

WESTERN SHAKER DESIGN, WITH EMPHASIS  
ON DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The Shakers, as they were popularly known, or the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, as they called themselves, were an evangelical sect founded in Manchester, England in the 1770's by a religious visionary named Ann Lee. In 1772, after being imprisoned for disturbing the Sabbath and publicly preaching her doctrine of celibacy, she was given the title of "Mother" and accepted as the reincarnation of the Christ Spirit by her followers. She was subject to wild outbursts of emotion, to shaking, to visions and delusions.

Mother Ann married against her will, and the death in infancy of the four children born of this union was to her, the act of an angry God. This set her mind against carnal relationships.

In 1774 she and a small group of followers left England and came to America where they sought a life in the unsettled back country of New England. There they organized a communal life of order and hard work. In their religious revivals where they danced and shook ecstatically, they made converts and soon began to prosper.

The Shaker attitude toward life and work produced a distinct philosophy and a unique American culture. Besides celibacy, they practiced equality of the sexes, separation from the world, and confession of sins.

The Shakers' attitude toward labor has left us an unequalled design legacy. Consecrated labor was the foundation of the Shaker religion in which labor and spiritual values were curiously fused. It was, as if with their hands, they worked to build up a spiritual order. The significance of Shaker work was based on the social and economic systems which governed all Shaker communities. As new members entered the order, all their worldly goods became the property of the sect. Each member had to be free of debt before he was allowed to enter into Shaker life. Each community was broken down into "families." A family within a community was a distinct unity and the family members were not related by blood. Usually fifty people lived together in one building. Each family was independent of other families in its economic pursuits, although often more than one family would work together on projects if this was advantageous to the entire community.

Mother Ann had given her followers an injunction: "Hands to work, and hearts to God." Thus, the Shaker craftsman approached his work with honesty before God, desiring to use his talents to work the material which had likewise come from God. It was this factor, rather than a conscious striving for the aesthetic, that resulted in the attractive charm of Shaker products.

#### Statement of the Problem

Widespread recognition of the excellence and utility of the design of the Shakers was belated; their imposed communal and isolated existence had set them apart from the world. In the 1930's the federal government in its art project and the culminating Index of American Design, devoted considerable attention to various aspects of Shaker

workmanship. Interest was increased in 1937 with the publication of Edward Deming Andrews' book, Shaker Furniture: The Craftsmanship of an American Communal Sect, and its subsequent reprintings. Since then many articles and exhibits have encouraged the appreciation of Shaker design. In the introduction of Andrews' book, the author stated:

For various reasons certain communities are excluded from consideration. The furniture made in the seven societies founded in Ohio, Kentucky and Indiana in the first quarter of the last century was marked by regional qualities which set it apart from the joinery of the older eastern colonies (p. 1).

An interest in the distinctive Shaker sect and a respect for them and the products of their societies prompted this study. Andrews' statement concerning the regional qualities of the Western Shakers intensified the author's curiosity concerning the regional differences of which he wrote.

There seemed to be a need to study and explore the characteristics inherent in Western Shaker design, but publications on the Shakers of the West are minimal compared with the many studies done on the Eastern Shakers.

#### Method

To add to the encountered difficulties, when the Ohio and Kentucky communities were dissolved early in the present century, many of the furnishings of the dwellings and shops were dispersed; consequently sources of information and authenticated Western Shaker pieces are scarce as compared with the East.

The need for a first-hand examination of the Western Shakers and their extant architecture and artifacts soon became apparent when

this study of Shaker design was begun. Many of the facts used in this study were observed by attending the Shaker Bicentennial Meeting in Cleveland, Ohio in 1974. It was held on the premises of the Western Reserve Historical Society which has on display many excellent authentic Western Shaker pieces, and which is located near the site of the North Union Colony of Ohio. Authorities on Shaker history were present and lectured. Trips to Union Village, Ohio, and Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, and observations made there will be evident in this paper because of time the author spent there. It was on these trips that available published material on the Western Shakers was purchased for research.

#### Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this writing is to portray in a pictorial study the design types and characteristics indigenous to the Shakers in Ohio and Kentucky, the Western Shakers. It is an attempt to isolate characteristics which differentiate a Western Shaker creation from those of the Eastern communities.

#### Terminology

Eastern Shakers - The members of the Shaker societies located in the geographical eastern United States were referred to as Eastern Shakers.

Western Shakers - The members of the Shaker societies located in the geographical western United States were referred to as Western Shakers.

Mother or Father - The leader of the entire Shaker order was called by the name of Mother or Father, as in Mother Ann or Father Joseph.

Shaker order - An organized Shaker society was a Shaker order. The societies were also referred to as communities, villages, and colonies. The term Shaker Order was also used in reference to the entity of the Shaker religion.

Mother Church - The society at New Lebanon, New York, was the central ministry (Mother Church) for the Shaker order - East and West.

Union Village, Ohio - The first Shaker society organized in the West was in Ohio and was named Union Village. It was the center of influence for Western Shakerism, similar but subordinate to the central church at New Lebanon.

Family - Each Shaker society divided the members into family units. The family was comprised of from 25 to 150 members and had its own spiritual leaders.

Central Family - The Central (Centre) family in each society was the Church (Senior) or Central order. The common worship (meeting) house was located on the Central family's domain. Other families in the society were named on the basis of their location in reference to the Central family, as East Family, West Family, North Family, etc.

The "World" - The Shakers referred to all people outside the Shaker religion as the "World."



## CHAPTER II

### EARLY ORGANIZATION AND TENETS

#### Introduction

A study of the history of the Shaker movement is an integral part of the study of Shaker design. A brief examination of the early organization, principles and practices, and worship of the order will clarify and enlighten a study of Shaker design. The life of the society member was distinctive in that it served not a secular, but a religious purpose. In a true sense, work was a ritual, a calling, a form of worship.

The rules by which a member was to abide were given in the Millennial Laws, the tendentious orders given by the early church leaders, which guided the faith and practice of the Shakers. The laws gave the members a foundation and a direction, and when read today help to illuminate the habits and customs of the Shakers.

#### Organization of a Community

The Shakers, in their search for a perfect social order, withdrew from the "World" and the forces of worldliness into self-contained villages. The trend toward a community of interest was dictated by both convenience and necessity. In embracing the unworldly doctrine of celibacy, the followers of Ann Lee committed themselves to living

apart from the world. But it is doubtful, since Ann herself had no clear institutional program, whether these first adherents to the new religion fully realized its social implications. Ann was still on her mission through New England when her disciples began to organize into family units and consecrate their goods to a common cause. This tenacity and organization by the Shakers led to nine colonies in New England and two in New York State by the close of the 18th century.

Converts to the new faith met at first in the houses of leading members. Personal and landed property were consecrated to the cause. The gatherings were gradually organized into family units. Three years after the death of Ann Lee the Shakers were building their own meeting houses and dwellings and beginning to initiate an active industrial program. Following the example of earlier New England faiths, they entered, about 1788, into covenants, oral at first, to bestow their property and services to the joint interest.

By 1795, under the direction of "Father" Joseph Meacham, the American born successor to Mother Ann, most of the societies had come into "gospel order," with written covenants designed to proclaim their principles and protect the "united inheritance" from encroachment, legal and otherwise, by the world. Co-equal with Meacham, a female head of the church, was Lucy Wright, a native of Pittsfield, Massachusetts. After the death of Joseph Meacham in 1796, Lucy Wright was first in the all powerful central ministry until her death in 1821.

New Lebanon became the home (the mother church) of the ministerial order, which consisted of two "elder brothers" and two "elder sisters" known as elders and eldresses. The societies were in turn, organized

into "families," each one with its own spiritual leaders (two elders and two eldresses) and its own temporal heads (deacons in charge of industries and trustees of finances). The Shaker families cooperated on major undertakings like the building of meeting houses, large barns, and dwellings, as well as joining together in many charitable enterprises. The Believers in each society worshiped together on the Sabbath; however, the families were largely autonomous, holding their own meetings, developing their own occupations, selling to and buying from each other.

The central family in each society, on whose domain the common meeting house was situated, was called the Church (sometimes Senior) order; members of this family had consecrated themselves and their goods entirely to the Shaker cause. Other families in the society were named on the basis of their location in reference to the Church order; as East, West, North, or South family. One family served as a novitiate order for young Believers. Authority passed down from the central ministry through the branch ministries to the elders and eldresses, deacons, deaconesses, trustees and caretakers of children.

The division of each community into family units had distinct advantages. Each family carried on its industrial activities independently, buying from and selling to the world or other families and societies. Each had its own store or trustee's office to serve as a supply depot and clearing-house for outgoing or incoming goods. Experience proved that the ideal size was fifty members; if larger, the energy evoked by the communal system was apt to be dissipated; if much smaller, the advantages of combination and division of labor were to a degree lost. The system had an additional merit, for under it, if one family, through such misfortune as fire, sickness, failure of crop, or mismanagement should suffer a reverse, it would be limited to a given area and there repaired. Shaker history is replete with examples of one family or community coming to the aid of another (Andrews, 1963, p. 106).

In structure, the United Society was a theocracy; the leadership ruled by revelation, by "gifts of God." However, the basic doctrine that all members had equal rights and responsibilities, regardless of sex, race, or possessions, gave the order a democratic spirit which pervaded the whole movement. Even the ministry and elders worked at a trade. To the Shakers, labor was worship. Mother Ann had enjoined her followers to "put your hands to work and your hearts to God."

### Principles and Practices

In the principles which the Shakers practiced with such devotion of mind and spirit lay the secret of their success.

#### The Principle of Work and Cooperation

The principle of work and cooperation was of primary importance within a given family and between families and communities. This principle was not based on economic theory but rather on a singleness of purpose, the advancement of the Shaker cause. There were many contributing factors, among which Andrews (1974) suggests:

1. The recognition and use of native aptitudes and skills--a system of apprenticeship. The practice of division and rotation of labor. the ability--accruing from combined labor--to produce on a large scale.
2. Respect for hard labor. Everyone worked, including the spiritual head.
3. Recognition of the equality of the sexes, in rights and responsibilities. Of inestimable value to the economy was the elevation of the sisters to equality with the brethren.
4. The doctrine of perfectionism. It was the Shakers' desire to excel the world in all good works, including standards of industrial workmanship. As one result, the products of their hands and shops commanded a premium in the market.

5. Order, utility, and improvement as determinants of the economy. 'Where there is no order, there is no God.'
6. The right use of property--'The earth is the Lord's and the fulness thereof.' Property belonged to God and should be used not to further man's personal ends, but His work in the world (p. 8).

Early in the history of the Shaker movement the advantages of combined labor--work that was devoted to common service rather than personal gain--became apparent. Talents which existed when the members joined the movement were utilized to give the colony stability. A rugged pragmatism saved the Shaker movement from the failure which beset so many "utopias" in America.

The Principle of the Separation of  
the Sexes

This practiced principle, within the order, found expression in its architecture, industry, and even in the form of worship. Dwellings were built with separate entrances, stairways, halls, and retiring rooms for males and females. Meeting houses had separate entrances for the sexes, the ministry, and the "World's" people. The sexes worshipped together but in forms which kept them apart. The male and female members worked, as a rule, in different shops, and in the children's order were separated in school and at play.

The tenet that the sexes should be thus separated in no sense, however, implied their inequality. The Shakers were pioneers in granting equal rights, privileges, and responsibilities to women and men. The ministry, eldership, and deaconship were dual orders, and all members, regardless of rank, labored alike for the good of the

whole community. This egalitarianism reflected a religion in which God possessed two co-equal natures, the masculine and the feminine, each distinct in function, yet one in Being. God the Father was power (to create); God the Mother, wisdom. The messiahship was also dual. The Christ spirit, manifested in Jesus, appeared again in the personality of Ann Lee. In harmony with this doctrine of a dual deity and messiahship was the belief that male and female were equal in the sight of God; hence, social equality of the sexes was recognized and practiced.

#### The Principle of Common Property

The virtues of simplicity, humility, and charity were fully displayed in the common ownership of property. The Shakers realized that unless the order was established on a firm temporal foundation it could not survive. It was both a socio-economic and a religious concept which required pooling of goods and services, and the covenant was to protect the common interest and develop an order of trades which would sustain and develop such an interest. Andrews (1963) wrote:

Community of goods was specifically discussed by John Dunlavy, the chief minister at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, who treated it under the term, 'United inheritance.' A competent Biblical scholar, Dunlavy probably had a clearer insight into the nature of religious communism than any other Shaker writer. For him, it was the only logical manifestation of equality and universal love; only by sharing prosperity with others could it be shown that such love was genuine affection. Faith in the brotherhood of man was meaningless without corresponding works. The true followers of Christ were distinguished from the world not only by their denial of carnal desire, but by the oneness of their spirit and possessions (p. 100).

### Mode of Worship

It is virtually impossible to separate the Shaker's work from his worship. The purpose of the Shakers was to build a millennial society separate from the world, to set an example of how men and women seeking Christian perfection should work and worship in peace, humility, and order. The Shakers consecrated their lives and their belongings to God and created a unique way of life. All aspects of their work took on religious overtones; work became a sacrament, a ritual.

There were, however, organized periods of worship and many of these services took place in the private family worship as distinguished from the public meetings in the church on the Sabbath. The frequent worship meetings were often held in the evening after a long day's work. They were not considered a religious duty but rather were anticipated with pleasure. To the Shaker, the meeting served as a refreshment of spirit.

When Mother Ann told her people to put their hands to work and their hearts to God, she knew it would be from the laborings of worship that they would get the strength needed for physical labor. How true this was, is realized when we read the intimate diaries and journals of her followers . . . dances and song were recreations. Though these exercises were often extravagant and highly emotional, they were surely not, as sometimes charged, the illumination of ignorant minds. This very exuberance was evidence of an afflatus great enough to sustain and continually inspire the institution (Andrews, 1963, p. 136).

All of the mystical experiences associated with the Great Awakening were present in the Shaker worship; clairvoyance--the speaking in unknown tongues--dancing exercises--and other charismatic gifts. The Shaker religion was in the beginning a charismatic one

which gradually evolved over the years to a greater form of disciplined and institutionalized worship and ceremonialism.

#### Millennial Laws, Abridged

Mother Ann was careful to leave to her followers truths on which the church could prosper and grow. She told them: "Hands to work, and hearts to God." Then she laid down a principle with which contemporary functionalists are familiar: "Every force evolves a form." She gave the members the advice: "Do all your work as though you had a thousand years to live, and as you would if you knew you must die tomorrow."

The so-called Millennial Laws of the Shakers, not widely circulated in written form, were at first given out by early church leaders and repeated until they became the ingrained tradition of communal procedure. The leaders seemed to have recognized the problems that would be present in the social experiment and set out the orders as a guide for the members to follow. The early Shaker leaders were averse to having the laws published, so laws were not recorded until after their deaths. The following "contrary to order" abridged categories (Andrews, 1963, p. 244) gives an insight into the communal life of the Shakers and the disciplinary principles they practiced.

#### I. Separation of the Sexes

##### Contrary to order:

for brethren and sisters to milk together;  
 for a brother to pass a sister on the stairs;  
 for a sister to go to a brother's shop alone;  
 to shake hands with a 'world's woman' without  
 confessing it;  
 for the brethren to go into the room when the  
 sisters were making the beds.



- II. Separation from the World  
 Contrary to order:  
 to have right and left shoes;  
 to employ a world's doctor;  
 to read newspapers in the dwelling house  
 at any time without the Elder's permission;  
 to write a letter without retaining a copy;  
 to drink any spiritous liquor among the world;  
 to take your place in meeting after you have  
 been out among the world.
- III. Orders Pertaining to the Sabbath  
 Contrary to order:  
 to stay from meeting on the Sabbath  
 without liberty;  
 to cut hair, pare nails, wash feet, clean  
 shoes, or shave on the Sabbath;  
 to pick fruit on the Sabbath;  
 to go into meeting without sleeve strings.
- IV. Orders on uniformity in Certain Acts of Behavior  
 Contrary to order:  
 to fold the left thumb over the right,  
 in prayer, or when standing up in worship;  
 to put the boot or shoe on the left foot  
 first;  
 to kneel with handkerchief in hand.
- V. Orders Regarding 'Dumb Beasts'  
 Contrary to order:  
 to wear spurs;  
 to kick a beast.
- VI. Orders Regarding Health  
 Contrary to order:  
 to eat any fruit after supper;  
 to lie on the ground;  
 to leave the lower sash of the window  
 open at night.
- VII. Orders Regarding Cleanliness  
 Contrary to order:  
 to spit out of the window;  
 to spit on the floor.
- VIII. Orders on Prudence, Especially to Avoid Fires  
 Contrary to order:  
 to take a lamp or candle without a lantern  
 into the clothes room, barn, or wood-house;  
 to empty a pipe out of the window;  
 to leave wood on the stove or under it;  
 to leave the spit-box near the stove and  
 go out of the room.

**IX. Miscellaneous Orders****Contrary to order:**

- to have watches and umbrellas;
- to tell he or she lieth;
- to play with dogs and cats;
- to have any money privately;
- to give nicknames;
- to reprove each other before the Elders.

## CHAPTER III

### WESTWARD MOVEMENT

Eleven communities were organized in the Northeastern States within the decade following Mother Ann's death in 1784. Withdrawn for several years to allow for consolidation of the movement, the testimony of Christ's Second Appearing was reopened in 1805 in the wake of the great Kentucky Revival. Three missionaries were sent out that year from the Eastern Mother Church, New Lebanon, to the Ohio-Kentucky frontier to carry the message of Shakerism. The mission was so successful that within 20 years seven communities were organized in the West, with Union Village, in southern Ohio, the center of influence.

The Eastern Church had sent its ablest preachers, Benjamin Seth Youngs, Issacher Bates, and John Meacham into the West to embark on the mission which would open Ohio and Kentucky with successful Shaker beginnings. The three men started out on foot, with one horse to carry their baggage. Andrews (1953) wrote of the first mission to the West:

No precise destination was in mind. They were tracing to its source those tremblings and spasmodic movements of the Kentucky revivalists which seemed so like the shakings of their own people as to offer a natural opening for the Shaker doctrine. They were always questioning travelers about the jerks. Random reports came of a new sect called Christians, who in their clamorous worship were seized with strange

paroxysms which causes them to pace the floor with closed eyes, fall in trance-like states, jerk the head and body, and shout, sing, and bark like dogs (p. 72).

The missionaries reached Tennessee about one and one-half months after their departure from the Mother Church in New York. In Tennessee they witnessed the curious worshippers they were seeking; however, the anticipated opening for the missionaries and the Shaker religion did not happen. People in Tennessee told them that the chief centers of the new movement were in central Kentucky and southern Ohio. This was the direction in which the missionaries went.

At that time the states of Ohio and Kentucky were inhabited by a widely dispersed population. Small settlements had sprung up wherever water was accessible. Few people could read or write; the people thrived on religion. The frequent church gatherings, which provided them both a social life and an emotional one, were eagerly anticipated. The congregation came from every direction, and it was not uncommon for the meetings to last for several days. The church gatherings during those revival times were often marked by ecstasies of body and spirit, and it made little difference if the preacher was Baptist, Methodist, or Presbyterian. This revivalistic spirit provided fertile ground for the Shaker missionaries.

By the time that Youngs, Bates, and Meacham reached the West a reaction had become manifest; denominational rivalries and doctrinal contention had divided churches, and a schism among the Presbyterians resulted in the rise of a new sect called by the names of New Lights, Schismatics, or Christians. Among the leaders of the ministerial authority of the Presbyterian system were the scholarly Richard McNemar,

in charge of the congregation at Turtle Creek, the largest Presbyterian church in southern Ohio, and Malcolm Worley, a landowner. Worley, McNemar and others who had captured the spirit of the revival were to provide the missionaries with their hoped-for opening.

The three tired missionaries from New Lebanon, New York, had traveled more than twelve hundred miles when they arrived in Warren County, Ohio, on March 22, 1805. As missionaries they were welcomed into the home of Malcolm Worley, who in turn introduced them to his friend and neighbor, The Reverend Richard McNemar, the minister of Turtle Creek Presbyterian Church. The missionaries were invited to attend religious services the following day at The Reverend McNemar's church. Hazel Spencer Phillips (1971) has written of the service:

Well dressed, in old style Quaker garb, they were intelligent and impressively religious when they spoke to the Turtle Creek congregation. McNemar stated that this was the first time that he had heard of the Shakers, but allowed them to read a letter from their church. Like McNemar, the Warren County people learned at once that the Shakers were a communal, celibate, religious sect of English origin, called the United Society of Believers. Worley and McNemar were prepared to receive this new belief by their activities in the Kentucky Revival the past few years. Both became early converts, consecrating themselves and their property to God in this celibate order, derisively called Shaker (p. 4).

Conversion of the two religious leaders, their wives, and their children established a firm beginning at Turtle Creek in Ohio. Conversions followed rapidly with almost all the members of McNemar's church following him into Shakerism. Worley and McNemar owned adjoining farms and each man gave his farm to the Shakers; Worley's frame house (the only frame house in the area) was used for services, and McNemar's log cabin was opened for the dancing exercises.

As the testimony spread, a kind of Church Order was being organized with the help of the Mother Church, New Lebanon, in the East, and Mother Lucy Wright, Mother Ann Lee's successor. Mother Lucy had been in correspondence with the new mission and sent the following letter to Turtle Creek. Since it marks the official opening of Western Shakerism it is included in its entirety. It is one of the few letters by Ann Lee's successor that has been preserved.

As some of you have answered me according to my desire, in relation to your faith--I am satisfied you all may feel Elder David your first Elder Councillor and Protector there in that distant Land, which is a great comfort and satisfaction to me, and I think it may be to you all.

I am sensible you have diversity of Gifts, but by the same Spirit: I desire you may build up and strengthen each other in the Gift of God. You may consider you could not be so complete if you was all a Head, or an Arm, or a Foot--therefore Labour to bring your gifts into Subjection to the work of God that you are called to in that Land.

If any of you should rise too high by reason of having great Gifts of God, I desire you would labour to creep down the best way you can; for if you should fall it might hurt you.

I desire you may not be deceived so as to feel your justification in making a great noise, or sound, although I believe the people must have an outward work before they are able to have an inward, as a body, but the work of mortification must increase as they travel--that will be coming down into the work of God, not rising above, if they do they rise above their protection, and of consequence must suffer loss. What I have written is my intention of doing you good.

This from your Parent in the Gospel (Andrews, 1953, p. 78).

The Shakers were building a western community. The first society in the West had built their first frame dwelling and were constructing sawmills in order to make use of the abundance of timber. On March 14, 1810, the first Western covenant was drafted and signed. The community was named Union Village and it would be the center of Western influence.

Progress was rapid in the next few years but often faced stubborn resistance and opposition. Religion was a serious matter in the backwoods regions. As the missionaries tirelessly sought new areas of growth, they were confronted with violence and ridicule and at times deep discouragement. The vow of celibacy was the great stumbling block, causing contention in families and arousing intense bitterness. The small groups of Believers, as in the early Eastern openings, held the first meetings of an infant Shaker community in a house. But by purchase, donation, and inspired industry the small community would grow to the point of being ready for "gospel order" and the introduction of communistic practices.

Even though Kentucky was enveloped in the early 1800's by the Great Revival, and body gyrations were practiced, many Kentuckians thought the Shaker practices and doctrines were too fanatical and disdained them. When Youngs, McNemar, and Worley visited Bourbon County in 1805, they were not permitted to proselytize, especially by the ministers present. Following is a quotation from an early Shaker journal:

But Elisha Thomas and Samuel and Henry Banta from Mercer County, who with some others were determined to hear them speak, drew them to a private house for that purpose . . . a few days after Elisha, Samuel and Henry opened their minds.

John Meacham, a Union Village Elder, was offered 'a horse, saddle, and bridle with spending money to go where and when he wished, if he would come to live at Shawnee Run.' But before accepting the added incentive of Elisha Thomas' 140 acre farm to settle in Mercer County, the Shaker proselytizers visited central Kentucky 'quite often,' making certain the converts would faithfully support the tenets of purity, simplicity, and utility.

Convinced that a few followers were ready for the acceptance of the Shaker faith, those Believers and the missionaries assembled on the Thomas farm just west of the present community of Pleasant Hill and signed a family covenant. Pleasant Hill was called the 'topmost bough on the Tree' and 'the cream of Kentucky' (Thomas, 1973, p. 9).

The covenant was signed in 1814.

The other community founded in Kentucky was formed on the Gasper River in Logan County and was later called South Union. The date for the founding of the colony is usually given as 1807; the principal gathering was in 1809; the meeting house was built in 1810. Benjamin Youngs, one of the first three Western missionaries, took a personal interest in South Union and was appointed to the first "lot" in its ministry, continuing there nearly 25 years.

Watervliet, in Ohio, and named after the original settlement in the East, was formed by a covenant of 1818.

The West Union community was organized in Indiana in the face of being warned that the country was right on the frontier and that war with the Indians was just at hand. These forebodings proved true when trouble with the Indians and outbreaks of malaria forced the abandonment of that community in 1827.

Two more communities, those at Whitewater and North Union, were founded in Ohio in the 1820's. The origin of the Whitewater settlement grew out of a New Light church revival in 1801. The group was helped by the Union Village members and by 1826 it was a prosperous community. Two factors basic to the success of religious communism were present at North Union, near Cleveland, Ohio: good land and good leadership. Under energetic management the colony prospered and included three families on its 1,366 acres of land.



The last successful communizing venture of the Shaker order is mentioned here because it was geographically a central link between the Eastern and Western societies. The colony was Sodus Bay, on the southern shore of Lake Ontario, in New York State.

In many respects the early history of Shakerism in the West is a repetition of the rise of the Eastern communities. Both sections of the society were built on revivals in older faiths, from which restless, discontented, and liberal elements alike were drawn by the appeal of "the one true church." Presenting a bold and definite program, inspired missions in both cases were able to proselyte with great success, not only among the poor, unlettered, and religiously bewildered classes, but among those who intelligently sought a more significant way of life. Both divisions of the United Society were born amidst scenes of persecution--a continuous oppression which served to bind the communes into a close unity and separate them from the world. Union Village became the center of Western Shakerism, the home of western ministry, holding a status similar, if subordinate to the central church at New Lebanon. The other societies in Ohio, Kentucky, and Indiana received their immediate orders, their chief elders, and immeasurable temporal aid from the Warren County community [Union Village], as the Eastern colonies received theirs from New Lebanon. Finally, East and West progressed materially at comparable rates. In 1823, 18 years after the three missionaries arrived at Turtle Creek, 1700 brethren and sisters had been gathered into the millennial order. The undertaking may be seen as a phase of our whole westward movement; a colorful, distinct chapter in which religious faith, rather than economic opportunity played the dominant role.

## CHAPTER IV

### DESCRIPTIVE DESIGN FEATURES

#### Introduction

The craftsmanship of the Ohio and Kentucky Shakers, though marked by the same simplicity and fine workmanship as that of the Eastern societies, shows certain regional characteristics which place it in a special category. For example, furnishings are made from heavier components and therefore more severe in appearance than the Eastern prototypes. In the East, the woods used for furnishings contributed to their lightness in appearance; conversely, in the West, the woods chiefly used--poplar (whitewood) and black walnut--were cut into larger components. The Western Shaker craftsmen were removed by proximity and time from the traditions which affected furniture types in the societies of New York and New England. The work of the joiners of the West was influenced by Shaker principles; but being a largely semi-autonomous society, practices developed with a degree of independence.

The communities and inter-visitations between the East and West usually were performed by the leaders of the Shaker movement; contacts between craftsmen and builders were few. The foremost evidence of a deviation or break with Shaker tradition is seen in the superfluous turnings sometimes found on the different parts of Western pieces. These superfluities show an acquiescence to the popular designs of the "World."

This study emphasizes the Western communities in Ohio and Kentucky. The purpose of this chapter is to show in a pictorial study the design types and characteristics indigenous to the Shakers in Ohio and Kentucky, the Western Shakers. It is an attempt to note identifying characteristics which show a piece to be Western Shaker. Figure 1 shows the location of the Shaker communities.



Figure 1. Location of Shaker Communities

## Furnishings

The base skirting on the butternut chest of drawers shown in Figure 2 is a superfluity that is sometimes seen in Western Shaker case pieces.

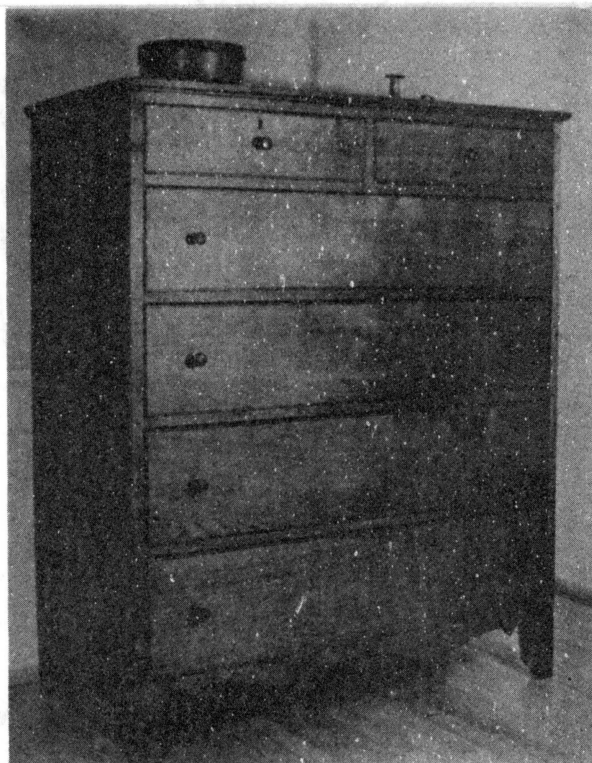


Figure 2. Butternut Chest of  
Drawers

This chest is initialed H. W. D. Very few pieces of Shaker furniture are either signed or dated; indeed ministry regulations expressly forbade using more than the maker's initials or the last two digits of the year, though by the 1890's these regulations were increasingly ignored. Like the Soviets, the Shakers tried to avoid creating a "cult of individuality."

The Shakers used the best woods available near a given community. The Northern communities made use of the many pine and maple trees. In the West, the most commonly used woods were poplar (whitewood), black walnut, and cherry. Cherry was used in Kentucky because of its availability and also in conformity with Southern tradition. To a less extent pine and butternut were used in the West.

The cupboard as a furniture piece was not original with the Shakers. It was a work-piece found in all nineteenth century homes. The Western-made cherry cupboard shown in Figure 3 is at the Golden Lamb Inn, Lebanon, Ohio. It was made in Kentucky. The turned legs are characteristic of Kentucky Shaker furniture. There is no inlay or veneer, and the cresting is rather deep and would not likely be found on an Eastern piece.

The trestle table in Figure 4 was made at the Union Village community, the first Shaker village in Ohio. It is made of walnut, and the heavy trestles form a sturdy base and give the feeling of massiveness. This is in striking contrast with the gracefulness of Northern versions. One of the reasons for this difference might be in the woods used. Walnut lends itself to being cut into large pieces. The top of the table is made of three wide planks placed lengthwise.

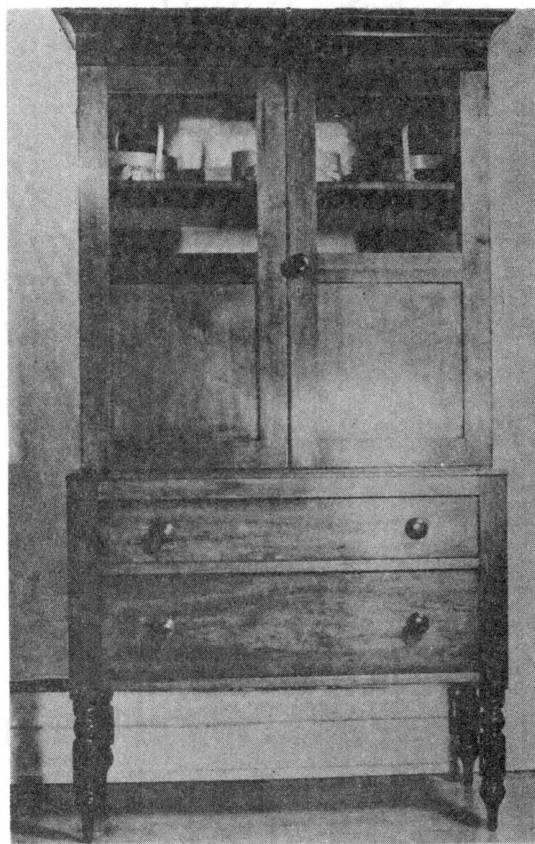


Figure 3. Cherry Cupboard  
from Kentucky

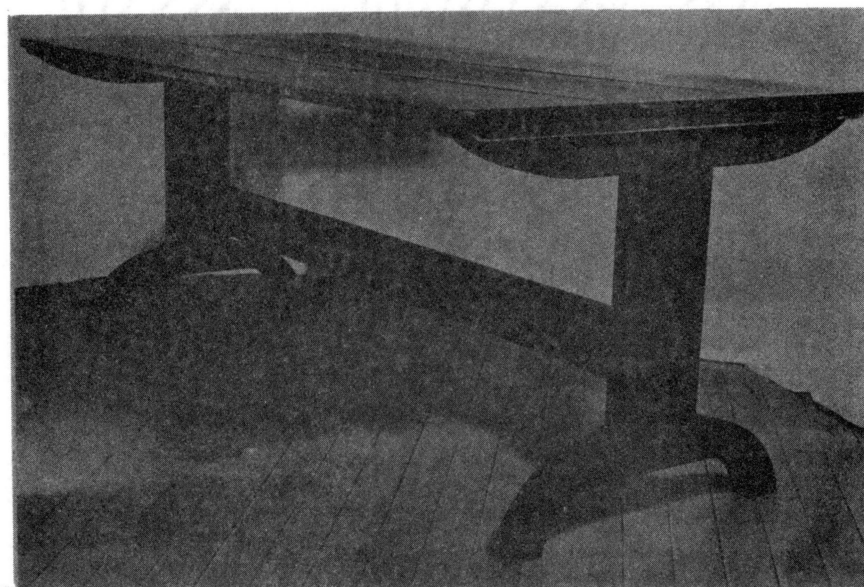


Figure 4. Ohio Trestle Table

When one observes a Western furniture piece with the lightness of appearance which the table in Figure 5 has, he would be hard pressed to determine its provenance. It has the lines of an Eastern table but is a cherry table from Kentucky. The legs are square and taper, and the table top has bread board ends which are not flush with the sides of the top.

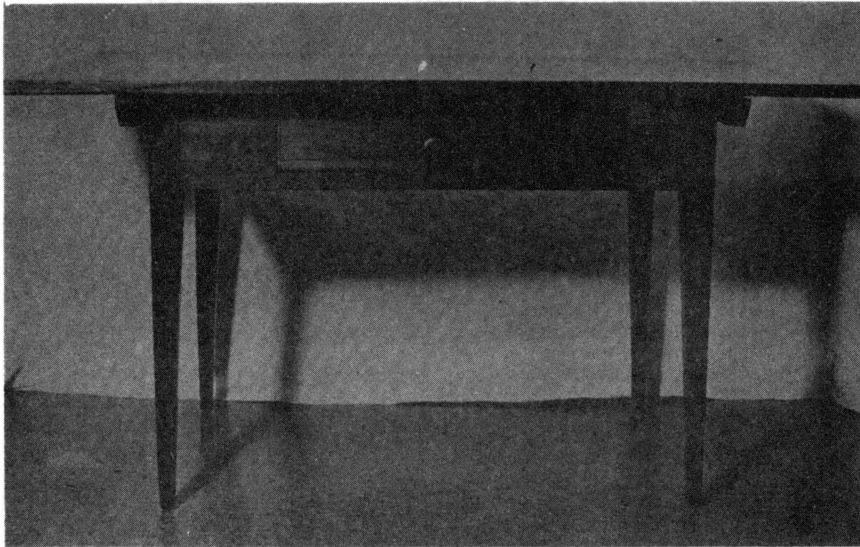


Figure 5. Kentucky Table



The desk in Figure 6 is an early secretary-desk of pine with a bookcase top above the pigeonhole section. Rather than have open bookshelves, the maker chose to provide doors for closing. The desk lid swings up to cover the pigeonholes when not in use. The desk is thought to have been made at Pleasant Hill. The side chair is rather massive and has bow topped slats, a Western Shaker characteristic. The two-candlestick sconce has spaced holes for adjustment to differing convenient heights, since some of the rooms in the Western communities were 18 feet in height. The proficient Shakers conserved energy with the convenient footrest.

In the economic organization of the Shakers it was the duty of the Trustees to perform business transactions for the family in which they resided.

The Trustee's desk shown in Figure 7 is from Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. Made of cherry, it has elaborately turned legs and a fancy gallery characteristic of Kentucky design. The gallery is  $10 \frac{3}{8}$  inches high at the back and  $7 \frac{1}{4}$  inches at the sides. The side panels are quite deep.

The Believers were probably the first people in this country to produce and use the rocking chair on a systematic scale. Intended originally for aged or infirm sisters and brethren, it was not long before such chairs were assigned to every retiring room in the family dwelling, evidence that Shaker asceticism did not exclude a modicum of comfort and convenience.

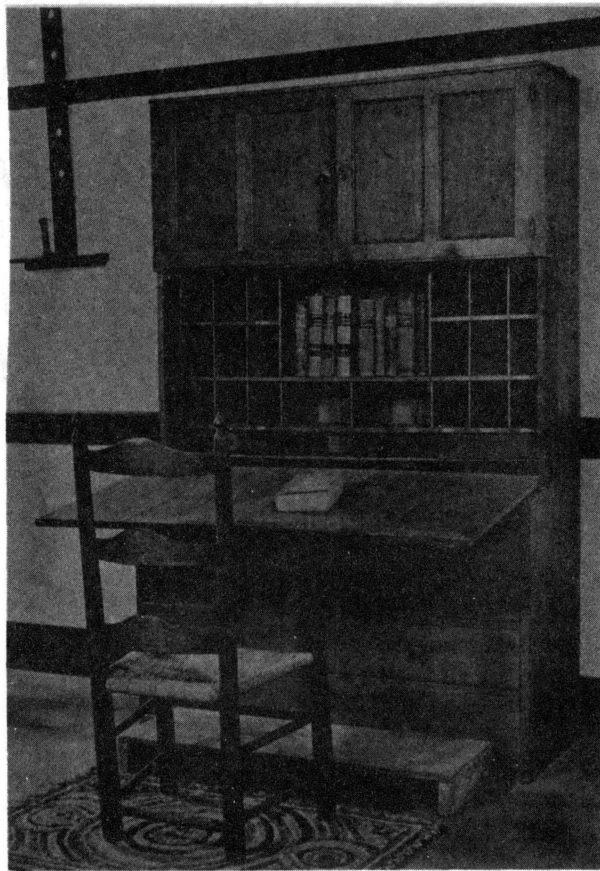


Figure 6. Secretary-desk of Pine

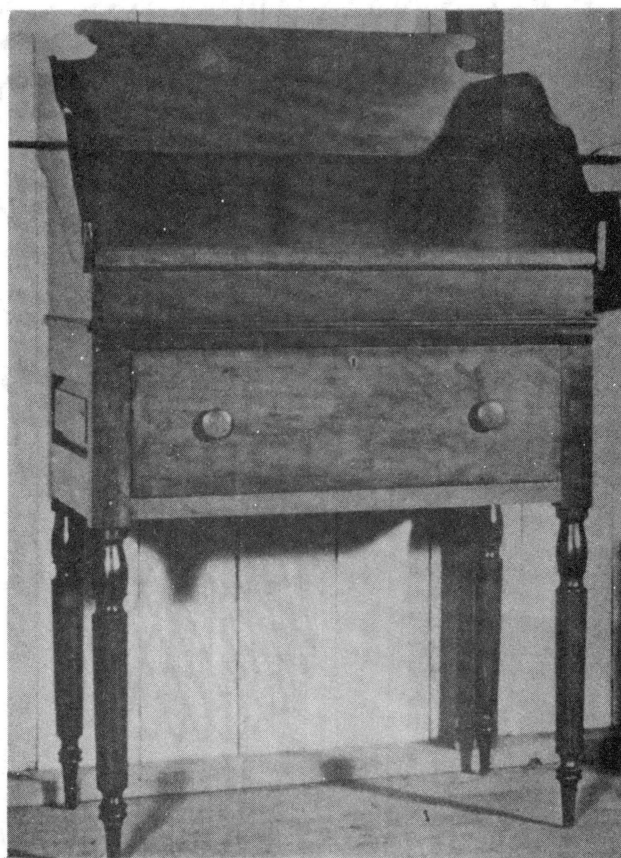


Figure 7. Trustee's Desk from  
Pleasant Hill

The rocking chair in Figure 8 has many distinctively Western Shaker features. Unlike the more conservative Eastern Communities, craftsmen in Kentucky seemed much less dedicated to a particular finial pattern. The finial on the Western chairs were of shorter proportions and shaped differently; also, a considerable variety was used. The shape of the finials on the chair in Figure 8 is bulbous, whereas the prototype Eastern chair finials were elongated.

Another Western feature is the one front stretcher. The Eastern chair usually had two. The unusually wide side scrolled arms are supported by simply turned posts.

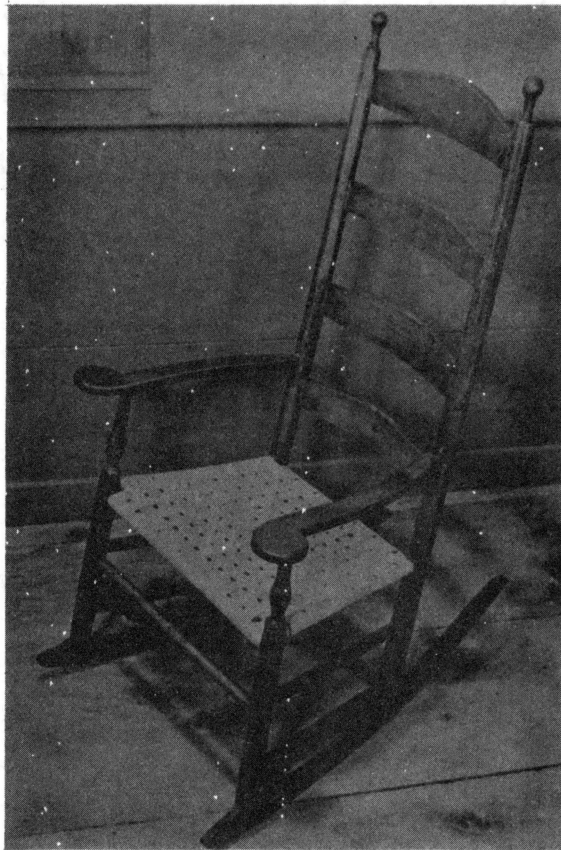


Figure 8. Armed Rocking Chair

The chair shown in Figure 9 is a side chair from Union Village. This chair has four slats as did most Western side chairs. Eastern side chairs had three slats. The slats on this chair are corner-notched, as the majority were. The back posts show a characteristic rabbit-ear flattening. The legs are sharply tapered. Unlike Eastern construction, the slats on this chair are individually affixed at each end to the posts with two thin nails. In the East, a single wooden peg at the ends of the top slat sufficed. The original finish of this chair featured cantaloupe-colored rounds and slats and black posts.



Figure 9. Side Chair from Union Village,  
Ohio

To increase the comfort of the growing number of aged or infirm members, certain innovations in the style and seats of rocking chairs were made about 1830. Colored tapes or braid (sometimes called list or listing when the selvage of textiles was used), woven in a checker-board pattern, partly displaced the splint seats and were later used to 'upholster' the backs also. Braids with over fifty color combinations were woven on special tape looms, or on cloth looms equipped with an attachment so that as many as seven tapes could be simultaneously produced (Andrews, 1950, p. 106).

The chair shown in Figure 10 was made at Pleasant Hill. A Shaker diary tells about the sisters in that community producing almost 1,000 yards of tape in one year.

Another trend toward greater comfort was attempted with the widening of the seats. This improvement seems evident in Figure 10. Wooden screws were used to attach the mushroom palm rests to the unusually wide scrolled arms. The slats appear to become progressively wider as they rise from the seat.

From earliest times, with two or three exceptions, all Eastern Shaker buildings were designed for stoves. In the early Western community buildings however, heating was generally done by fireplaces. After the 1850's coal-burning iron grates were implanted in the wood-burning fireplaces. Shaker designed cast iron stoves were later used.

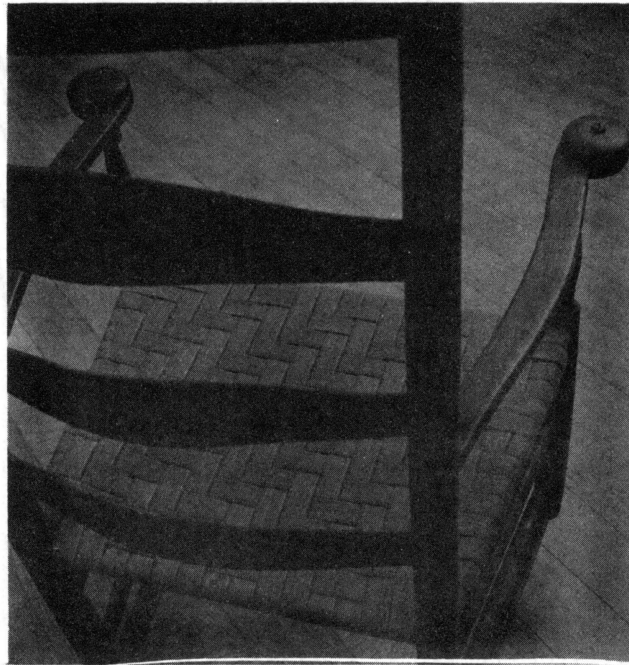


Figure 10. Detail of Rocking Chair Showing  
Tape or List Seat

The Western cast iron stoves, though of the usual Shaker pattern, were notably heavier and more massive in design than the Eastern counterparts. Although Shaker stoves were made in many different sizes and variations of form, the illustrations for this study show the stove which the Shakers called a super-heater. In a super-heater, a smaller stove was set above the main stove, with two peg legs in front, and with the back supported by the smoke hole of the main stove beneath. Thus the heat went from the lower to the upper stove and thence up the stovepipe to the chimney.

The stove in Figure 11 is from South Union, Kentucky. Although the stove has the lines of an Eastern pattern, it seems to have a heavy and crude appearance. The left leg of the super-heater is a Shaker replacement from a broken original.

The delicacy of the stove shown in Figure 12 is not characteristic of Kentucky stoves. This stove has a super-heater and a tripod base. Because of its delicate look, it might possibly be an Eastern stove that was sent West to be used as a pattern for those made there.

It has been written that the Eastern stoves were made entirely on the community premises. Even though the blacksmith played an important role in the self-contained Shaker community in the West, he never cast the stoves in the community foundry. They were manufactured from Shaker patterns in the nearby "World" foundry.



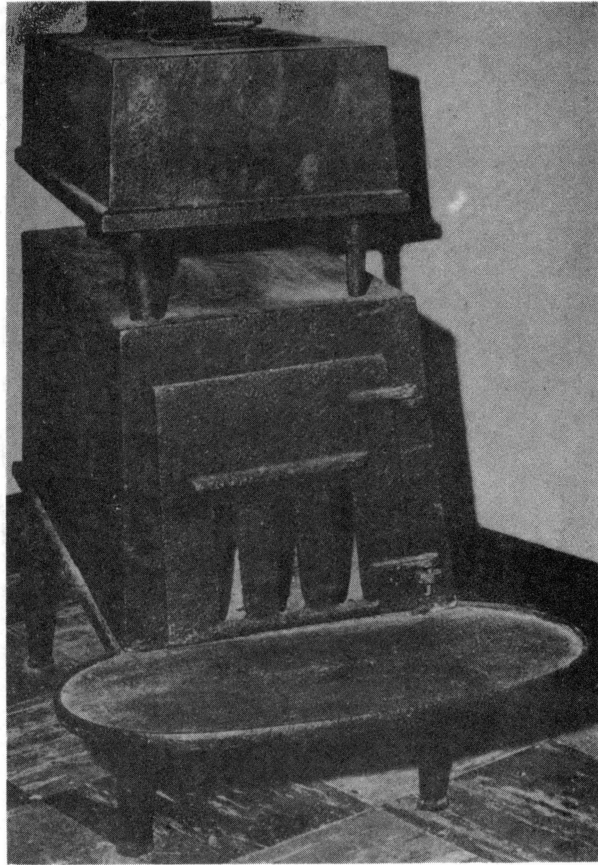


Figure 11. Stove from South Union

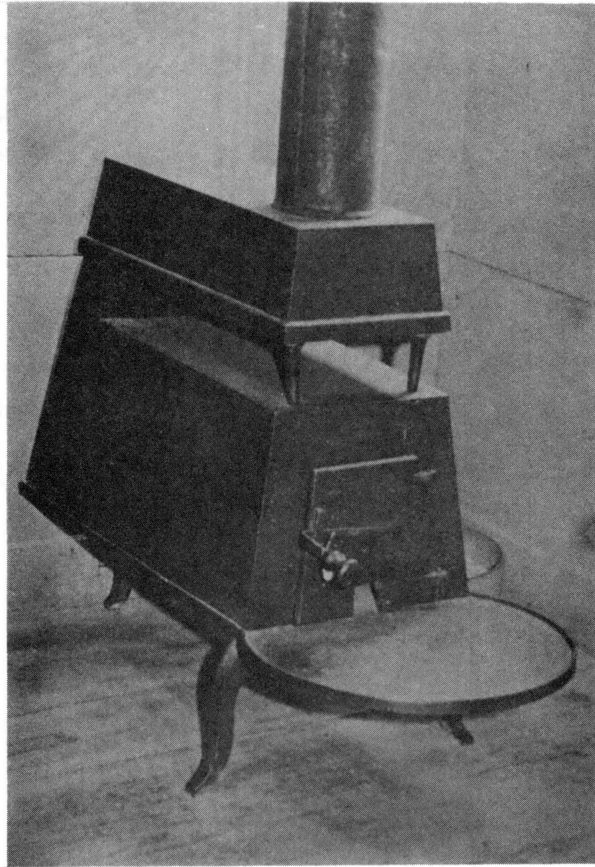


Figure 12. Stove from Pleasant Hill

### Smallwares

If it is true that we can come to know a society by studying the products that were a part of its way of life, this is even more true of the Shakers to whom work with their hands was a way of life and a part of their religion. They turned their attention even at the beginning of their history of an organized society to the manufacture of many articles needed in the daily living of our American national life.

The products of their shops made a considerable contribution to the welfare of the society, even though production was limited in certain cases and at certain periods. As the number of brethren decreased, the sisters took their places in key industries and expanded the output of their own shops. An economic stimulus to the societies was obvious with the sisters' manufacturing of fancy work, poplar baskets, the lining and finishing of boxes, the making of chairs, mats, blankets, cushions and other marketable items. The shops kept the community stores well supplied.

The adjustable wooden candle sconce used for light until 1848 was exclusively Western Shaker. The tall sconce shown in Figure 13 is from Union Village, Ohio. Candle sconces of the Western communities are much larger than those of the East, possibly because the rooms in the Western communities tended to be monumental in scale. The many holes in the hanger were for adjustment on the wall pegboard and proved quite functional for the direction of light in rooms with high ceilings. The Ohio candle sconce is very similar to those from Pleasant Hill, Kentucky. In the Ohio types, the hanger terminates at the top in a

triangular gable, while those from Pleasant Hill terminate in a bow. In both types, the rim around the holder is turned into the board, and is not an applied strip.

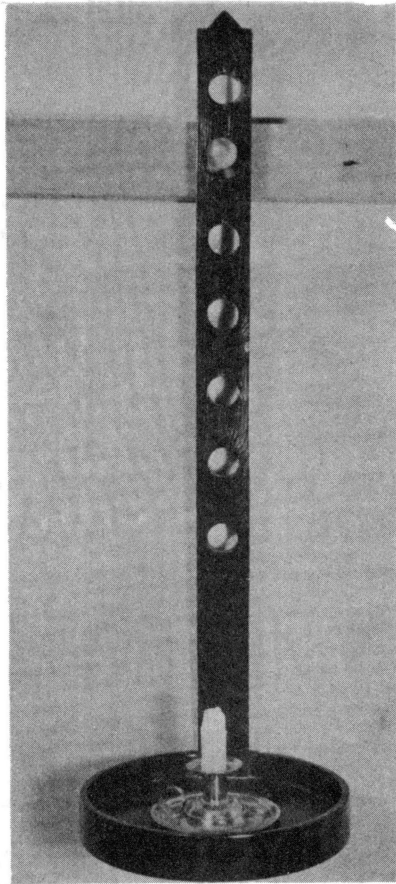


Figure 13. Adjustable Candle  
Sconce

The Shaker pegboards are possibly the most readily identifiable of all things Shaker. Every room, almost without exception, of every Shaker building was ringed with these all purpose pegs. The Shakers had an appointed place for everything and very often the ubiquitous peg was that place. A number of items found their places on the pegboard: clothing, brooms and mops, tools, mirrors, candle sconces, and even chairs - to clear the floor for cleaning. A Kentucky cupboard painted red and supported by a pegboard is shown in Figure 14. In each Shaker community a number of small furniture pieces were utilized; even a communal order recognized personal comfort and convenience.

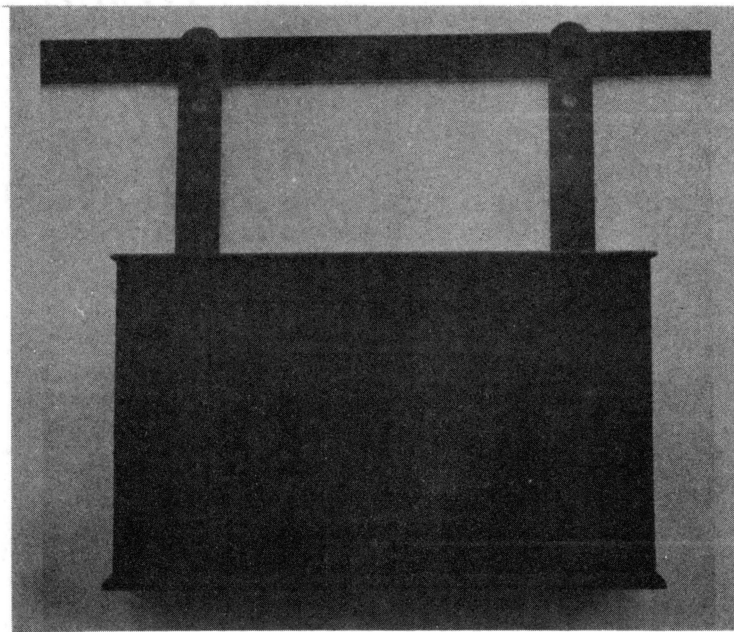


Figure 14. Small Wall Cupboard

No products of the Shaker wood-working shop possessed greater charm than the multi-sized oval boxes which were made throughout the nineteenth century. The oval box was a successful refinement of the general utility box, usually round. Boxes made with the care the Shakers gave them, with snugly fitting covers, graceful "fingers" lapping around the side, and yellow, dark red, or green stains are beautiful indeed.

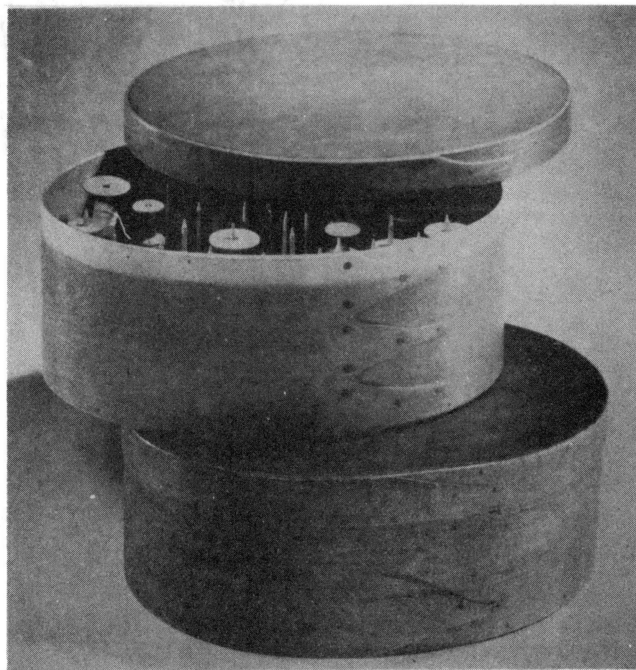


Figure 15. Oval Boxes Containing  
Spools of Colored Silk  
Thread

Silk culture was one of the most unusual Shaker industries in Kentucky. It flourished between 1825 and 1875, with both the South Union Community and the Pleasant Hill Community actively engaged in cultivating silk worms. A visitor to Pleasant Hill in 1825 reported that the silkworm was being raised there and that sewing thread of superior quality was made of its web. The caterpillars would spin a cocoon of fibers which was unraveled and rewound on a spool for use as a sewing thread or for weaving. From a Shaker journal is the following:

When Elder Henry C. Blinn of the Canterbury, New Hampshire, society visited Pleasant Hill he was interested in seeing the wound cocoons. At South Union he was given a cocoon and an oval box containing spools of colored silk thread (Figure 15) to show the sisters at Canterbury.

On New Year's Day, 1832, the South Union sisters all appeared dressed in their homemade silk kerchiefs for the first time. The following New Year's the sisters gave a 'beautiful silk neckerchief' to each of the brethren (Figure 16). The men's neckerchiefs were collar width, fastened at the back, and had a small bow at the front (shown at the right in Figure 16). The women's kerchiefs were 32 inches by 34 inches hemmed rectangles. The colors ranged from white, blue, pink, and mulberry to light and dark brown. Some kerchiefs were iridescent, others were checked, and still others had a border of a contrasting color or a border design made by heavier threads. Many of the kerchiefs were sold or sent as gifts to the Eastern societies. Men's white silk handkerchiefs were also made and sold at \$1.00 each (Antiques, 1974, p. 610).

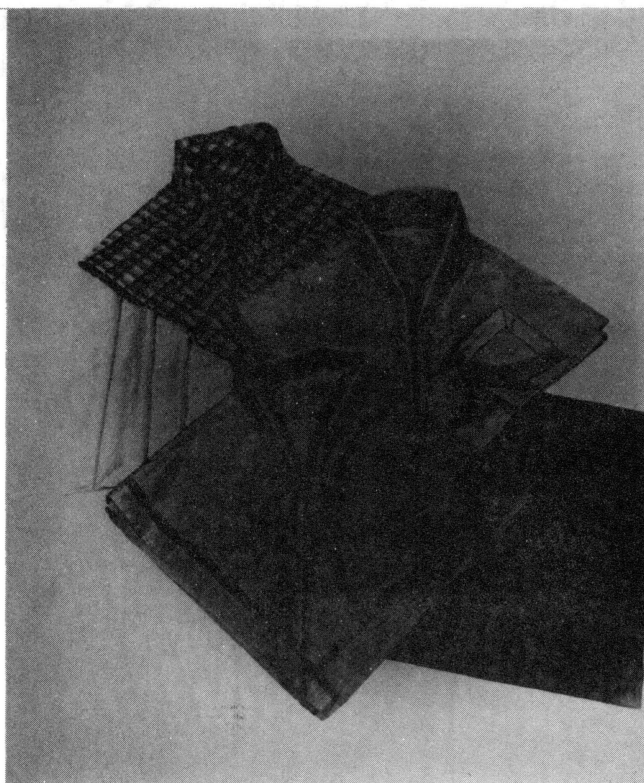


Figure 16. Women's Silk Kerchiefs and a  
Man's Silk Neckerchief



Smallwares were, economically, a stimulus for the Shaker communities. As the number of Shaker brethren decreased, upsetting a desirable balance in membership, the sisters took their places in key industries and expanded the output of their own shops. The sisters lined and finished boxes, made leathergoods, spool stands, blankets, cushions, chair mats, and rugs. All these items were eagerly bought by the "World."

Items made for trade outside the community were also used by the Shakers within their village. The halls and stairs in Shaker dwelling houses were protected with woven runners (Figure 17). Smaller, crocheted and woven rugs were used in the rooms. Western Shaker gift shops found ready customers for hundreds of other simple rugs and runners. The bleaching and dyeing of the year engaged the entire time of several Shaker sisters. The Shakers prepared their own natural dyes.

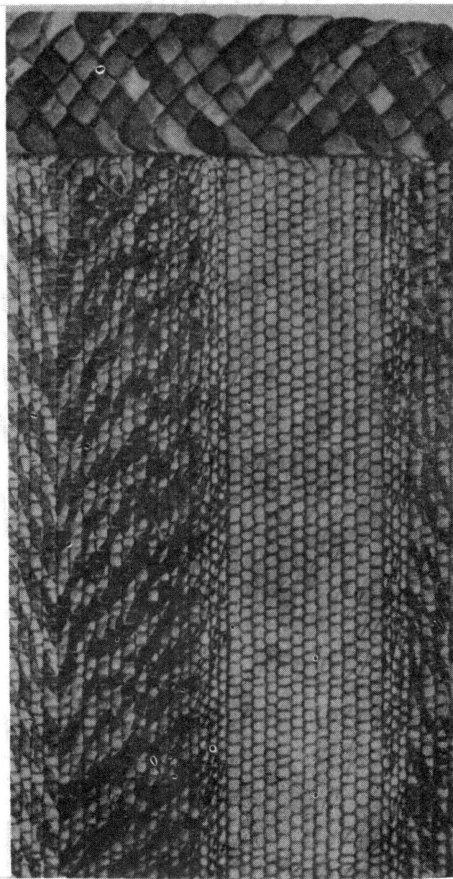


Figure 17. Woven Rug With  
Braided Border

## Architecture

The great Shaker "ingathering" was from 1790-1864. During this time their numbers and prosperity increased with the Shaker master builders designing and executing barns, houses, schools, and all manner of structures.

When the Shakers first built on their land in the West, they followed as closely as possible the design of the Eastern prototypes with which they were familiar and which had been sanctioned by the Eastern church leaders. They built a large frame dwelling 30 x 40 feet of two stories, with a 'straight roof,' two stacks of chimneys, the inside something like the East House at Lebanon, New York. It was designed for separation of men and women and was called the Elders or South House. It was first occupied on June 6, 1806, by eleven brethren and eight sisters with David Darrow as the Head.

The missionaries then wrote home to the Shaker Center in New York, rather apologetically, that they might be starting too high, but that the quality of the land and their phenomenal success with converts seemed to justify the expenditure (Phillips, 1971, p. 5).

The dwelling described by Phillips (1971) and the buildings which are shown in early Union Village photographs adhered to the New England principles of simplicity and purpose. The Shakers had been given specifics in the Millennial Laws concerning the execution of their buildings.

Odd or fanciful styles of architecture may not be used among the Believers; neither should any deviate widely the common styles of buildings among the Believers, without the Union of the Leaders or Ministry (Section IX, Article 2).

This law was broken innumerable times in the West. The Western Shakers for various reasons deviated, in time, from the traditional New England prototypes; a Western style evolved. It could

be that the mother church recognized that exceptions would need to be met and gave its consent. Plain frame buildings first built in the southern communities of Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, and South Union, Kentucky, were replaced in a few years by large, carefully built Georgian structures of brick or stone. Even though regional differences evolved, the Shaker objectives of utility, order, and harmony were present in Western Shaker architecture.

It was the duty of the Trustees to see to the domestic concerns of the family in which they resided and to perform all business transactions either with the world or with Believers in other families or societies. All trade and traffic, buying and selling, changing and swapping, was done by them or by their immediate knowledge and consent. The Trustee's office had a secondary purpose of accommodating visitors, travelers, and merchants.

The Trustee's office at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, was built by hired hands between 1839 and 1841. It is an attractive building of red brick and stone with beautiful arches and the lovely simple lines of Shaker architecture. Pleasant Hill architecture is congruous with the late Georgian and Federal style employed by the "World" at that time. The building has two dormer windows which provide light for the area at the top of the twin spiral stairways, certainly the most prominent feature of the building. The circular stairway had no noticable means of support and therefore gives to the observer a feeling of fluency. The steps are interlocked and held with metal bolts; these works are enclosed with a plaster well-like wall. The stairwells have aesthetic appeal and are a space saving way for going from floor to floor in a Shaker building which was built with unusually high

ceilings, presumably for ventilation purposes. Stairway shown in Figure 18.

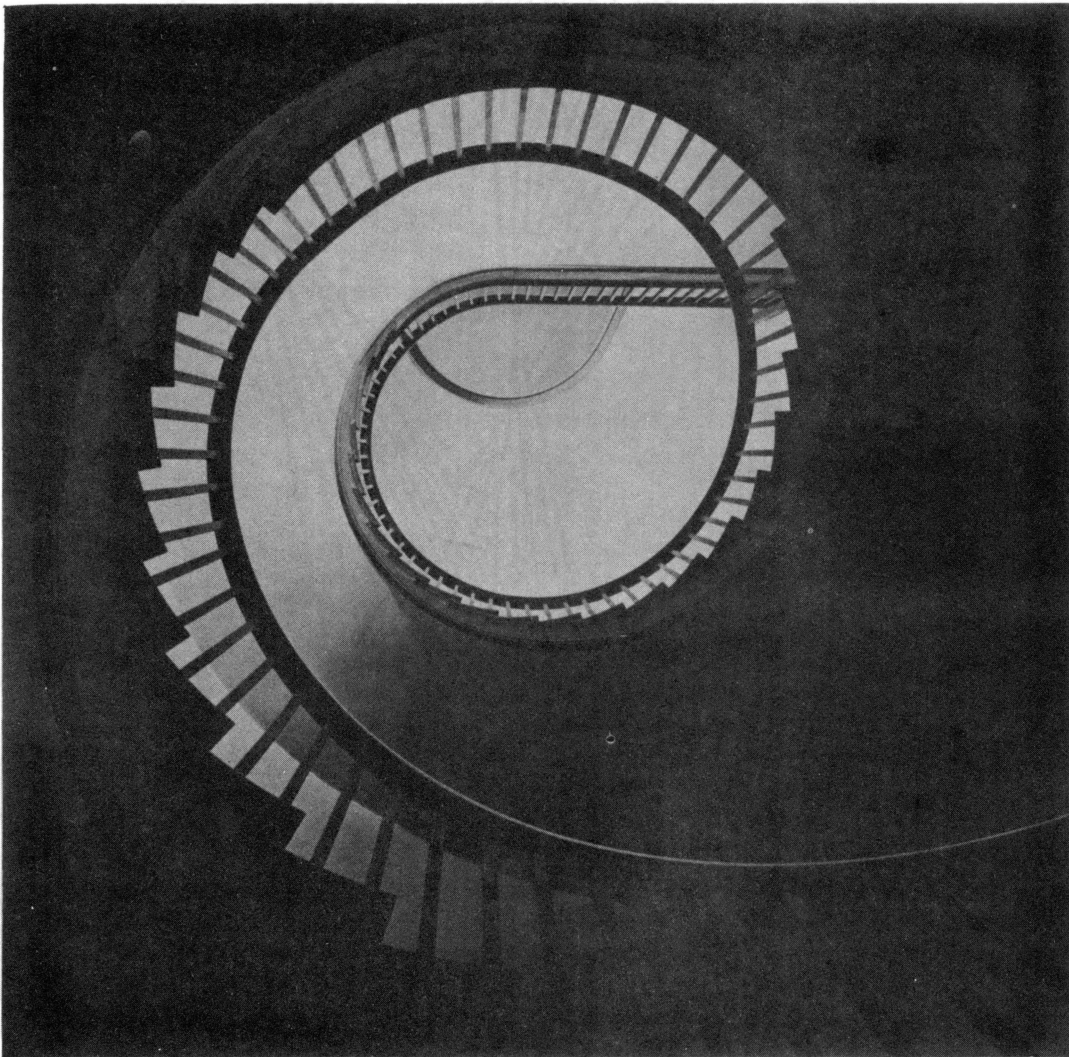


Figure 18. Stairwell in the Trustee's Office

A continuity of design is evident at the Pleasant Hill community; this can be attributed to the talented Micajah Burnett who held an esteemed place within the village. Figure 19 shows a picture of Burnett. Thomas has written of Burnett:

His initial training as a carpenter enabled him to become the principal architect and engineer of the village's major buildings, specifically the Waterworks with its early use of a central reservoir and the Trustees' office with its graceful twin staircases. He traveled more extensively than any other Believer, purchasing items for the village and selling its cattle and ware throughout the Middle West (Thomas, 1973, p. 16).



Figure 19. Micajah Burnett

The twin doors and double staircase (Figure 20) stand quietly today as a tribute to the celibate Shakers. The orders given the Shakers by the church forbade all private union between the sexes, in any case, place, or under any circumstances, in the buildings or out. It was therefore considered contrary to order for a brother and a sister to pass each other on the stairs, for a brother to go into a sister's room without knocking, for a sister to go to a brother's shop alone, and for a brother to shake hands with a sister or give her a present.

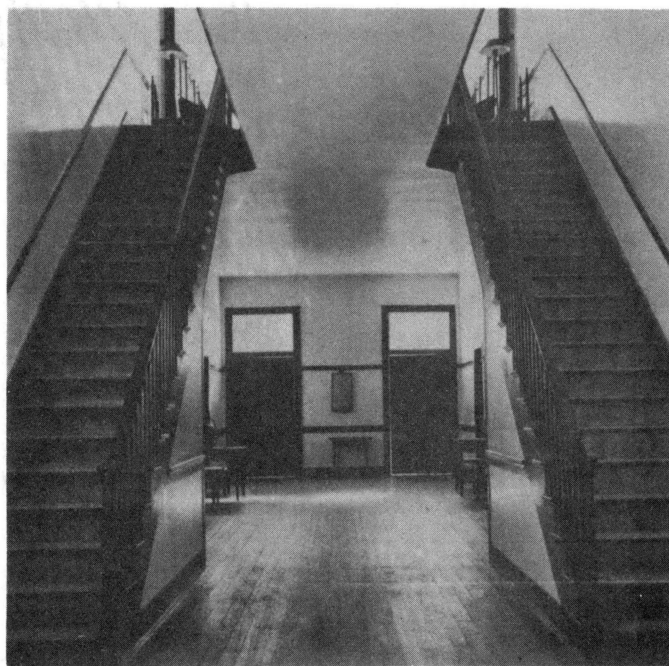


Figure 20. Twin Doors and  
Double Staircases

The necessity of vigilance was realized early in the history of the Shaker movement, and the Shakers designed and executed their buildings so that temptations would be removed to some extent. The separate doors and stairs created an ambiance of separateness.

The stone Centre Family Dwelling House at Pleasant Hill is the village's largest structure. It was under construction from 1824-1834 and is quite imposing with its forty rooms (See Figure 21).

A Shaker community was divided into semi-autonomous living groups called families. Each unit had its own dwellings, houses, shops, barns, and specialized industries. At Pleasant Hill, the East, West, North, and North East Families were named for their locations relative to the principal or most spiritually advanced first order family, called the Centre Family. Believers were placed or moved to maintain a family's congruent character and purpose. For instance, the West Family, also known as the second order, was reserved for older members who performed less arduous tasks (Thomas, 1973, p. 10).

A Shaker journal explains the chopped trees shown in Figure 21. The Shakers cut the trees following instructions from the Mother Church to trim the trees and remove others. Following is an excerpt from the journal:

We removed the flowers, shrubs, and most of the evergreens and other trees, not excepting the fruit trees, out of the yard (for there was a super abundance of them). And all the other Families did the same this Spring, in accordance with the instructions given by the Ministry and Elders of Holy Mount when they were here on a visit last Summer, it being contrary to their practice and counsel to have trees in the yard. A few were permitted for shade in this warm climate (Thomas, 1973, p. 82).



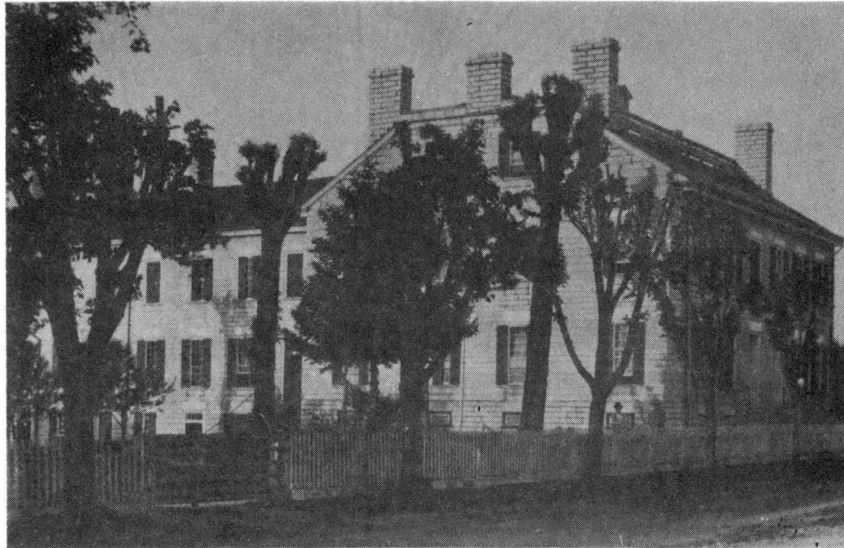


Figure 21. Centre Family Dwelling House

The arched doorway, shown in Figure 22, is a Western Shaker feature. The arch was used in both exterior and interior construction, and often a mullioned fanlight transom was fitted into the arch over the door. The Western Shakers also used arched windows.



Figure 22. Arched Doorway,  
Pleasant Hill

The Believers' life was a disciplined one. A Shaker member followed strict routine, traditions, and functions; he was inhibited by the taboos on recreation, reading, and association with the opposite sex. The normal sex impulses were suppressed by the basic principle of the Shaker faith. The frequent religious services with the extravagant and emotional dancing and singing were anticipated with pleasure and served a dual purpose of recreation and rejuvenation.

To provide the immense and unrestricted area desired by the Believers in their meeting room, the ceiling had to be spanned without the usual supporting columns. This feat was ingeniously achieved by hanging the ceiling joists from four vertical timbers which extended through the second floor.

The corner of the meeting room shown in Figure 23 has movable wooden benches for the Believers and permanent seating, called fasteners, built into the dado for visitors. There are three rows of pegboards running along each wall of the large meeting room. The pegboards and the other trim in the room are painted blue. The paint used by the Shakers at Pleasant Hill more nearly resembles a stain, and the original paint is still intact on many of the wooden surfaces in the village.

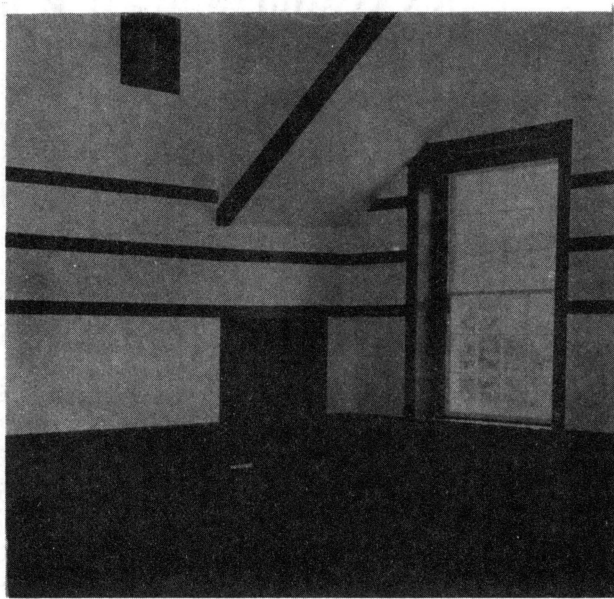


Figure 23. Corner of a Shaker  
Meeting Room

The East Family Sisters' Work Shop at Pleasant Hill is shown in Figure 24. The exterior of this building is plain and unadorned and was used as a place for the sisters to work. In one year, 1846, the sisters made 946 yards of tape for caps, apparel, carpet bordering, and chairs.

Domestic chores occupied almost all of a Shaker's day. The communal life was well organized and a high standard of efficiency was maintained. A rotation system helped to keep the work from becoming arduous. Each village had several workshops where the labor was carried out, brothers' shops and sisters' shops. The Western communities followed the church's order of separation. According to the Millennial Law, Section V, Article 23: "Brethren's and sisters' shops should not be under one and the same roof, except those of the Ministry."

The author, Daniel Hutton (1936) describes a phase of the Pleasant Hill industry:

The Shakers conducted a sawmill, a grist mill, a pulling mill and an oil mill. They spun and wove, made silk, cotton and wool cloth, straw hats for both sexes, and manufactured all kinds of furniture. They also had a printing office. Broom-making was a specialty. They made their own implements and wagons and turned out the hundred and one things needed in daily life. They made butter and cheese, preserves of all kinds (always a specialty) and canned vegetables (p. 27).

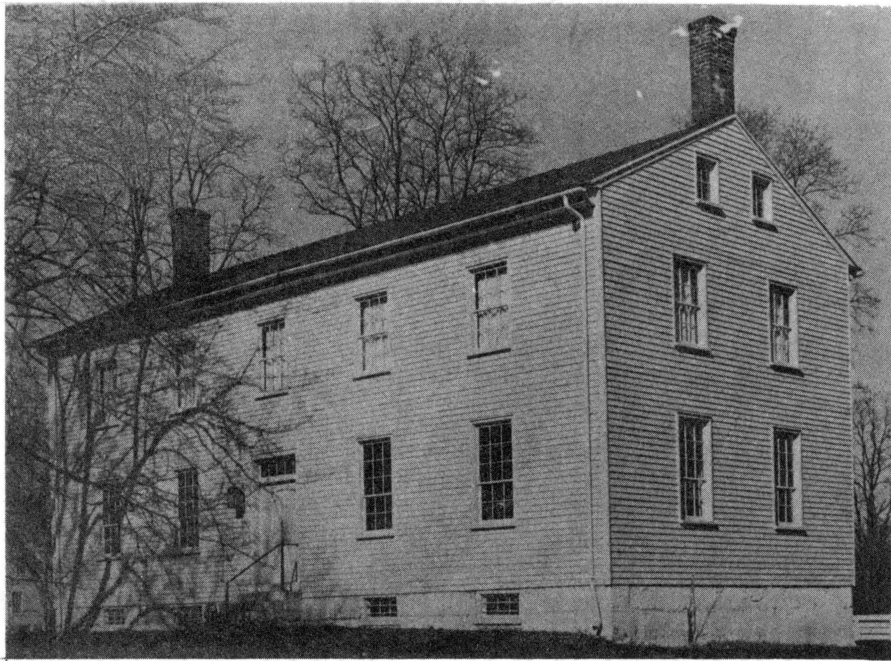


Figure 24. Sisters' Work Shop

Sister Mary Settles, shown in Figure 25, was the last surviving Pleasant Hill Believer. A widow from Louisville, she joined the Pleasant Hill Society in 1859. Sister Mary was a faithful Shaker until her death in 1923. A look at the tactile hands would lead one to believe that this Shaker put her "hands to work, and heart to God."



Figure 25. Sister Mary Settles

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

It was the purpose of this writing to portray in a pictorial study the design types and characteristics indigenous to the Western Shakers, and to note regional characteristics which identify a design as Western Shaker.

It is possible to observe distinctive features employed by the Shakers in the West, even though there is a scarcity of published material on their design. Unlike the conservative Eastern communities, the Western communities seemed to favor variety. The Ohio and Kentucky furnishings and architecture display a diversity and richness of detail which identifies it as Western. Just as the Eastern austerity is evident in the Eastern design; so is the more relaxed life evident in the Western design. Nonetheless, the traditional Shaker restraint is always present.

The regional influences are evident, especially at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky, where the architecture of the community closely parallels the Georgian structures of brick or stone which were being built by the "World" outside the Shaker village. The elegant southern designs were merely modified for the Shaker purpose.

The Shakers were a monastic order with the religious motivation never far removed from their daily lives. Ohio was considered a frontier, far removed from New England and the stern and repressive



way of life there. It can be observed that Ohio was between the Calvinistic New England starkness and the somewhat more lenient Anglican religious influence present in Kentucky. A design variety is evident in the products and architecture of the Ohio Shakers, but not as much diversity as that reflected in the Kentucky region.

The sectarian Shaker work shops were isolated from the "World," but the converted Believer came from the "World." When he converted to Shakerism and became part of the order, he brought with him his craft skills learned outside the order. As a Believer, he retained his ideas of design which he had used all his working life.

A culture works with what materials are available for its people. The woods available in the West lent themselves to being cut into heavy and large components. This is not to say that fine workmanship was not apparent in the finished product, but materials available often lead to the construction of a massive piece.

Late in the movement the creeping worldliness and Victorian influence seemed to be pervasive in the West. As the number of males in the society decreased, the Shakers were forced to employ help from outside the communities. This brought on a breach in the line of separation, held so long, between the Shakers and the "World."

The Western communities were semi-autonomous; a great distance separated the colonies from the church influence in the East. Direct contact with the mother church at New Lebanon was between church leaders, not the craftsmen and builders. The geographical isolation cannot be overlooked, and when one considers the distance the Western communities were from the mother church and its leadership, it is a wonder that they were able to conform as well as they did.

The chance of the Shaker movement lasting was a tenuous one.

The Shaker and his work could not be separated. The design legacy left us by the Western Shakers is a testimony of their abundant faith.

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