

# A Tradition of Fine Silver Craftsmanship

To many, many thousands of Canadian women, the name "Community" on flatware is synonymous with distinguished design, beauty and quality.

Few, however, know the fascinating story behind "Community" since first it was manufactured by a little band of workers who, united in faith, sincerity and purpose, had founded their "Community" near Oneida, N.Y., over 100 years ago.

So that you may feel even more proud of your "Community", this little story has been prepared. It tells very briefly the dramatic story of the human effort and the conscientious craftsmanship behind the silverware which bears this famous name.

Most of the world's great movements have reached importance in their times and sphere through the strength and zeal of a far-sighted leader.

To such a man, John Humphrey Noyes, the Oneida Community owed its being and the story of its growth and development reads like a page of inspired fiction.

Noyes, a graduate of Yale Theological School, was more than a religious enthusiast, he was a man of courage and integrity who "thought through" the moral and spiritual problems of the day and inspired his followers with profound faith in the new Christian doctrine he preached — "Perfectionism".

Those were days of religious unrest and persecution, and eventually, in search of freedom, a small band of sturdy New England farmers and mechanics, with their families, followed Noyes to a secluded and pleasant valley in New York State and established there the association which became known as the "Oneida Community".

It was in March, 1848, when this pioneer group reached their new home, a disused log cabin formerly occupied by Indians. It was winter, and hardships and privation were to be their lot for a long time to come, yet every member faced the future with hope and cheerfulness and in complete agreement.

This simple quality of "Agreement" was the great strength of the community, the well-spring of tolerance and love that enabled its members to live in harmony as one family for thirty years, to eat at one table, to hold a common purse and to change the wilderness into a garden. In establishing this larger and better family Home, planned to both a Church and a practical school for the improvement of character, the Bible was a constant inspiration.

At first the Community expected to make its livelihood from the rich and fertile soil of the little valley, but markets were distant and hard to reach in those days and in straightened circumstances, the Community turned to manufacturing.

One of its members, Sewall Newhouse, had invented a wolf trap better and more efficient than any previously made. It attracted attention and trappers began to ask Newhouse to make more and more of them. Soon all the Community men, women and children, were engaged in making traps — a venture which proved to be tremendously success-

ful. Other activities were engaged in. Fruit was packed for the first time in glass jars. Sewing and embroidery silks, luggage, hardware, chains, were some of the other things manufactured and sold.

Of the many attempts to establish communities by various religious sects of that period, the Oneida association was almost the only one to maintain itself through its own endeavours. Word of its activities was carried far and wide through its own freely distributed publications and applications for admittance to the Community were many. Only those, who after searching examination, declared themselves willing to work and live unselfishly for the common good, were accepted as members.

As the years passed, a large and beautiful Mansion House was built; added to and enlarged again and again. The work of the Community was now too much for the members alone to carry on and it became necessary to bring in help from outside. New factories were opened, hundreds of workers engaged and kept busy.

Life at Oneida was full of activity, yet serene and harmonious. Each person, even children at an early age, had their particular job to do in the work a day life of the Community. Those with special aptitudes were put at work in which they could use their ability to best advantage. Each day closed with an evening meeting in the great hall of the Mansion House where the cares of the day were laid aside and entertainment and instruction combined in an atmosphere of cheerful friendliness.

The children of the Community were cared for in the Children's House, educated by teachers from among the members and watched over the solicitous care by nurses and guardians. As the children grew up many of the young men were sent to the best New England colleges, while the young women who showed special ability were sent to New York to take finishing courses. Literature, science, art and music were cultivated and life was rich and full.

In 1877 the Community turned to the making of table flatware, the first step in building the business now internationally famous. On invitation from the Council of Niagara Falls, New York, a factory was established there at the source of cheap power. Later another factory was started across the river at Niagara Falls, Canada.

It has always been the creed of the Community to make "Only the Best". With this as the standard for the products of this new endeavor, it is not surprising that "Community" in time, became well and favourably known, a familiar name . . . hallmark of the highest quality in silverplate.

In 1880, by common agreement, the Oneida Community closed the great experiment which it had begun nearly forty years before. In that year it was incorporated as a joint stock company, with the stock divided among its members in proportion to the number of years' service which each had contributed to creating the wealth of the community. All, women and men, were comfortably provided for and the entire property of the community was divided without the loss of a dollar in litigation, a demonstration of the harmony which prevailed among the members.