



## Zoar Village

Topic Guide for Chronicling America (<http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov>)

### Introduction

An experiment in communal living, Zoar Village was founded in 1817 by German Separatists seeking religious freedom. The group of 200 people, led by Joseph Baumeler (later Bimeler), purchased 5500 acres of land along the Tuscarawas River to start a new way of life. After a rough start, the Zoarites eventually became virtually self-sustaining and prosperous. In the 1820s, the Zoarites were contracted by the State of Ohio to build the portion of the Ohio and Erie Canal that crossed their land. They were able to use the money they earned to pay off their loans earlier than expected and increase the community's wealth. Joseph Baumeler's death in 1853 left the community without a spiritual leader, and as the younger generation left to pursue their own fortunes and religious orthodoxy decreased, the society slowly began to fall apart. In 1898, it was dissolved with each remaining member receiving 50 acres of land and \$200. Although Zoar Village is still standing, it was named on the 2012 National Trust for Historic Preservation's Most Endangered Historic Places list.

### Important Dates

- 1817: Zoar Village is founded in eastern Ohio.
- 1828: Zoarites completed work on a portion of the Ohio and Erie Canal.
- February 3, 1832: The Society of Separatists of Zoar was incorporated under Ohio law.
- 1834: An outbreak of cholera claims the lives of 56 Zoarites (one-sixth of the population).
- 1884: A railroad station is established near Zoar, allowing outsiders easy access to the colony.
- 1898: The Society is dissolved.
- 1901: President William McKinley spends the afternoon in Zoar Village.

### Suggested Search Strategies

- Try the following terms in combination (as an "all" word search), proximity or as phrases: Zoar, colony, village, German, Separatists, Tuscarawas, Zoarite, society, communist, Joseph Baumeler.
- Use specific date ranges when looking for articles in order to narrow your results.
- Search newspapers in all states, not just Ohio. Zoar Village captured the curiosity of all states.

### Sample Articles from Chronicling America

- "[Strange Colony](#)" *St. Paul Daily Globe* (St. Paul, MN), February 1, 1895, Image 7, col. 1-2.
- "[Windup of an Experiment](#)" *Kansas City Journal* (Kansas City, MO), February 27, 1898, Image 20, col. 1-2.
- "[The Last Days of Zoar](#)" *Sun* (New York, NY), April 25, 1898, Image 8, col. 1-2.
- "[Hidden Wisdom of 'The Hermit of Zoar'](#)" *St. Louis Republic* (St. Louis, MO), September 14, 1902, Image 39.
- "[Former Communists of Zoar in Their Freedom](#)" *Stark County Democrat* (Canton, OH), October 19, 1906, Image 2-3.