



West of Eden: Communes and Utopia in Northern California

Michael Watts, Cal Winslow, Iain Boal, Janferie Stone

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In the aftermath of the Vietnam War, a large portion of the population had become disenchanted with the American way of life that they did not feel they belonged to. While some openly revolted in the streets, others took to turning away from the mainstream and headed toward a new world. Utopian visions, manifesting themselves in the form of communes, were aimed at breaking the bonds of capitalism, big business, and the reigning oligarchy and were popping up throughout the country. The San Francisco Bay Area was the hotbed of these communes, and from the Height-Ashbury in San Francisco, east to Berkeley's protest hub at Sproul Plaza, and south to Oakland's Black Panther's communal households, this is an exploration of this unique cultural revolution of the 1960s and 1970s. The history and vision of communal living is investigated in a series of essays aimed at explaining just what these communes were, how lives were lived within them, and what their goals entailed.

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