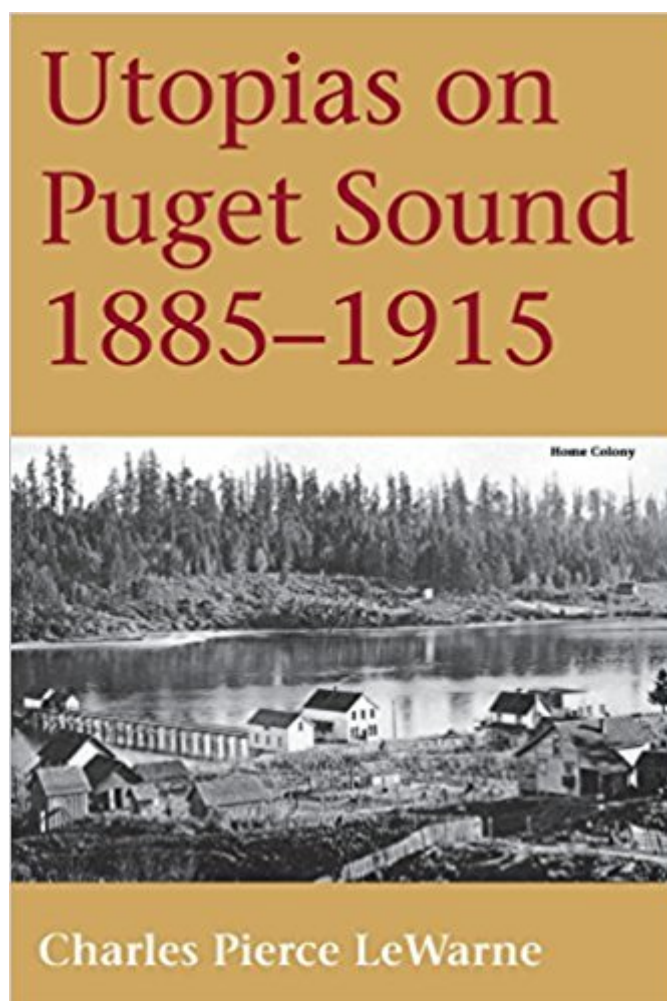


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Utopias On Puget Sound, 1885-1915



Synopsis

Postmaster General James A Farley's famous toast to the forty-seven states and the soviet of Washington introduces and sets the tone for this study of Washington State radicalism. The state's colorful reputation for radical movements was established in the 1920s and 1930s by free speech fights, strikes, strong labor organizations, and woman suffrage reforms. Charles LeWarne finds the roots of this radicalism in the communitarian experiments of the late nineteenth century. Through analyses of several of these experiments, LeWarne demonstrates that the influence of a coterie of liberals and radicals centered on Puget Sound in such communities as Home, Burley, Freeland, Equality, and Port Angeles was felt in the state long after the utopias they came to colonize had ceased to exist. Probably the most famous of the experiments was Home Colony on Joe's Bay near Tacoma. From a nucleus of three families, Home grew to over two hundred residents and lasted for more than twenty years. Its reputation for anarchism and flamboyance contributed to a jail sentence conviction for one editor of the Home newspaper for publishing an editorial called "The Nude and the Prudes." Readers interested in current social movements and lifestyles will find many enlightening parallels with recent communal attempts, particularly the rejection of traditional values and the belief in a perfectible world. Whatever the differences within individual colonies, the communitarian ideal has certain general characteristics that find their way into each of these attempts to form a perfect society. Historians will welcome this treatment of an important part of the social and cultural history of the area. The book contains a mine of previously scattered information on the subject. It is a delightful footnote to the history of the Puget Sound region.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dr. Charles Pierce LeWarne is a historian who seemingly specializes in the Washington area (e.g., see his book, *Washington State*). In this book, Dr. LeWarne focuses on an often-told tale---19th/20th century utopian communities---but rather than give a broad survey of a great deal of such communities, he concentrates on a 30-year period, and only five communities: The Puget Sound Co-Operative Colony; Equality Colony; Freeland; Burley Colony; and "Home." LeWarne notes at the beginning of the book, "Near the term of the present century, a half dozen of so communitarian experiments, commonly called utopian or socialist colonies, appeared near the inland waters of western Washington that embrace Puget Sound. Part of a long communitarian tradition and of a contemporary revival, they drew together radicals, reformers, and generally good and well-meaning people in a common search for a better life. The experiments disappeared, and their settlers merged forgotten into the general populace." His own observations are quite pertinent, and rather charmingly understated: e.g., "the persons attracted were not necessarily the most valuable workers; needing money, the colony accepted some who had the required fee but were not strong contributors thereafter." And "Ironically, the two most vocal defenders of free love at Home ... were in their seventies." In his conclusion, LeWarne notes, "The communitarian experiments of western Washington failed not only to achieve their grandest aspirations but also to maintain their very existence...."

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