*

³¹ The 1847 Crawford complaint is in the possession of the Vermont Historical Society.

³² Those seeking to understand what happened in Putney in 1847 (and what became of Achsah, Emma and Helen Campbell), are deeply indebted to George Wallingford Noyes, son of Noyes’s brother George and a daughter of John R. Miller, who in the early 1900s wrote two important history books on the early Perfectionists (both cited heavily herein). After G.W. Noyes died in 1941, Oneida leaders burned the archives he had collected, including original letters and diaries of Oneida members. Ellen Wayland-Smith, “From Free Love Utopia to the Well-Set Table,” Ch. 15 (“The Burning”).

then tried to persuade Dr. [John] Campbell, her step-son, to talk with Noyes, but he refused.³³

Also in early 1847, the Noyes inner circle focused on “converting” three young Putney women: Helen and Emma Campbell, and 15-year-old Lucinda Lamb, a Campbell relative and contemporary and classmate of the Washburn brothers.³⁴ Helen and Lucinda were among the handful of young Putney women attending private boarding schools. The Noyes group’s ill-fated plan began in January, 1847 when John R. Miller (age 34, married to Charlotte Noyes and living in the Noyes family house on Kimball Hill), brought Helen Campbell, age 20, back to school at the Charlestown Female Seminary (in Charlestown Massachusetts) for her spring term. He told her mother, Achsah Campbell, that he had business in Boston necessitating his travel. During the trip Miller engaged Helen in conversation about religion. His interest in the young woman would lead to Putney’s full focus on and rejection of the Noyes group several months later.

Upon returning to Putney, Miller began writing letters to Helen, expressing concern for her spiritual well-being and urging commitment to Christ. Helen, young, intelligent and (consistent with the times) open to new ideas, wrote back about the tedium she experienced in her school’s religion classes. When the school term ended in March, Helen returned to Putney with Lucinda, also a student at the Seminary. Miller advised Noyes that if they could convert Helen Campbell, it “would have a great influence on the young people in this town, and she would be a valuable member of our society.”³⁵

The Noyes group sought to convert Helen, and began working on Emma and Lucinda as well. Noyes and Miller discussed the fatherless Campbell sisters with their mother Achsah. Noyes “had a plain talk with Mrs. Campbell about the management of her daughters,” while Miller assured the concerned Mrs. Campbell that in his “association with Emma and Helen my only motive has been to bring them to the knowledge and confession of the truth.”³⁶ Meanwhile, Noyes and Miller had long conversations with Emma Campbell.

³³ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” Ch. 22 (“Divulging the Secret”). The assertion that it was Lydia who “convinced Mrs. Achsah Campbell without pressure from Noyes” seems improbable.

³⁴ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” Ch. 23 (“Conversion of Helen, Emma and Lucinda”). Lucinda Lamb’s paternal grandmother was Marion Campbell, younger sister of Dr. Edward “Ned” Campbell of Westminster, and a first cousin of Patty’s father Dr. Alexander Campbell.

³⁵ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” Ch. 23 (“Conversion of Helen, Emma and Lucinda”).

³⁶ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” Ch. 23 (“Conversion of Helen, Emma and Lucinda”). “John Humphrey Noyes himself introduced young women to sexual intercourse at or shortly after the onset of puberty,” and Oneida records “suggest the average age of female induction was thirteen.” Wayland-Smith, at 70. “50% of the newest generation of Oneidans had Noyes blood running through their veins.” *Id.* at 128.



The home of Achsah Campbell and her two daughters in the 1840s (now 79 Westminster Road). The house is close to the Noyes family house at 52 Westminster Road, and about a third of a mile south of the Washburn house at 142 Sand Hill Road (depicted in Ch 2). The David Crawford farm at 105 Westminster Road (also depicted in Ch 2) is mid-way between the above house and the Washburn house. 2022 photo credit: Scott Carr.

The focus of the Noyes group had its desired effect. A May 26, 1847 letter from Noyes's sister Harriet Skinner to George Cragin reported that "Emma, Helen and Lucinda, the flowers of the village, were all at our meeting last evening. . . . John proposed that we should all express our heart's desire. It was delightful to hear them say how much they desired to know the will of God and do it. What new-born feelings!"³⁷

In May of 1847, Lucinda stopped returning home after visits with the Noyes inner circle, and began living with them. This led to strong protest from her parents. Noyes came up with the idea of having his younger brother George propose to Lucinda, to mollify parental concern. Harriet's May 26 letter quoted above also states:

if [Mr. Lamb] should compel [Lucinda] to remove her boarding-place and forsake our society, what then? John has just been up here with a fancy. What if George should go tomorrow morning and ask Lucinda if she will marry him, and then ask Mr. Lamb's consent? (One of Mr. Lamb's great troubles is that John dictates our marriages, but he has signified his acceptance of George for his daughter.) This would be a perfect countercheck to the plans of the enemy, and place Lucinda independent of her parents under John's instruction.

The following week Noyes penned a sanctimonious letter to Mr. Lamb invoking the Will of God. The June 4, 1847 letter stated that:

³⁷ G.W. Noyes, "The Putney Community," Ch. 23 ("Conversion of Helen, Emma and Lucinda").

[t]he relation which exists between me and your daughter is one which I did not seek. It was thrown upon me by the providence of God with her free choice God has the absolute right and the irresistible power to direct the movements of her spirit and fix her heart on the Kingdom and followers of his Son.”³⁸

The letter instructed Mr. Lamb that Lucinda’s real father was Christ. Noyes added that he had advised Lucinda to “call no man father on earth, for your father is in heaven.” He recommended that Mr. Lamb “[b]eware of the attempt to take your daughter out of God’s hands.” The letter was not well received by the Lambs and other villagers, including Dr. John Campbell (Mr. Lamb’s relative, also agitated by the Noyes’ group’s pursuit of his younger sisters Helen and Emma), and attorney John Kimball, from whom Lucinda’s parents sought legal advice.

The May 1847 sequestering of 15-year-old Lucinda Lamb by Noyes and Miller over the protest of her parents, and their interest in the young Campbell sisters, took place as Noyes’s belief in “free love” became known. Combined with the peremptory brush-off Noyes gave Lucinda’s parents, he now had the full attention of the village. Putney’s “War of 1847” had begun, with the Campbell family at the center.

In June of 1847 Noyes announced that the Kingdom of God had commenced. He informed his Putney converts that:

With a mighty hand and marvelous wisdom God has gathered us together here. We have been able to cut our way through the isolation and selfishness in which the mass of men exist and have attained a position in which *before heaven and earth we trample underfoot the domestic and pecuniary fashions of the world. Separate households, property exclusiveness have come to an end with us. Our Association is established on principles opposed at every point to the institutions of the world.*³⁹

The full import of the Noyes sect continued to detonate in Putney. Dr. John Campbell severed relations with Noyes and became a leader of Putney opposition. One method that Noyes used to insulate himself from rapidly mounting community resistance was offering marriages to Lucinda and the Campbell sisters. After Noyes’ suggestion that his brother George marry Lucinda failed to resolve her parents’ concern, he arranged for George to marry Helen Campbell, and for his close associate William Woolworth to marry Emma Campbell. In a double wedding on July 12, 1847, Helen, then age 21, married George Noyes, and Emma, age 24,

³⁸ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” Ch. 23 (“Conversion of Helen, Emma and Lucinda”).

³⁹ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” Ch. 24 (“The Kingdom of God Has Come”) (emphasis added). Noyes also published these assertions in the July 15, 1847 edition of his monthly publication, *The Spiritual Magazine*.

married Woolworth.⁴⁰ Larkin Mead, Noyes' brother-in-law and local lawyer, officiated. Around this time, it appears that Noyes was engaging in sexual relations with Achsah Campbell.⁴¹

Also in July of 1847, with Lucinda Lamb living with the Noyes inner circle, Noyes arranged for her to write a letter to her father, insisting that her activities were voluntary. The letter stated, "I now tell you that I do not consider you as my father, and shall have nothing more to do with you, until you are willing to ask the *forgiveness*" of Noyes, "and are joined to my *true* Father, which is Christ."⁴² Noyes may have thought that the Campbell marriages and Lucinda's letter would mollify Putney. But Putney had had enough.

In October 1847 Noyes was indicted on charges of adultery. One of the several women with whom he was alleged to have engaged in "adulterous fornication," named in the public Indictment, was Achsah Campbell.⁴³ Noyes was arrested and arraigned, with trial set for April, 1848. After the court released him on \$2000 bail (provided by Miller), Noyes absconded to New York City. The interstate flight was necessary, Noyes claimed, to protect himself from a lynch mob of Putney barbarians.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ *The Spiritual Magazine*, July 15, 1847 (George W. Noyes, Editor), announced the nuptials. George Noyes and Helen Campbell had one child who died before his first birthday, after which George fathered three children by three different women in the Oneida community. One was author George Wallingford Noyes (the mother of whom was John R. Miller's daughter Tirzah). It is difficult to track Oneida pairings, but it appears that Helen had another son with George, and also children with at least two other Oneida men (Henry W. Burnham and Henry Seymour). In 1850 Emma Campbell had a daughter with William Woolworth named Arabella Campbell Woolworth.

⁴¹ Noyes, who professed not to believe in traditional marriage, used it strategically. In 1842 his converted sisters Harriet and Charlotte married close converts John Skinner and John Miller, respectively. In 1838 Noyes married Harriet Holton, a convert who brought money to the union, and in 1847 two more close Noyes male associates married Helen and Emma Campbell. These marriages strengthened (and with the Cragins represented the core of) his "Putney Association."

⁴² Original emphasis. Noyes published the letter in *The Spiritual Magazine*, January 10, 1850, accessed at https://books.google.com/books?id=ZtLgaqrbmHMC&pg=RA1-PA365&lpg=RA1-PA365&dq=%22Lucinda+Lamb%22+putney+vt&source=bl&ots=sQixT9QoWW&sig=ACfU3U1crRTl8p7vRPShnytZpajqwe7pkg&hl=en&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwiUz8K2-czAhU0gnIEHU_IDQYQ6AF6BAgTEAM#v=onepage&q=%22Lucinda%20Lamb%22%20putney%20vt&f=false.

⁴³ Hubbard Eastman, "Noyesism Unveiled: A History of the Sect Self-Styled Perfectionists, with a Summary View of Their Leading Doctrines," Brattleboro, Vermont 1849), pp. 36-45. The Indictment charged in part, "John Humphrey Noyes, on or about the first day of September, now last past, at Putney, aforesaid . . . then and there being a married man, with force and arms did carnally know one Achsah Campbell, a single woman, and with her . . . did commit adulterous fornication, contrary to the form, force and effect of the statute . . . and against the peace and dignity of the State." *Id.* at 40.

⁴⁴ At a May 1849 court hearing the State's Attorney urged revocation of the fugitive's bond, stating to the court that Noyes "is a man of wealth, talents and education, and therefore has an unusual influence. If he was a poor man, instead of being at the head of a harem in the State of New York he

Noyes' mid-1847 declaration of "principles opposed at every point . . . to the institutions of the world," and his endorsement of free love, surprised those who did not discern such radicalism in his preaching since the mid-1830s. The Editor of the *Vermont Phoenix* concluded that Noyes had been deceitful in screening his true beliefs. Noyes's principles had been "so covered up by subtleties, by mystification, and confused explanation, and by bold denial of imputed licentious consequences and results," the Editor wrote, "that the unwary and the unsuspecting might well be deceived."⁴⁵

Putney residents likely viewed Noyes as using his considerable resources, and his claim to be a Messiah of the Kingdom of God, to exploit women made vulnerable by very limited civil rights and economic opportunities. He did not appear to meet Charles G. Finney's description of a selfless and disinterested perfectionist, and also seemed to violate Finney's support for women's independence from licentious males.⁴⁶

Rev. Elisha Andrews, then living in Michigan, pressed his friend David Crawford for information about what was going on in Putney. In a November 23, 1847 letter to Andrews, Crawford summarized the facts, stating:

We have had a high excitement in the public mind growing out of the alleged conduct of J.H. Noyes and his followers. Near the end of Oct. he was arrested on a charge of adultery. He waived his right to an examination before the justice, and gave Bonds in \$2000 for his appearance before the next Term of our Co. Court in Apr. next. The people believe their conduct bad, very bad.

would be at [the State prison in] Windsor hewing stone where he ought to be." The Oneida Community Collection, in the Syracuse University Libraries, George Arents Research Library for Special Collections.

⁴⁵ *Vermont Phoenix*, November 24, 1847, p. 2 ("Perfectionism"). The article reviews a decade of Noyes publications culminating in his claimed Kingdom of God, and observes that "the idea of *perfect holiness*, of being in a state in which it is impossible to sin, where salvation is secured . . . is no doubt alluring and sweet . . . every fear and every anxiety is banished forever, and all the passions hold a jubilee. It is tempting bait to the anxious and inquiring mind, and, garnished as it is with plausible passages of Scripture, requires but a little self-deception to make it palatable . . . The new converts, unconscious perhaps at first of the practical results of their religious belief, are led along, step by step, and their minds gradually prepared to swallow [the licentiousness to which this doctrine leads]." On January 7, 1848 the *Vermont Phoenix* published a second lengthy piece on Noyes.

⁴⁶ Four decades later, Rev. Amos Foster's history of Putney observed that: "Modern Perfectionism . . . under the leadership of John H. Noyes . . . exerted a blighting influence upon the cause of good morals and religion. This sect, while they held to the doctrine of sinless perfection, at the same time embraced sentiments of a most licentious tendency. . . . [T]he deleterious influence of the doctrines and practices of the sect long remained in the community. . . . A book entitled *Noyesism Unveiled* by Rev. H. Eastman, a Methodist clergyman and ex-presiding elder, gives a more extensive account than here." "Vermont Historical Gazetteer -- A Local History of All the Towns in the State, Civil, Educational, Biographical, Religious and Military," Volume V, Collated by Abby Maria Hemenway (Brandon, Vermont, 1891).

If the disclosures of a man who was, a short time, one of them are true, the inmates of the house being seven men & their wives & some 6 or 8 widows and girls, have lived the summer past in promiscuous sexual intercourse. It appears if reports are true, that none but the inmates of the house have participated practically, but others of the sect knew that such practices were held to be right for them as they were really in the Kingdom of God and cannot sin. . . . I do not mean that the disclosures charge all the inmates of the house. Of some of them it is not known. I understand that the deluded creatures, or some of them, are waiting in expectation that God will annihilate our Church before the next April & believe that Noyes can at his pleasure scatter to the four winds all opposition to him. I think our community [is] settled upon this point – that such conduct shall not continue in their midst.

By letter Andrews responded to Crawford as follows:

There is no subject in which I take so deep an interest as the in the welfare of my former church with the exception of my own family. My heart bled when I heard the sad disclosures which your letter made. Yet they were not altogether unexpected , for I repeatedly predicted such a result when at Putney, and I did it not from any facts in the case that would lead to such a conclusion, but from the fact that I have never known any cases of pretended immediate revelation from heaven but what ended in the same lamentable manner, downright licentiousness.

How lamentable it is, that such fine talents, refined education, respectability of family, and moral influence should all be prostrated to such vile purposes!⁴⁷

Although Noyes had fled, most of his disciples remained in Putney, disseminating his religious themes in *The Spiritual Magazine*. On the evening of December 2, 1847 Putney residents met at the Congregational Church to discuss the situation. Preston W. Taft was appointed Chairman, with William Houghton as Secretary. On motion of Dr. John Campbell, a committee was appointed, consisting of Rev. Amos Foster, John Kimball, Israel Keyes, Rev. Hubbard Eastman, and James Keyes, to draft resolutions. At a second meeting on December 6, resolutions were circulated, discussed and adopted. The first resolution, noting that the Perfectionists had “declared that moral law is abolished,” stated that, “[t]he moral interests of this community demand the immediate dissolution of [the Perfectionist] Association.” The second observed that publication in town of *The Spiritual Magazine* “ought immediately to be discontinued.” The third urged that “those Perfectionists who still remain in this town, ought publicly to renounce those principles which tend to, and abandon those practices which are, a violation of the statute laws of the State.” The fourth stated that residents injured by the

⁴⁷ The Elisha Andrews – David Crawford correspondence is in the possession of the Michigan State University Archives and Historical Collections, as the “Mary True Dooley Papers (UA 10.3.217 Box 2074H Folder 1) Correspondence 1849-1850.”

Perfectionists “ought to be suitably renumerated” by the group.⁴⁸ In the wake of these resolutions, publication in Putney of *The Spiritual Magazine* was suspended.



Putney's Congregational Church, attended by the Washburns, Campbells and Crawfords, depicted in 1884. The church was a center of opposition to Noyes' "Bible Communism." The building still stands in 2022, housing the Next Stage Arts Project.

In the wake of Putney's firm rejection of Noyes in late 1847, and his absence from the village, Emma and Helen Campbell, as well as Lydia (Crawford) Campbell, reconsidered his divine commission. Dr. John Campbell, in particular, urged his two sisters and his wife to abandon the sect. He was doubtless joined by Rev. Amos Foster and others. By Christmas of that year, Emma, Helen, and Lydia had all left the Noyes group.

In a December 13, 1847 letter to his fugitive brother, a concerned George Noyes in Putney reported:

Emma is considerably in communication with the Doctor, and is of course spiritually oppressive and sometimes threatens. Helen is more isolated, though opposed and almost discouraged. This makes Woolworth's and my position difficult. . . . I have some things which I should like to talk about for the sake of having a more perfect understanding, when you can find time.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ *Vermont Phoenix*, December 24, 1847, p. 2. The proceedings are also reviewed in Hubbard Eastman's book, "Noyseism Unveiled," Ch. VI ("Action of the Citizens of Putney – Proceedings of Public Meetings").

⁴⁹ G.W. Noyes, "The Putney Community," p. 338.

A December 25, 1847 letter to Noyes from Miller in Putney reported that, “Lydia, I understand, has given you up entirely, and with you her own revelations. Emma and Helen are opposed too. They do not go to meeting or call at either of the other houses. Mrs. [Achsah] Campbell calls on us occasionally.”⁵⁰

Events of 1848 made the Campbell sisters’ circumstances more difficult. First, both gave birth in Putney: Emma’s daughter Helen Emma Woolworth was born in June 1848, and Helen’s son Arthur G. Noyes was born in December, 1848. Second, Noyes announced that his followers should regroup near Oneida, New York, about 200 miles west of Putney. In early 1848 he visited the location, recommended by associates as a potential place to settle. He approved and purchased it, and during the summer and fall the large Oneida “Mansion House” was built. Noyes put out a “call to Oneida,” letting his followers know they should join him there. The “king-bee has lit, and the swarm is coming,” he wrote Cragin early that year, adding “the divine energy is pushing us forward.”⁵¹

During 1848 most of the Perfectionist “rear guard” migrated from Putney to Oneida. The Campbell sisters, however, held out. Both of their husbands, allied with Noyes, pressed them to make the move. Against these forces, by mid-1849 Helen was weakening. In a September 15, 1849 letter from Harriet Skinner (in Putney) to John Miller (in New York), Harriet wrote:

Today has been a victorious one for God over the power of Putney unbelief as it has been expressed in Helen’s feelings for the last two years. She has come out into a state of grateful submission to God and love for the Association and its principles . . . George expressed himself satisfied with the result of two years of conflict and suffering, and Noyes remarked “If you conquer the Campbell spirit, you have conquered the world.”⁵²

It appears that Helen was the first to agree to the move, and that ultimately Emma decided to accompany her sister. A September 22 letter from Miller in Putney to Oneida reports that, “Emma has decided to go with us next week, and is packing up her things. . . . Mrs.

⁵⁰ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” p. 349 (adding, “Most of the people here seem to be quite bitter against us”). During 1848-49 two adversaries – J.H. Noyes and Putney’s Rev. Hubbard Eastman of the Methodist Church, wrote competing books addressing Noyes’s ideas and conduct. Eastman published first, in 1849, with “Noyesism Unveiled – A History of the Sect Self-Styled Perfectionists, With a Summary View of their Leading Doctrines.” Eastman’s book sets forth a history of events, accompanied by outrage and commentary. A few months later Noyes published his “Report of the Oneida Association: Exhibiting its History, Principles, and Transactions to Jan. 1, 1849.” Noyes explained that his group was “devote[d] . . . exclusively to the establishment of the kingdom of God.” His book advances a dense and high-toned religious explanation of his beliefs, saying little about events in Putney.

⁵¹ G.W. Noyes, “The Putney Community,” Ch. 35 (“The Call to Oneida”).

⁵² G.W. Noyes, “Free Love in Utopia: John Humphrey Noyes and the Origin of the Oneida Community,” University of Illinois Press (2001), p. 59.

Campbell is going too.”⁵³ In late September 1849 Helen and Emma – each with a baby – moved from Putney to Oneida, New York, with their husbands and mother Achsah.⁵⁴

At Oneida, both Campbell sisters were confronted by Noyes’s “demand for total loyalty to his ideas and leadership.” He was the “supreme leader,” and those who questioned him were turned away.⁵⁵ The fact that Helen and Emma had abandoned Noyes for two years was a problem for him; both women were far too independent minded. On October 30, 1849 he wrote a “charge” accusing Emma Campbell of pride, “breach of covenant in regard to the use of her tongue,” and “disrespect and ingratitude toward me.” Noyes required the two sisters to make written statements and oral presentations to the community expressing contrition and commitment. As to Emma, he decreed that absent “a hearty confession and repentance,” she would be required to “withdraw from the fellowship of the church.”⁵⁶

Helen was the first to proffer a written statement in the form of a letter to her brother, Dr. John Campbell. In late 1849 Noyes published the letter in *The Spiritual Magazine* at Oneida, along with the letter Lucinda Lamb wrote her father in mid-1847 (referenced above). Noyes explained that “the object of the writers is to clear themselves from the reprobate spirit, which in Putney has so long tormented itself in impotent malice toward the truth and its representatives.”⁵⁷ Helen’s letter criticized her brother for trying to separate her from Noyes, and asserted that “the spirit that persecuted and drove Mr. Noyes and his followers from Putney is the same that crucified Christ.” She contended that God had “specially raised [Noyes] up to establish his Kingdom on earth.” Helen observed that her brother from late 1847 through 1849 had caused her to doubt Noyes and identify herself “again with what I call the Campbell spirit, which has in it the very essence of unbelief . . . and God-defying in its nature. It is also a proud and rebellious spirit. You [Dr. John Campbell] were a strong man in the world, I but a babe of a few weeks in Christ.”

Emma acquiesced in a January 15, 1850 letter to *The Spiritual Magazine*, “frankly confessing and rejecting my past errors.” She wrote that it was “the spirit of evil” that led her to war with the truth and her friends. “The excessive pride, which is natural to me, and a foolish sensitiveness to worldly honor, with other strong influences to which I was exposed (but which I now feel were no excuse), caused me in a time of temptation to abandon my faith. . . . I am now strengthened to cast off the spell of unbelief with which I have been bound. . . and

⁵³ G.W. Noyes, “Origin of the Oneida Community,” p. 60.

⁵⁴ Helen’s son died of Dysentery a few weeks after the 1849 move to Oneida. Neither Emma nor her Putney born daughter thrived at Oneida. Emma died at age 31 in 1855; her daughter died at age 23 in 1872. A second daughter born to Emma in 1850, Arabella Campbell Woolworth, lived until 1931.

⁵⁵ G.W. Noyes, “Origin of the Oneida Community,” p. xvii.

⁵⁶ G.W. Noyes, “Origin of the Oneida Community,” p. 62.

⁵⁷ *The Spiritual Magazine*, Vol II, Oneida Reserve, Jan. 10, 1850, pp. 361-64.

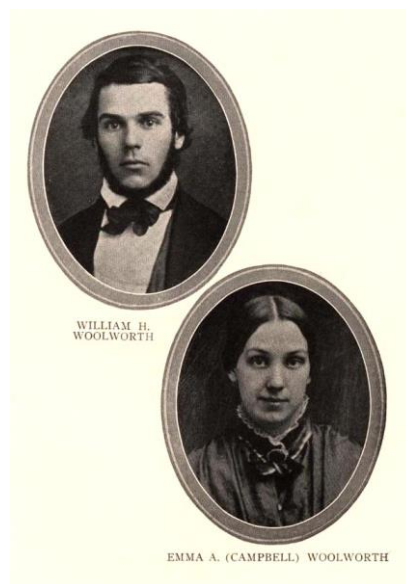
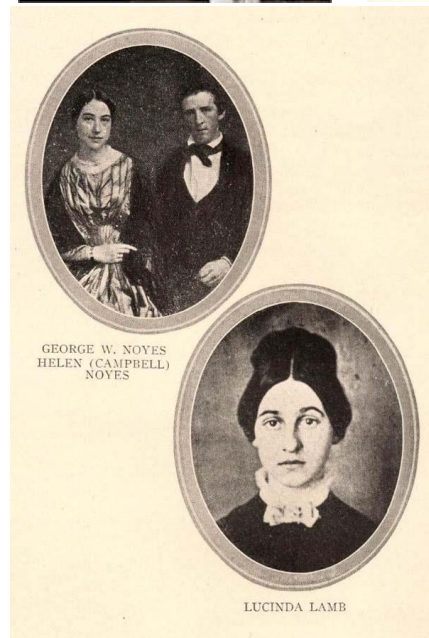
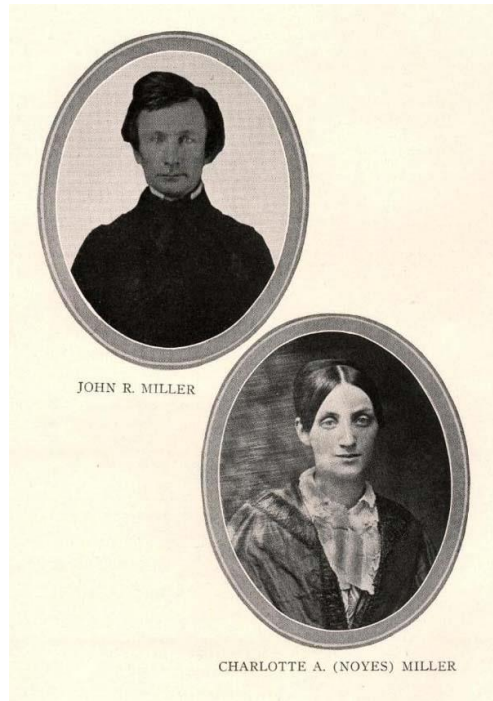
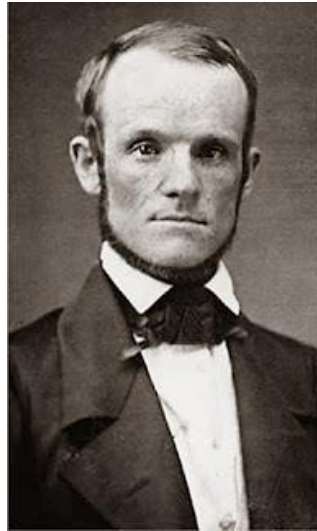
confess my belief of the righteous character of this Association.” Emma closed by asserting her “full confidence in J.H. Noyes as a spiritual teacher.”⁵⁸

In addition to these written statements, Noyes required the two Campbell sisters to stand and confess error before assembled Oneida residents. The Oneida Community Journal reported that on February 15, 1850, Emma “made her maiden speech” to the Oneida Association, “freely, boldly, warmly espousing this cause (our social theory), confessing her past wrong-doings, her present admiration for the truth, and her desire to serve it.” Helen made a similar “confession.”⁵⁹ With considerable effort Noyes had forced both sisters to bend the knee and surrender the “Campbell spirit.”⁶⁰

⁵⁸ G.W. Noyes, “Origin of the Oneida Community,” p. 66.

⁵⁹ G.W. Noyes, “Origin of the Oneida Community,” pp. 65-66.

⁶⁰ Lucinda Lamb escaped Noyes, due to the vigorous intervention of her parents. The 1849 catalogue of Saxton’s River Seminary lists her as a student, boarding in the same house as fellow students Seth and Alex Washburn (and one of the Crawford boys). In January 1848 Russell Lamb, represented by Putney attorney John Kimball, filed a lawsuit against Noyes and Miller for pursuing his minor daughter. G.W. Noyes, “Origin of the Oneida Community,” p. 17. A Windham County court document maintained by the Vermont State Archives & Records Administration indicates that from May 24 to August 4 1847 Lucinda lived with Noyes, his brother George, and John Miller, during which time those men were alleged to have “unlawfully and unjustly and for the purpose of procuring the seduction and prostitution of the said Lucinda enticed persuaded and procured the said Lucinda J. Lamb to depart” from her parents. After a trial in January 1850 judgement issued for Mr. Lamb, with damages of \$500 found against the defendants (equivalent to \$17,000 in 2022). G.W. Noyes, *supra*, p. 18. Hubbard Eastman’s 1849 book, “Noyesism Unveiled,” contains an appendix treating the “Case of Miss Lucinda J. Lamb,” asserting that the Noyes group aggressively pursued her, even after her father first moved her out of Putney to a home in Newfane, Vermont and ultimately “removed his daughter to an adjoining state.” The 1852 catalogue of Bradford Academy in Bradford, Massachusetts, lists Lucinda as a student in “the year ending July 9, 1852.”



Top: John Humphrey Noyes (left), and John R Miller and his wife Charlotte Noyes. Bottom: Helen Campbell with George Noyes, and Lucinda Lamb (left), and William Woolworth with Emma Campbell.

Achsah, Emma and Helen Campbell spent the remainder of their lives with the Oneida Community. All three women are buried in the Oneida Community Cemetery. The Oneida Community practiced the principles and teaching of J.H. Noyes for about 30 years.⁶¹ After

⁶¹ In late 1851 John Miller returned to Putney on behalf of Noyes to auction property left behind. He reported in *The Circular*, published at Oneida, that “a great change” had come over the town

Noyes died in 1886, the community abandoned “complex marriage” and other tenets of Bible Communism. Oneida gradually morphed into a manufacturer of flatware and dining implements.

Patty Washburn and her sons, along with the families of Dr. John Campbell and Uncle David Crawford (and the other area Campbell, Crawford and Washburn families in the 1840s), must have been astonished by the influence Noyes gained over multiple female relatives. In the small village of Putney, these families were woven together by generations of community leadership, social engagement and commitment to education, as well as long participation in the Congregational Church. The 1847-50 Noyes debacle inevitably caused many incensed and awkward family discussions, both with the family women joining the sect and with baffled family members in opposition. Helen Campbell was only a few years older than the older Washburn boys, and Lucinda Lamb was their contemporary and school-mate. It must have been nearly unfathomable to Patty and her sons that Achsah and Lucinda became Noyes intimates, the first named in a public adultery indictment, and the latter cohabitating with the Noyes’ inner circle (and the subject of a lawsuit and trial). Uncles David Crawford and Dr. John Campbell, the boys’ father figures, must have felt that Noyes was sorely abusing the widowed Achsah and the fatherless Campbell sisters. When the three women left Putney for Oneida in 1849, their families likely anticipated their return to sanity and Putney in the near future. But that was not to be.

A few months after Putney’s 1847 uproar, gold was discovered in California in early 1848. By the following year the Gold Rush was underway. Upon graduating from high school, most of Patty’s surviving sons did not hesitate to leave Putney for California.

since the “War of 1847” and that Noyes acolytes may want to consider returning. Miller asked townspeople to express their views on the subject. In response, on January 23, 1852 villagers met at the Congregational Church. On motion of David Crawford a committee was appointed to draft and report resolutions. The Committee consisted of David Crawford, Dr. John Campbell, John Kimball, Rev. Amos Foster, Israel Keyes, Rev. L. C. Dickinson, and Thomas White. A week later Dr. Campbell reported resolutions, which were adopted, stating that Miller’s report was inaccurate; that the people of Putney had not retracted their December 1847 resolutions; and that the Oneida group was not welcome in Putney unless they “retract their principles and reform their practices.” The *Brattleboro Eagle*, Feb. 12, 1852, p. 2; see also G.W. Noyes, “Origin of the Oneida Community,” pp. 149-150.