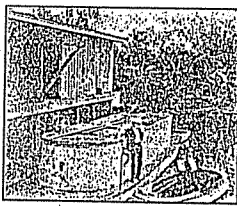


# Today

Feature Editor • Anita Alesina • 253-5311

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# The Man and his Community




The founder's house on the settlement.

Story by Jean Rademacher

**I**N 1880, A MORAVIA RESIDENT, Dr. Cyrus Teed took the name "Korosh," a biblical translation for Cyrus, and founded a utopian-religious community.

He called his movement, the Koroshan Unity Settlement, vestiges of which can be seen and studied in Estero, Fla.

His father, Jesse Teed, owned a small business in Moravia, which he turned over to his son for the colony. The venture failed, the converts left, but Teed tried establishing colonies around the state from Syracuse to New York City, and eventually Chicago before moving to Florida in 1894. The Florida property was donated by a German settler, Gustav Dankohler.

Teed, one of eight children, of Jesse and Sarah Ann Tuttle Teed, was born in Delaware County in 1839. He grew up near Utica and served as an apprentice to his physician uncle, prior to joining the Union Army. He graduated from the New York Eclectic Medical College in 1868.

It was while working in his laboratory in 1869, that Dr. Teed, had his vision, a revelation he called a "divine illumination." He believed that the Bible was written in symbols, that life is cellular and that the earth is a hollow sphere with the sun as an electro-magnet in the center.

Jane Hogg, a volunteer at the Koroshan State Historic Site in Estero, Florida, said his vision implored him to "lead the people back to true Christianity."

Hogg said it must have been difficult for the city people to leave their cosmopolitan Chicago life for the humid, hot, snake and mosquito infested "wilderness" that was Florida. But they went, nevertheless. The followers brought their possessions, including musical instruments and books via train, steamer and finally a sloop up the Estero River to their new home. Today, the art hall dealers musical and scientific instruments, artifacts and paintings, many by the founder's son, an artist of note — Douglas Arthur Teed.

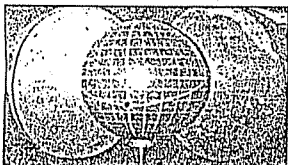
The Koroshan Unity was founded upon the ideas of communal living and property. Whiskey, tobacco, profanity were not tolerated. Women were in charge of many activities in the community, but business dealings with outsiders, was handled by men. There were several levels of membership in the community including a celibate group.

Teed believed in education. Children attended school in the morning, and in the afternoon, worked as messengers or at vocational "jobs" at the settlement. Community businesses included a print shop, bakery, boat-building business, machine shop, saw mill, post office and store where they sold vegetables, fruits and jams and jellies they made. Community members had the capacity to make 600 loaves of bread a day. While most of the bread was used within the community, some was sold at the settlement store, the only store between Naples and Fort Myers.

"They were very enterprising, and had their own generated power supply, alerting the community to start up and shut off of power by ringing a bell," Hogg said.

Adults attended art, doctrine and other lectures. All were encouraged to study music and participate in theatricals. They presented concerts and plays to which the

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Dr. Cyrus Teed, who believed he was immortal, died in 1908 at 69.

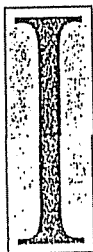
Photos provided

The Koroshan Unity, Inc. publishes an eight-page, biannual paper, "The American Eagle," which is dedicated to the Preservation of Koroshan History. The Eagle flies in April and October and features news, history and happenings about the Koroshan Unity and Koroshan State Historic Site. A subscription is \$5, write P.O. Box 97, Estero, Fla., 33928.



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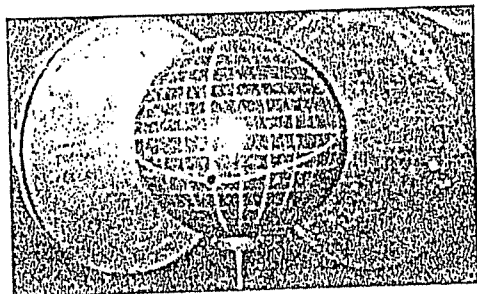
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## Community: A way of life

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public was invited.

The gardens — vegetable, fruit orchards and ornamental plantings were carved out of mangroves, scrub oaks and pines.

They exchanged seeds and plants with horticulturists to develop their idea of the Garden of Eden. Through the years, much has been lost to fire, flood or has been reclaimed by nature but among the remaining plantings are camphor and monkey puzzle trees. The latter, originally from Australia, are reportedly the tallest in the U.S.

"Dr. Teed believed in planting for soul and body. It is beautiful to work here, something is always blooming," Hogg said.

Teed, who believed he was immortal, died in 1908 at 69. Without their leader, membership declined and in 1961, the four remaining members of the Koreshan Unity decided 305 acres to the state of Florida to be used as a park. Several of the original buildings remain, and the state has been

reconstructing and restoring the settlement, located on Route 41.

Rangers and volunteers guide tours through the park, which, in addition to the settlement and its gardens, includes a campground, fishing and boating, picnic areas and a nature trail.

Across Route 41 from the state historic site is a building housing the Koreshan Unity Foundation, Inc. Jo Bigelow is president and Evelyn Horne is her assistant. Lecture tours are available by appointment. Twice a year, in April and October, festivals are held here.

"We have more than 100 years of records, plus artifacts, books, photographs, and furniture here," Mrs. Bigelow said. Surviving fire and flood, the community will note its centennial in January 1994.

Mrs. Horne says her grandfather and father heard the charismatic Dr. Teed lecture in San Francisco. They journeyed to Chicago to join the community and then moved to Estero.

She recalls her grandfather was in charge of fishing. "When the boats returned to the settlement, the women

would rush to the river, quickly clean and cook the fish because there was no refrigeration."

"My father told stories about settlement hunting trips for deer and turkey, which were plentiful at the time. My brother Charles learned the printing business here," she said. She remembers that the ladies would go for boat rides in their white, starched gowns.

As a youngster, Mrs. Horne attended concerts, lectures and poetry readings in the art hall, every Sunday.

Mrs. Horne, now 70, cared for the five remaining members until the last,

Hedwig Mitchell who had come from Germany, died in 1982.

The Koreshans chose a difficult life, a life they believed in. A glimpse of that life is preserved in Southern Florida.

If you can't travel to Estero, Florida, contact former town of Niles historian and former Cayuga-Owasco Lakes Historical Society president, Mrs. Mable Crosby now of Boyle Center. Mrs. Crosby has researched the Teed family. Or contact the Cayuga-Owasco Lakes Historical Society in Moravia.