

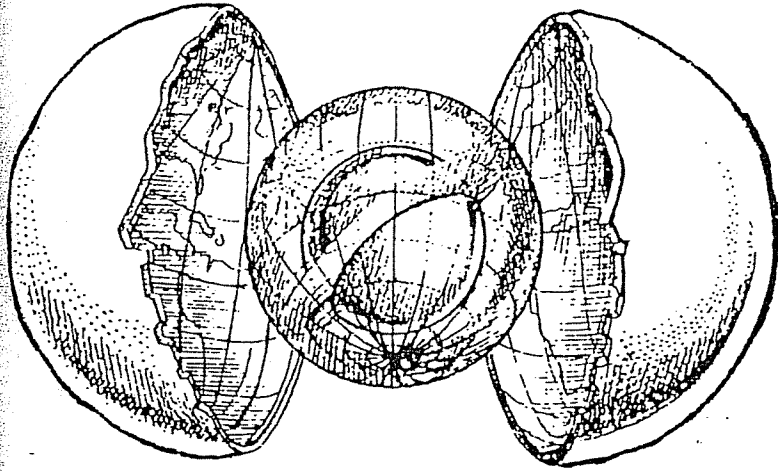
THE AMAZING DR. TEED AND  
HIS OUTSIDE IN WORLD

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## THE AMAZING DR. TEED AND HIS OUTSIDE-IN WORLD

It was close to midnight one autumn evening in 1869 and Dr. Cyrus Reed Teed had been experimenting in his electrochemical laboratory in Utica, New York. He sat back to review the results of his studies. Many years later, he wrote: "I believed that in the knowledge of transmutation was concealed the key...which would unlock and disclose the mystery of that vital law potent in its efficacy to mitigate the suffering incident to the ravages of disease...I had succeeded (previous to this night) in transforming matter of one kind to its equivalent 'energy' through polaric influence, to matter of another kind."

He followed these unsubstantiated claims with a description of an experience that transformed his life. This started with a relaxation of the back part of his brain and a buzzing tension in the forehead, followed an out-of-body experience in which he heard a sweet voice saying that he had been nurtured throughout countless embodiments from the lowest to the highest and that his time had come. He saw a vision of purple and gold which began to separate into two hemispheres. In the upper part appeared a rainbow set with twelve diamonds. Then appeared a beautiful female form, clothed in purple and gold with an exquisite 'chiseled' (sic) face; her luxuriant golden hair fell over her shoulders. This apparition spoke to Dr. Teed, telling him that she had chosen

The late  
Peg (Eleanor) Hassett <sup>was</sup> ~~has~~  
been a member of the Board  
of Trustees of Oneida County  
Historical Society for ten  
years, two of them as president. She was a  
retired chemistry teacher, mother of 3 boys, a  
world traveler, and a fine amateur photographer.  
She and her late husband Tom, a fellow RR buff  
who was retired from GE Utica's microfilm lab,

visited every continent except Antarctica (because there are  
no railroads there). Great people and sorely missed.

him to redeem the race and that the way would be a weary pilgrimage. He was given to understand that victory over death would be achieved, but not for him,-----others would reap the benefit. Before she left the vision confirmed that she was the great Mother, and along with the Father and the Son, was the highest majesty.

Dr. Teed returned to his house on Fayette Street at half past two. After sleeping for two hours, he was awakened by the noise of a great rushing followed by the sound of great wings flying and of chariot wheels turning. This succession of sounds was repeated twice more and then came a still small voice giving him the revelation of the mystery of immortal life.

Something had happened to Dr. Teed. The next day, his cousin, Myron Baldwin, saw him standing in an aura of mystic light and spoke a blessing on him. Also, Mrs. Baldwin had seen two cherubim in her dining room just before the two men arrived for dinner.

Cyrus Teed was born October 18, 1839 in the hamlet of Teedsville on Trout Creek in Delaware County, New York, the second of eight children born to Jesse and Sarah Ann Tuttle Teed. In his early childhood, his family moved to New Hartford, New York, and lived next door to his grandfather Oliver Tuttle. Here Cyrus went to school; perhaps he worked on the Erie Canal at the age of ten. In this area, the 'burned over' district of upstate New York, young Cyrus was exposed to the intense and emotional Baptist brand of revivalism, since grandfather Tuttle was a leader in the

newly formed Baptist church of the village. Equally dogmatic varieties were practiced by the Methodists and Presbyterians. It was in this area that the Shakers, Mormons, Millerites and Perfectionists were started and prospered for at least a few years. There were other, more ephemeral groups. Friends and neighbors urged Cyrus to follow the ministry because of his fine manner of speaking but he was attracted to medicine and started studying with his uncle Dr. Samuel Teed. In 1859, Cyrus married Delia Ann Rowe and their son, Douglas Arthur, was born the following year.

When the Civil War broke out, Cyrus had moved his family to New York City, where he enlisted in the 127th New York Infantry and served for fifteen months. He was discharged from Alexandria, Virginia for 'disability'. In 1867, he attended the Eclectic Medical College of New York and graduated in 1868. The following year he started a joint practice with Samuel Teed in Utica.

However, there may have been a detour on the way to a medical degree. A report datelined Hamilton (New York) and published at the time of Dr. Teed's death in 1908 states: "In 1867, Dr. Teed suddenly appeared in Hamilton, representing himself as a single man just from the University of Ann Arbor Michigan. He was the possessor of an extraordinary knowledge of anatomy and soon found employment in the office of Dr. Kimberly. He made himself a social favorite in the village in an almost incredibly short time, but in a few weeks after his arrival here, Dr. Kimberly received a communication from a lady claiming to be the abandoned wife of

Dr. Teed and enclosing a snapshot photograph of a man in prison garb taken through the grated window of a cell. When confronted with the communication and the picture, Dr. Teed acknowledged that the photograph was a likeness of himself and immediately left town and went to Trenton, where he opened a photographic studio, but became involved in serious trouble there and next appeared before the public as a M.D. in Utica. since which his history is known." It should be noted here that George Teed, probably one of Cyrus's brothers, is listed in the 1965 Utica Directory as a photographer. The story may be a case of confused identity after so many years, or it may be entirely inaccurate.

It is relatively easy to trace Dr. Teed's career from the time he joined his uncle. The office at the corner of Columbia and Seneca Streets was distinguished by a large sign plainly visible from Genesee Street, reading "HE WHO DEALS IN POISON DEALS IN DEATH" or something similar. Dr. Teed did not prescribe drugs; an examination of the records of a drugstore a half block from the office shows no prescriptions written by this doctor.

The Utica Daily Press of December 28, 1908 reported the following: "The two had an office on the second floor of the Wells House on the corner of Seneca and Columbia Streets in Utica. Their medical school was one of their own, a mixture of medicine and religion, and it accomplished the purpose for which it was designed---to make money. To show that they had no faith in drugs, the Teeds put out a sign with the inscription HE WHO DEALS OUT POISON DEALS

OUT DEATH. It was a large sign extending clear across the front of the building. The first floor of the building was occupied by a saloon by a man who had formerly been a policeman. And the public reading the sign applied it not to the medical methods of the Teeds but to the dispensing of beverages on the first floor, and the boys around town had a good laugh at the expense of the saloon keeper. The Teeds got more notoriety through that sign than in any other way, and it all helped business for both occupants of the building." Again, the account is not contemporary with the event.

It is not known whether the midnight vision or 'intellectual illumination' of that autumn night caused a rift between the partners, but Cyrus had a separate office on Genesee Street in 1870; this is listed in the city Directory for that year only. Samuel continued at the first office until his death in 1888.

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**CYRUS R. TEED, M. D.**  
**Physician & Surgeon,**

**Office,—169 Genesee Street, Utica,**

**(OVER BUCKINGHAM & KETCHUM'S MUSIC STORE.)**

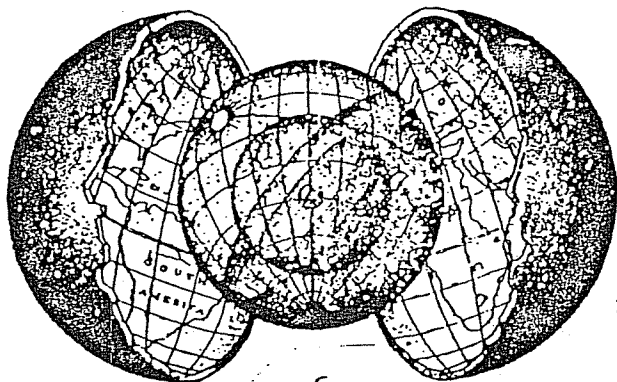
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After the revelation,. Dr. Teed began to ponder his ideas on the nature of the universe. These were collected and published in later years under the

# title CELLULAR COSMOGONY.

It appears that Dr. Teed believed that human beings are the final product of the evolution of God's plan; this being true, it logically follows that God would never permit so many unanswered questions and uncertainties that the accepted Copernican (heliocentric) theory leaves in doubt. A good, beneficent God would arrange a neat, comprehensible universe.

From this premise, Dr. Teed postulated a sphere composed of twelve metallic layers (gold on the outside), seven mineral layers, and an inner geologic strata that is habitable. These layers comprise the rind of the material universe, the inner shell of which is concave. The ratio of curvature of this sphere is eight inches to the mile, thus giving a diameter of eight thousand miles and a circumference of about 25,000 miles. Within this sphere are three gaseous layers; nearest the habitable portion is a mixture of oxygen and nitrogen, then a layer of hydrogen and in the center something called 'aboron'. All of the stars are within this great sphere and the sun is at the



center. The sun has a light and a dark side accounting for day and night and moves in a slightly helical pattern accounting for seasons. The moon and planets are reflections of ultra electromagnetic waves.

This sphere is a cell and all inorganic and living material has a cellular form, as well as physiological, psychic and social structures. Only the concept of the spherical cell is developed in any detail.

As one of the first principles of knowledge, the law of gravity is the first law of formation or creation and is the product of the union of heat and light; the body is the product of love and wisdom, the two corresponding substances of mind.

To add religion to Dr. Teed's grand theory, he states that the sun's precessional period is 24,000 years long. Twenty four thousand years before the beginning of the Christian era, conditions in the world were the same as then. God was manifest in the flesh and the Lord of the Christians was identical with the 'Adzmic' personality in the beginning of the 24,000 year cycle. The end and beginning of every grand cycle brings into manifestation the Son of God who is Father, Mother and Son.

Not suprisingly. the leaders and members of the established churches were astonished and suspicious of such unusual reasoning, and the majority of Utics agreed with them. Dr. Teed left the area and tried to practice medicine in several small towns to support his family. It was difficult to maintain a viable practice while preaching a

revolutionary doctrine. He started calling himself "Koresh", the Hebrew translation of Cyrus. His sister Emma and probably his wife were loyal supporters, although Mrs. Teed's health failed and she went to live with her sister until she died in 1885. This separation led to rumors of neglect and serious marital problems

Late in the summer of 1879, Dr. Teed gathered his followers and established the first Koreshan community in Moravia, New York. His father had started a small manufacturing business there that he may have intended to turn over to the group. After two years the colony failed, and the members returned to their homes. Dr. Teed went to Syracuse, where it was reported that he claimed to be the prophet spoken of in Isaiah xiv:12. Here his brother Oliver joined him in medical practice.

The Utica Daily Observer of August 11, 1884 reported: "The office does a lucrative business, although of only a few years standing. Among the doctor's patients was Mrs. Charles Cobb, member of Plymouth Congregational Church, who was suffering from nervous prostration and who charges the alleged prophet with obtaining money from her and from her mother, Mrs. Willis of Camden, under the plea that he is the 'second Christ'...(and that) when he is 46 he will be translated to heaven, whence he will return in 54 days to found a kingdom where all will be love. By love is meant only mind love of the greatest purity and elevation...While living in Moravia he was the head of a society similar to the Oneida Community, and

it is claimed, eloped with the wife of a livery stable keeper in that place. He is also charged with obtaining money under false pretenses and is liable to arrest at any time. It is said that his claims are indorsed (sic) by the pastor of a Methodist church in Syracuse." This story was also carried by the Syracuse papers and the New York Times. In later years, Dr. Teed was named in several lawsuits alleging sexual misconduct.

That same year, Dr. Teed decided to move on to New York City, hoping that he would be appreciated in the more liberal and sophisticated area. This did not happen but he stayed there until he received an invitation to address the National Convention of Mental Science in Chicago; this was arranged by one of his followers. He was very well received, and actually was so impressive that he was elected president of that organization. He conducted mental healing sessions which drew caustic comments from the medical profession, but attracted several eager adherents who were so influenced by his miraculous cures that they gathered around him.

The first Koreshan Unity house was at 33rd Place and Cottage Avenue in Chicago; as the movement grew larger quarters were found in Washington Heights. In 1893, the colony numbered 126 persons. Even after a permanent home was established in Florida, the Chicago branch continued for several years. Other groups formed in San Francisco, Baltimore, New York, Oregon, Massachusetts and Tennessee. Dr. Teed traveled all over the country lecturing and finding new converts. The

Clinton Courier (Clinton, New York) reported on December 14, 1898: "The Reverend Ure Mitchell, a prominent Universalist minister, has been in town the past week selling a peculiar book advocating the theory that we live on the inside of the earth. Book published by Dr. Cyrus R. Teed of Chicago, formerly of Utica,"

Dr. Teed received good reviews too. The Pittsburgh Leader answered his critics by stating: "If Dr. Teed does not practice his teaching, if he is seeking personal gain for personal ends, if he loves his subjects with a more earthly than platonic love, he is the most consummate, polished and best educated rogue the world has ever produced...He says that as soon as his system of government prevails, which will be within ten years, he will build a six track railroad between the Atlantic and Pacific coasts in one year, employing a million men in its work. He will also construct a pneumatic passenger way across the continent as well which will carry one to San Francisco in twelve hours; the cars will run without wheels. More wonderful than all, Dr. Teed says that one of his members in the Chicago office has a device whereby he can, from the desk in that office in Chicago, set the type for every newspaper in the country by wire and that an application for a patent is now on file in Washington."

A decision was made to found a 'New Jerusalem' in the frontier area of Florida where it was hoped the group would not suffer misunderstanding and persecution. Dr. Teed and three female companions went to inspect property for sale.

Finding it beyond their financial means, they returned to Chicago but left some Koreshan tracts in the Punta Gorda station. Gustav Damkohler found them.

Gustav Damkohler was a native of Germany who went first to Australia to mine gold; finding none, he came to America and settled in Missouri where he married and started a family. He then moved to the Fort Myers area of Florida, which was a remote frontier at the time. Seeking still more isolation, he explored the Estero River and found good land along its banks. As he was considering the possibilities of the area, he heard a voice say "Take and dress until the Lord comes". He followed instructions, acquiring more than 300 acres by homesteading and purchase; there he buried his wife and five of their six children. Occasionally he sailed to Punta Gorda for supplies and mail and on one particular day he found the Koreshan tracts in the railroad station. They made a deep impression on him; he wrote to Dr. Teed who went back to Florida with his followers to inspect the property. The party stayed six weeks and made arrangements to buy most of the acreage. Damkohler became a devoted member of the community; later he and his son went hunting gold in Alaska where he died.

What kind of man could lead educated, reputedly well-to-do people from urban surroundings to a pioneer existence in a subtropical wilderness? Of course, Dr. Teed was dynamic, forceful, convincing and had a strong character.





As described in contemporary accounts, he was about five feet six inches tall, weighed about 165 pounds and possessed tremendous energy. His brown eyes were bright and lustrous, his hair was worn combed back and he was clean shaven, except during a few youthful years. His walk and gestures were graceful, his voice was deep and resonant---he occasionally spoke with more energy than necessary. He always dressed formally, usually with a frock coat and a generous white tie.

Followers of Koresh envisioned a commonwealth conforming to ancient Christian beliefs. The governing structure consisted of 'orders'. The highest order, the leaders, were to be

celibate and to live in the community buildings. Lower orders were to live in the surrounding territory as families. Their children would assure the continuation of the community. They all believed that their new home would eventually house ten million people and they used concepts of city planning and ecology long before these were employed elsewhere. New Jerusalem was Florida's first planned community. Avenues were to be broad and parks filled with fruit and nut trees. Telephone and telegraph wires were to be underground (electricity was not available) and perpetually moving platforms were to convey debris and offal to composting sites. Dr. Teed declared: "There will be no dumping of the public waste into the rivers, bays and gulfs. The waters will never be allowed to be rendered impure by such a barbarous method of disposing of public waste".

The settlers built a thriving community with large buildings for the leaders, other housing, a boatyard, general store, concrete factory, publishing house, bakery and whatever else was needed. They had citrus groves and other tropical fruits and they planted a locally famous botanical garden. Not all of this was accomplished during Dr. Teed's lifetime.

Their diet was supplemented by fish from the river, shellfish from the bay, cattle from their own herd, eggs, chicken and turkey from their flocks; their honey was famous throughout southern Florida. A major drawback was the 'sulfur' water from deep artesian wells. It was drawn in the evening and allowed to stand overnight to allow some of the unpleasant odors to escape. They worked very hard,



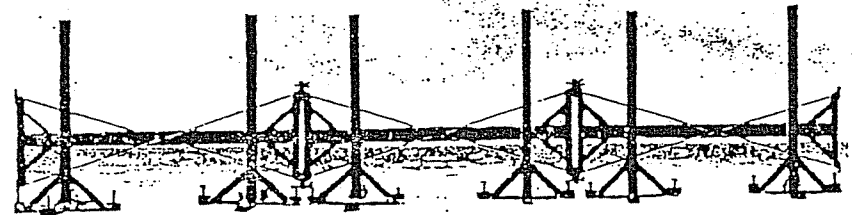
and while it may sound almost idyllic, it was not. Life was made harder by the multitude of stinging, biting insects and the abundance of 'creepy crawlies'.

One woman remembered many of the hardships. She had arrived as a child in 1908 and recalled years later: "I cannot forget the white cornmeal mush which was a daily staple for breakfast. Then for supper it was put in the oven slathered with lard to warm...it was not one of my favorites. Vegetables were not as available as they are now..meat was scarce as the Unity depended on their cows as a milk source and seldom butchered for meat. At a proper time of year we had turtle meat. We had lots of honey, so much so that it spoiled in the extreme heat of summer. Sunday supper was two molasses cookies and a cup of tea." A realization of these hardships may have been the inspiration for Dr. Teed's frequent talks on diet--how people eat more than necessary for health and the success of the Japanese who thrive on rice and a bit of dried fish.

As hard as life was. the Koreshans did not neglect the social side. They had a band and an orchestra; they produced plays, gathered for picnics, and even took vacations. Children went to school two and a half hours daily and then helped with the work, apprenticing in various activities. Dr. Teed was a great raconteur; they all loved to listen to his stories. Twice yearly there were elaborate celebrations. The Solar Festival in October was in honor of Dr. Teed's birthday and the Lunar Festival in the spring was for Victoria Gratia (formerly Mrs. Annie Ordway), president

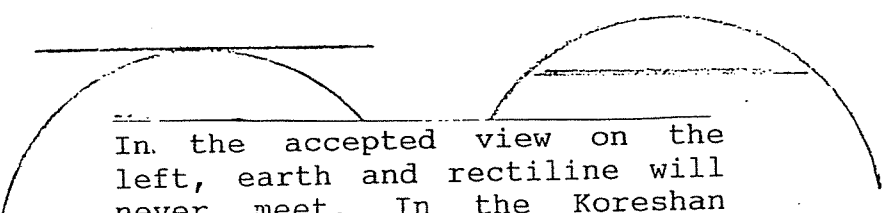
of the Unity and generally regarded as Dr. Teed's special assistant. Women shared in the governing of the group. The festivals are still held on the original site. However, there is no mention of Christmas or Easter.

One of the attractions of Florida was the existence of long straight beaches. On one beach near Naples, Koreshans hoped to demonstrate to all the concavity of the earth which was the basis of all their beliefs. A device called the Rectilineator was designed. Perpendicular standards were placed at points where there was a quiet expanse of water; across these standards the bar of the rectilineator was lined up with the distant horizon of relatively still water. From the first placement the 'rectiline' was extended slowly until it met the water at a distance proportional to the height of the standard.



For eight weeks, very careful extension of the line was carried out. After four miles, the line projected into the water. This proved to the great satisfaction of all Koreshans that the earth was concave. A complete list of operators, observers and all of the data is given

in the CELLULAR COSMOLOGY. And according to Koreshan belief, if the earth was concave, the whole system was correct.



In the accepted view on the left, earth and rectiline will never meet. In the Koreshan version, they will.

But visionaries and their visions are frequently misunderstood. Derogatory statement appeared in the Fort Myers newspapers. Not only was th Unity a closely knit community, but it controlled much property. As converts joined, they turned over all of their property, including any acquired by homesteading. Thus the Unity controlled many hundreds of acres. Small wonder that the local people felt threatened. Dr. Teed did not profit from this; he had incorporated the Unity under the laws of New Jersey, naming himself as Prime Counselor. Business affairs were in the hands of a Board of Trustees which included women---women had equal rights and powers with the men in the colony.

Then there were political differences. The colonists were mostly Republicans from the north and thus were barred in voting in Democratic primaries, and the Democratic nomination was tantamount to election in the south of those times. The Koreshans decided to take action. By using their band to attract crowds and using loudspeakers to address the crowds once assembled, they conducted several rallies around the county. Local Democrats became very alarmed; members of the Unity often discussed their choices before elections

and tended to cast their ballots as a block (men only, of course). At this time, Fort Myers was a rough cowtown where cattle were driven down the main street for shipment to Cuba. Niceties of the election process were largely disregarded.

Carl Carmer, in his book DARK TREES TO THE WIND relates the following incident as told to him by a Koreshan friend who took part. Carmer's friend was walking on the main street of Fort Myers with another young member of the Unity. Nearing the center of town, they saw a big burly man in a broad brimmed Stetson hat walk up to a smaller man and speak to him. Apparently upset by the reply, the big man struck the smaller on the head three times, knocking him to the ground. The attack was on Dr. Teed, and the young witnesses went to the doctor's defense. The big man was knocked down. Since he was the town marshall, the Koreshans were forced to go to the police station, where bitter words were exchanged, before they were released. In less sympathetic accounts, this was described as a street brawl.

Dr. Teed was seriously hurt. He had been predicting his death at the hands of a "people who profess the religion of Jesus the Christ of God" but none of his followers believed him. After many months of severe pain, Dr. Teed died at a Koreshan settlement on Estero Island (now known as Fort Hyers beach) on December 22, 1908. His devoted people, remembering his teachings of immortality, demanded that his body be given the opportunity of renewing itself. The body lay in state, fast decaying

in a midwinter heat spell until the Fort Myers authorities ordered burial. A sturdy concrete tomb was erected on Estero Island, the body placed inside and the tomb sealed. Some believers tried to break into the tomb to prove that the body had dematerialized inside and materialized again outside, so a guard was posted. A dozen years later, people heard the noise of a great wind rushing. Some say it was followed by the sound of great wings flapping and the noise of chariot wheels turning. When the sounds ceased there was no trace of the tomb or of the remains of the great Koresh.

The Utica Daily Press used the notice of Dr. Teed's death to publish titillating rumors about the Chicago period. There, the paper claimed, a Koreshan 'heaven' had been established where men 'angels' and women 'angels' all lived together. Three days later the vice president of the Koreshan University, a man from Bristol, Tennessee, was given space to deny that Dr. Teed was dead. that he ever was considered a Messiah, and also, that everyone expected his resurrection.

Despite wild stories and rumors, it appears that Dr. Teed had built his community well. After his death, a few people left, including Victoria Gratia, the second in command. But most of the people stayed at Estero and kept the development going as had been planned. The directors in charge of the business affairs were able to sell off property gradually for the benefit of the group. Children grew up and went away to school,

but some returned after careers in other areas. The American Eagle, started as a political paper in the campaign of 1906, changed over the years into a horticultural journal specializing in subtropical trees and plants. Koreshans were among the first adventurers to cross Florida by car on what was to become the Tamiami Trail (Route 41). Since this road went right by the general store, the colony prospered. As traffic increased, the Unity established a gas station and for years, some of the women ran a tea room. But the core of the group was celibate and the children of the lower orders who were to continue the group never appeared.

When Carl Carmer visited in 1948, there were twelve members of the Unity living on the Estero site. The oldest was Emma Teed, sister of the founder and aged 93. In charge was Hedwig Michel.

Hedwig Michel lived in Frankfurt, Germany where she had a school for Jewish children. One of the instructors she hired, a young American, converted her to Koreshanity. After the Nazis came to power, no Jew was safe in Germany and Hedwig came to America, losing all her property to robbers on the journey. In spite of the poverty resulting she was allowed to come to Estero, where she was able to guard the colony's assets and care for the old people. The numbers dwindled; when there were four people left on the Board of Directors, they voted to turn the property over to the state of Florida for a park. Hedwig fought to have the gift accepted and was finally successful. She was the last Koreshan to live there and hers is the only grave on the property.

The original buildings are now being restored; visitors can see the Art Hall where there are several paintings by Douglas Arthur Teed, Koresh's son. There are also the Planetary Court, the Founder's House, the Damkohler cottage, bakery, machine shop and others.

A small campground has been laid out on the property and the Estero River is a canoe route for all to enjoy (don't disturb the manatees!) Across Route 41, now largely superseded by an Interstate, the Koreshan Unity lives on as an organization devoted to keeping the ideas of Dr. Cyrus Teed Reed alive. There is a museum and library and festive activities are directed by the president, Mrs. Jo Bigelow, and a Board of Directors. The American Eagle is published semiannually and each issue has material from the earlier period.

Cyrus Reed Teed was a remarkable man who combined good sense with a very different vision of the world we live in. He was not a charlatan, but a charismatic leader for people who wanted and needed certainty and security with all their questions answered.

#### SOURCES

The Oneida County Historical Society has a copy of "The Illumination of Koresh", and a well documented paper titled "The Koreshan Unity: The Early New York Beginnings of a Utopian Community" by Howard David Fine. An independent check of several of his references showed no discrepancies. The Historical Society also has a full set of directories and historical accounts. The Utica Public Library has all of the Utica newspapers and most of the New York Times on microfilm.

A visit to the Koreshan Unity provided us with the CELLULAR COSMOGONY and many issues of the American Eagle. Friends provided us with a video tape of a show on public broadcasting which examined the colony.

Carl Carmer's book DARK TREES TO THE WIND (New York: William Sloane Associates, 1949) contains a gentle and possibly fanciful account of "The Great Alchemist at Utica".